

MIRANDA FRICKER



1. Miranda Fricker is a contemporary British philosopher known for pioneering the concept of epistemic injustice—unfair treatment experienced in her capacity as a knower, speaker, or interpreter of experience. Her work integrates epistemology, ethics, feminist philosophy, and social and political theory.
2. Fricker's main work, **Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing** (2007), explores how injustice extends beyond wealth, rights, or political influence. It also involves unfair treatment within knowledge creation and sharing. Epistemic injustice occurs when people are unfairly harmed because of their role as knowers. For instance, prejudice might cause their testimony to be ignored, or society may lack the concepts needed for someone to express a significant experience.
3. Testimonial injustice happens when people are not believed because of bias. On the other hand, hermeneutical injustice occurs when individuals struggle to articulate their experiences due to societal gaps in understanding.
4. This occurs when a listener trusts someone less than they should due to biases connected to the speaker's social identity. For example, a statement might be dismissed or considered less credible because of prejudiced perceptions related to gender, race, class, accent, age, or social status. Fricker refers to this as an "identity prejudicial credibility deficit"—a situation where the individual isn't just misunderstood but is also unfairly regarded as an unreliable source of knowledge. When someone's testimony is consistently undervalued, society implicitly conveys, "You are not a credible knower," thereby reinforcing epistemic inequality. These dynamics can uphold broader societal patterns of dominance and exclusion.
5. This form of injustice is more subtle and pertains to hermeneutical injustice, which occurs when societal inequalities prevent someone from accessing shared concepts

needed to understand or communicate a key social experience. Fricker's well-known discussion illustrates this with examples like sexual harassment before it was widely recognised as a social concept. In such cases, a person may undergo a distressing event but struggle to express it due to a lack of interpretive resources. Consequently, testimonial injustice happens when your account isn't fully believed, and hermeneutical injustice occurs when the necessary social language or concepts to describe your experience are absent.

6. Hermeneutical injustice mainly arises from what Fricker describes as hermeneutical marginalisation, where certain groups lack equal voice in shaping society's shared meanings. Historically, dominant groups have exerted greater influence over institutions like law, education, politics, academia, media, medicine, and public discourse. As a result, the experiences vital to marginalised communities are often underrepresented in society's collective interpretive resources, emphasising the link between knowledge and social power.
7. Fricker highlights social power as the ability of social actors to influence or control others' actions. She emphasises identity power, which functions through shared societal beliefs about different groups. For instance, stereotypes about a group's typical behaviour can influence perceptions of their intelligence, trustworthiness, rationality, or authority. Therefore, power extends beyond laws, governments, or force; it also manifests in everyday judgments about whose knowledge is deemed valuable.
8. One effective way to understand Fricker is by examining social interactions, where people regularly assess whose credibility to trust. Credibility acts like a social identity, inherently asserting authority. This shows how even basic acts of believing and listening can hide underlying power relations.
9. An additional effect of epistemic injustice is that people may be seen only as sources of information rather than active contributors to knowledge. Marginalised individuals might be examined, talked about, or labelled without their personal insights being appreciated. Fricker stresses the importance of acknowledging people as epistemic subjects capable of generating and sharing knowledge.
10. Fricker goes beyond diagnosing injustice; she develops a virtue epistemological response. Regarding testimonial injustice, she suggests that the hearer should cultivate reflexive awareness to counteract the effects of identity prejudice on credibility judgments. Concerning hermeneutical injustice, she advocates for

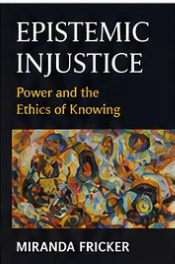
hermeneutical justice, where listeners should recognise that a speaker's difficulties or experiences may stem from societal gaps in collective understanding rather than from the speaker's shortcomings. Therefore, a good knower must also be a responsible listener.

11. Fricker's theory significantly influences feminist epistemology by highlighting that traditional views see knowledge as occurring between socially neutral people. In reality, Fricker argues that knowledge practices are rooted in relationships influenced by factors such as identity, prejudice, credibility, and social power. As a result, knowledge has crucial ethical and political consequences.
12. Her major works include 'Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing' (2007), which is a landmark book and essential for understanding her ideas, and "The Epistemic Life of Groups" (2023, co-edited), which explores epistemic issues related to groups and collective agents. She has also contributed impactful writings on forgiveness, blame, moral responsibility, epistemic responsibility, and feminist philosophy.
13. Fricker revolutionised contemporary epistemology by posing a seemingly simple question: " Can someone be treated unjustly specifically as a knower? " Her answer - yes - spawned a significant area of research on epistemic injustice, which is now applied to a wide range of issues including education, healthcare, law, testimony, discrimination, disability, gender, race, colonialism, and political representation.
14. Miranda Fricker contends that justice encompasses more than giving people equal rights and resources; it also involves acknowledging them as equally trustworthy contributors to producing, understanding, and sharing knowledge.

MIRANDA FRICKER

Epistemic Injustice and the Ethics of Knowing

Miranda Fricker is a contemporary British philosopher. She is best known for developing the concept of *epistemic injustice*—injustice suffered specifically in a person's capacity as a knower, speaker, or interpreter of experience.



CENTRAL IDEA

Epistemic injustice occurs when a person is unfairly disadvantaged specifically in their capacity as a knower. It is injustice in the production, communication and reception of knowledge.



TWO MAIN FORMS OF EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

1. TESTIMONIAL INJUSTICE

Occurs when prejudice causes a hearer to give a speaker less credibility than they deserve.

- The problem is a credibility deficit based on the speaker's social identity (gender, race, class, accent, age, etc.).
- The speaker is wronged as a source of knowledge.
- It says to the person: "You are not a credible knower."

Example: A woman's report of harassment is not believed because of sexist stereotypes.

2. HERMENEUTICAL INJUSTICE

Occurs when structural inequalities leave someone without adequate shared concepts to understand or communicate an important part of their experience.

- There is an interpretive disadvantage.
- The person cannot adequately explain their experience because society lacks the concepts to make sense of it.
- It is not just "being misunderstood"; the necessary concepts are socially unavailable.

Example: Before the term "sexual harassment" was widely available, many women could not adequately express their experience.

HERMENEUTICAL MARGINALIZATION

- Root cause of hermeneutical injustice.
- Not everyone has equal influence over society's shared concepts and interpretations.
- Dominant groups shape institutions (law, education, politics, media, academia, medicine, etc.).
- As a result, experiences of marginalized groups are poorly represented in collective interpretive resources.

POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

- Fricker links epistemic injustice to social power.
- Identity power operates through socially shared ideas and stereotypes.
- Power works not only through laws or coercion, but also through everyday judgments about whose knowledge counts.
- Knowledge is therefore shaped by relations of power.

CREDIBILITY ECONOMY

- In social life, we constantly judge: "Who should I believe?"
- Credibility functions like a socially distributed good.
- Some people face credibility deficits (unfairly disbelieved).
- Others may receive excessive credibility because of their social identity.
- Ordinary acts of believing and listening can hide structures of power.

EPISTEMIC OBJECTIFICATION

- Marginalized people can be treated merely as objects from which information is extracted.
- They are studied, classified or spoken about, while their own interpretation receives little authority.
- Justice requires treating individuals as epistemic subjects—active participants in knowledge.

EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE AND FEMINISM

- Traditional epistemology assumed socially neutral knowers.
- Fricker shows that knowledge practices are shaped by identity, prejudice, credibility and power.
- Knowledge has an important ethical and political dimension.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION? EPISTEMIC VIRTUES

Testimonial Justice – for testimonial injustice
Hearers should develop reflective awareness to correct the influence of identity prejudice on credibility judgments.

Hermeneutical Justice – for hermeneutical injustice
Listeners should recognise that a speaker's difficulty in expressing an experience may arise from gaps in society's concepts, not from defects in the speaker.

The good knower must also be a responsible listener.

MAJOR WORKS

- Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing** (2007)
Her landmark book and the most important text for understanding her thought.
- The Epistemic Life of Groups** (2023, co-edited)
Examines epistemic questions involving groups and collective agents.

She has also written on forgiveness, blame, moral responsibility, epistemic responsibility and feminist philosophy.

WHY FRICKER MATTERS

Fricker transformed contemporary epistemology by asking a simple but powerful question:
"Can someone be treated unjustly specifically as a knower?"

Her answer —YES—created a major field of research on epistemic injustice. It is now applied to issues of:


Education


Healthcare


Law & Testimony


Discrimination (Gender, Race, Class, Disability)


Political Representation

It helps us understand how knowledge, power and justice are deeply connected.

EXAM-READY DISTINCTION

Testimonial injustice: prejudice makes society undervalue what you say.

Hermeneutical injustice: structural inequality makes society lack adequate concepts for understanding what you experience.

ONE-LINE CONCLUSION

Miranda Fricker shows that justice requires not only giving people equal rights and resources, but also recognizing them equally as credible participants in the creation, interpretation and communication of knowledge.

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