Trust and the Ethics of Knowing

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I. Introduction

A recurring project in many feminist epistemologies is the task of linking ethics and knowing. There are several forms that such a link could take. Trivially, one might say that the ability to be ethical depends on the content of one's knowledge. Somewhat more substantively, but still non-controversially, one might claim that the method used for coming to know that one selects may have an ethical impact on the world. While both of these claims have been neglected by traditional epistemologists and scientists, nevertheless, when raised by feminists, they are not widely contested. Where the feminists begin to encounter resistance from traditional epistemologists is when they link epistemology with ethics or politics by showing that the normativity of truth assertions is partially based on an ethical or political normativity. Finally, they may even extend this to claim that one's ability to know is linked with one's being ethically good.

In this paper, I begin by demonstrating that truth claims have a normative dimension which is partially ethical and based on trustworthiness. I use this to show that one's ability to come to know is dependent on one's ability to be ethically good within a

productive political structure. On this basis, I give some suggestions for how to balance the demands of epistemology and life in a pluralistic culture before making some concluding remarks in defense against possible objections to the proposals made.

II. Knowing as trust
A. Normativity of assertion

Ludwig Wittgenstein was famously impressed by what he called G. E. Moore's paradox, in which one states something like, "It's raining outside, but I don't believe that it is." The interesting aspect of the paradox is that it seems impossible to both assert p and assert a personal non-belief in p simultaneously, but this impossibility disappears when speaking about the beliefs of others or one's own past beliefs. Wittgenstein remarks about the paradox,

> [T]he statement "I believe it's going to rain" has a meaning like, that is to say a use like, "It's going to rain," but the meaning of "I believed then that it was going to rain," is not like that of "It did rain then."[1]

Why is there a difference between these two statements? Because, "One can mistrust one's own senses, but not one's own belief."[2] Since one cannot mistrust one's current beliefs in the way that one can mistrust one's past beliefs, there is a fundamental asymmetry between the two. Its being my current belief is what is meant by saying one trusts a proposition. This means that an asserted proposition "says something about" more than just the world, it also says something about the speaker:

> If, however, "I believe it is so" throws light on my state, then so does [the] assertion "It is so." For the sign "I believe" can't do it, [but] can at most hint at it.[3]

What the proposition does is to show something that is broader than a mere statement of belief, but not entirely different from a statement of belief either. There must be an overlap between belief and assertion for Moore's paradox to be a paradox, but if

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[1.] Wittgenstein, II. x. p. 162.
[2.] *Ibid*.
[3.] *Ibid*., p. 163.

asserting a proposition is different from airing an opinion, there must be a difference as well. How can these two requirements be reconciled?

I propose that what happens in cases of Moore's paradox is that one is contradicting the implied normativity of asserting p. The assertion "It is so" throws light onto my internal state and reveals that (unless I am engaging in an act of deception) I believe, "Not only do I believe it is so, others *should* believe it is so, because it is." Any time we assert p before another person, we are implicitly recommending belief in p to that other person, or else the speech act would fail to be an assertion. Accordingly, an assertion of p means that not only do I believe p, moreover I also think that p is an appropriate belief for others to have as well. As Naomi Scheman writes in "Epistemology Resuscitated,"

> Central to what we do when we call an argument, conclusion, or decision "objective" is to recommend it to others, and, importantly, to suggest that they *ought* to accept it, that they would be doxastically irresponsible to reject it without giving reasons that made similar claims to universal acceptability.[4]

Hence, Moore's paradox can be translated into, "I believe that everyone[5] should believe it's raining outside, but I don't believe it." Strictly speaking, of course, Moore's paradox need not be a true contradiction if one denies there being any similar to a categorical imperative to believe what it is that you think everyone (else?) should believe. Presuming that it really is possible to suspend one's need for at least apparent coherence among beliefs, there would be no pure contradiction in doing this. However, given the background assumption that we human beings almost all share about the undesirability of self-dealing, there is a real contradiction at work in recommending a belief as universally normative and yet exempting oneself from belief in it.

From the preceding examination then, we can see that there is a normative dimension to all knowledge claims, since asserting that something is the case is to recommend its

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[4.] Scheman, p. 24.

[5.] Or at least everyone in a given community of inquiry. This caveat also applies elsewhere to the term "universalization."

universalization. Accordingly, we can see that if epistemology is the study of which circumstances give us warrant to make assertions, epistemology must explain what it is that allows us to derive the *ought* of "everyone ought to believe *p*" from the *is* that "*p* is the case." Have we naturalized an ethical claim, or is the normativity at work here a different kind?

B. Relation of ethics to epistemic normativity

It seems on the surface that epistemology must intersect with the field of ethics, since assertions are meant to be taken up by other human beings, and we cannot recommend an assertion to other human beings without first checking to see if we have some, other higher value that overrides our concern with asserting what we take to be the case.

However, one might perhaps object that epistemology is only the theoretical study how one knows as an individual, not the practical study of what one should assert in public. That is, from epistemology, we come to understand the reasons why I am justified in believing it is raining, but not whether or not I am warranted in asserting this before others, since one can very easily construct cases in which any number of other considerations (from simple politeness to seriously deleterious consequences) might inhibit one's public assertion of a particular proposition. On the side of politeness, one thinks of contentless pleasantries or the need to refrain from pointing out painful facts that antagonize the listener. On the side of serious consequences, one thinks of cases in which lying to evildoers (or at least withholding the truth from them) will prevent further harm to innocents. In cases like these, the fact of *p* and whether it should be publicly asserted are two different matters. That is, epistemology tells us what we should assert to ourselves to be knowledge, and other fields of inquiry tell us what we should assert to others.

However, when we consider the traditional concept of knowledge as a "true, justified belief,"[6] we see that justification cannot mean, "justification to my personal satisfaction,"

[6.] There are, of course, many difficulties with this traditional definition of knowledge, but most revised formulations of the definition will also be amenable to the analysis offered here.

since that would be redundant, as "belief" already implies the same. Justification concerns the meeting of a *public* standard. This standard should not only be reliable but also explicable, in principle if not in practice. We need to be able to give reason why others should believe what we believe if they too had the same evidence. Accordingly, merely making to oneself the self-assertion that "I know *p*" contains the seeds of the social judgment that believing *p* is normative according to some public criteria of justification, whether or not other considerations inhibit the public assertion of *p* at a particular time or in particular circumstances. "I know *p*" implies the theoretical existence of circumstances in which someone else in my position would also be normatively obligated to assent to *p*.

We have shown that asserting *p* to be known includes with it a judgment of the normativity of believing *p*, but still we have not shown that norm to be a matter of ethical consideration rather than some other kind of consideration. For example, for Linda Zagzebski, the justification of knowledge is matter of satisfying one's "epistemic obligations" or "demands," but she nevertheless insists,

> I do not mean to imply that the demand is moral. Not all demands are moral demands; not all obligations are moral obligations. The demand to be conscientious in my beliefs in domain *D* is conditional upon my caring about domain D.[7]

So for Zagzebski, the normativity behind epistemology is different from the normativity behind morality. Nevertheless, I will argue here that we cannot fully understand the normativity behind epistemological claims without also considering ways in which our claims intersect with ethical considerations.

To begin, suppose one has a pragmatic-view of the truth, namely that we should call something "true" only if it is useful to do so. In that case, we must make a full account of whether the claim is useful according to our various values. To omit our ethical values from such an accounting without a good reason would be bizarre, and if belief in know-

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[7] Zagzebski, p. 357.

ledge claims is normative for others but this has no ethical presuppositions or side-effects to consider, this seems very strange. Of course, this does not mean that we need to be vulgar moralists. It may be that we are pragmatically motivated to assert some claim that we would ethically prefer to be false, since failing to do so will harm the practice of our larger aims (which it will if, for example, the claim is one where the world rather than our beliefs about it controls whether it is practically able to be implemented). Hence the pragmatist must consider the ethical repercussions of a claim before declaring it to be normative for others.

On the other hand, suppose one is committed to a non-pragmatic view of truth, such as the correspondence theory of truth. In that case, one must have a justification for the commitment to normative assertion of truth even where it could possibly harm the attainment of our other goals. If our ethical values are among our highest values, then there must be an absolute imperative to speak truth that justifies ignoring other considerations in order to attend to correspondence alone to the exclusion of pragmatic concern, and this imperative can presumably only be grounded in other ethical or religious values.[8] Hence the ethical normativity of assertions cannot be wholly dismissed even by a non-pragmatist. In either case, the consideration of our ethical values—either as pragmatic aims or as an unwavering commitment to the truth—must come before our assertion of knowledge as a part of its epistemic normativity.

C. Responsibility and trust

Lisa Heldke and Stephen Kellert in "Objectivity as Responsibility" help to explain why it is proper to bring such other considerations into epistemology, even if those considerations are not themselves strictly epistemological:

[8.] For instance, Christians who hold a correspondence view of the truth might point to John 8:32 ("And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."), which makes the case for an absolute commitment to truth by appealing to its pragmatic soteriological effects. What is important to notice here is that truth for truth's sake is at least initially a secondary commitment for the knowing individual, though it may come to be internalized and held as a primary commitment afterwards.

> Decisions about *better* knowledge cannot be made without reference to values, and these values are not and should not be limited to "cognitive" values like simplicity, explanatory scope, and predictive power. At every step in the production and evaluation of knowledge social or "contextual" values also play some role.[9]

Better knowledge is more valuable knowledge, and whether knowledge is valuable or not depends on what our values are. For Heldke and Kellert, objective inquiry is "good" inquiry not only in the sense that it is properly conducted but in the sense that conducting one's inquiry well is obligatory for a person engaged in society. Just as there is an ethical obligation to refrain from lying, so to do we have other obligations placed on the sort of discourse we engage in publicly and saying that some bit of purported knowledge meets the standards of "objectivity" is to say that the content in question has met those obligations. As they explain,

> Inquiry is marked by objectivity to the extent that its participants acknowledge, fulfill, and expand responsibility to the context of inquiry.[10]

Heldke and Kellert explicitly use the word "responsibility" to describe objectivity in order to "draw attention to the verb 'to respond' from which the word 'responsibility' derives."[11] A good inquiry is one that responds to criticisms and shortcomings.

Perhaps, however, more than the term "responsibility," the word "trust" helps convey what sort of justification stand be behind knowledge claims. It should not be controversial to say that a good justification is the kind that one can "trust" when evaluating whether or not a claim is true. In the same way, when one has real knowledge, one can "trust" that the world will behave as one expects it to according to that knowledge. However, in addition to these senses of trust, when we first begin to evaluate a claim, we must also be able to "trust" that the claim is a claim worth evaluating and that the putative justification offered is one that is relevant to the evaluation of the claim. In the absence of such interpersonal trust, it may be possible for the hearer to reconstruct

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[9.] Heldke and Kellert, p. 367.
[10.] *Ibid.*, p. 361.
[11.] *Ibid.*, p. 363.

a justification for the claim, but in that case, the justification could not be said to rest in any way on the one making the assertion. In the same way, as the one making an assertion, if we have not cultivate the rational interpersonal trust of others for what we are saying, then we have no right to insist that they should believe our claim (which is what asserting *p* means). Unless we are trustworthy, then we cannot say that other *should* find our claim trustworthy (nor, empirically speaking, may we expect that they *will* find it trustworthy), and in the absence of a norm of trust, the normative force behind an assertion will collapse. As such, there is a sense in which the ethical status of a person is relevant to the evaluation of a knowledge claim.

Nevertheless, one worry of the traditional epistemologist will be that to consider the person rather than the evidence that the person offers is the definition of the *ad hominem* fallacy. However, a closer look at the *ad hominem* reveals that its flaw is not to consider the character of the speaker, but to consider the character of the speaker to the exclusion of other evidence. Indeed, in certain cases, it is clearly correct to reject certain claims prima facie on the basis of knowledge about the speaker. Trusting someone known to suffer from compulsive lying is an error in the absence of external, corroborating evidence.

Conversely, if it is the case then that sometimes one is not justified in believing someone because of their character, and if the assertion *p* is a near equivalent to "everyone should believe *p*," then as the person who believes that *p* could be truthfully asserted as knowledge, one must believe that other people are justified in trusting the claim, which means that in cases where one's testimony is an important part of the justification of the claim, one must believe oneself to have a character that is trustworthy in order to know *p*. In other words, one must be good in order to be a good knower.[12]

[12.] Because of the difficulties involved in saying one "is" trustworthy or not, it may be desirable to consider trustworthiness, justification, and knowing on a scale from better to worse rather than as a binary dichotomy.

III. Being good and being a good knower
A. Collaborating with others

The claim that being a good knower involves being good may meet a great deal of resistance from traditional epistemologists, but there are certain senses in which the claim is trivial. In classical Western philosophy, one often finds claims that the ethically good is good because it allows one achieve one's aims, particularly happiness. This is why the word "virtue" has the dual meaning of ethical goodness and instrumental goodness. In some contemporary consequentialist theories, ethics is thought of as a way of overcoming social coordination problems by creating incentives to cooperate. Even those who follow deontological systems of ethics, in which an ethical rule must be followed even if it produces a bad result, are unlikely to deny that, as a matter of fact, following ethical rules tends in the aggregate to produce better results, though this is considered merely a pleasant side-effect. Accordingly, certain ethical features of the knower follow directly from the claim that a knower is a socially situated embodied human being: if one wants to earn a doctorate in a particular field, it is helpful not to commit crimes that would result in incarceration; to learn about the lives of others, one must not abuse them; encouraging theft may lead to the loss of one's book or other resources; etc.

However, to really examine the non-trivial senses in which knowing and ethics are related, it must be noted that, in spite of the legacy of Descartes' *cogito* on modern epistemology, absolutely no one really begins the process of knowledge acquisition in an isolated state. Indeed, it was because of this, not in spite of it, that Descartes chose to attempt to "raze everything to the ground and begin again from original foundations."[13] It was because Descartes distrusted the knowledge that he had received from his upbringing that he chose to believe only what he could prove to himself. However, modern science relies on joint social exertion. Nevertheless, one might object that such joint endeavors, while pragmatically valuable, are of secondary importance as a means

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[13.] Descartes, p. 17.

of knowing. They are a substitute for what one might do oneself. As Scheman explains, the Cartesian revolution in epistemology was designed to minimize one's need to trust the authority of others, particularly those in the church, by proving an objective method that could in principle be followed by anyone. While this was a laudably democratizing goal, in practice, for the would-be self-made knower,

> Even if he can satisfactorily conclude that others are, like him, conscious, rational beings, he cannot so confidently rule out the possibility that they are careless or mendacious.[14]

Historically, in the early modern period, this possibility was mitigated through reliance on the social ideal of the "gentleman" and the importance of "his word," which of course had the negative effect of anti-democratically locking non-male, non-aristocratic individuals out of the publicly acknowledged practice of science. (Of course, behind the scenes, many experiments were physically conducted by women.) While it might be claimed that this is merely a practical matter and not an issue for theoretical epistemology, such issues of trust are intertwined with human knowledge production practices in such a thoroughgoing way that any discussion of them which attempts to exclude the issue of when and how we can rely on the testimony of others can be no better than solipsistic. As Linda Martín Alcoff writes, "Testimonial knowledge is, in fact, the primary form of knowledge in everyday life[…]."[15] We get most of our knowledge from others. No scientist could get especially far if it were necessary for each of them to prove first the existence of the external world and the laws of induction as an individual and without help from any outside source. Thus, even for the most staunch of individualists, the bulk of knowledge will be founded not on one's own perceptions but on the perceptions of others, and confirmed not according to one's methods but according to the methods of others. Hence, we see that epistemology is inescapably social, and that, as Alcoff explains,

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14. Scheman, p. 31.
15. Alcoff, p. 236.

> [I]f one is aiming for a *general* account of knowledge one would think the more typical case of belief generation should be taken as the paradigm, that is, knowledge based in one form or another on the testimony of others.[16]

Accordingly, our theory of epistemology must have a central place for the role of testimony and other modes of social interaction as a means of coming to know.[17]

B. Testimonial injustice

In order to understand how testimony can be incorporated into epistemology, it is worth noticing different ways in which it can fail to become useful knowledge. The most obvious, of course, is when the person offering testimony is speaking incorrectly or purposefully deceiving us, and these cases are handled reasonably well by traditional epistemology. However as Miranda Fricker explains in *Epistemic Injustice*, there are also several ways in which social power can contribute to "epistemic injustice," in which a person suffers harm in their capacity as a knower, and these kinds of injustice also need to come into our understanding of testimony. One kind of injustice is "testimonial injustice," in which, "prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's words."[18] Testimonial injustice shows the ethical impact of epistemology, since failing to treat someone as a reliable source of testimony (or relying too much on a person as a source of testimony) can be an ethical failing if, for example, we allow certain kinds of prejudices to seep into our assessment of the person's character. Moreover, repeatedly suffering from testimonial injustice may cause knowers to lose confidence to such a degree that they can no longer be said to "know" something true that they do in fact have adequate justification to believe or otherwise preemptively silence their voices. However, in addition to these case where the practice of epistemology gives rise to ethical effects, testimonial injustice also illustrates the effects of ethics on epistemology, since in order to know, one must be sufficiently ethically sophisticated as to keep from

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[16.] *Ibid*.

[17.] Indeed, Arindam Chakrabarti in "Telling As Letting Know" intriguingly suggests that it is the testimonial sense of the sentence which is primary and not the non-asserted meaning.

[18.] Fricker, p. 1.

undermining the epistemic capacities of others from whom one might learn. Moreover, in order to properly assess someone's trustworthiness as a source of testimony, we must be able to utilize, "the perceptual deliverances of a well-trained *testimonial sensibility*."[19] Fricker explains that a testimonial sensibility is analogous to an ethical sensibility in that it is a "non-inferential judgment" of the trustworthiness of the speaker which is honed through "internalizing" (testimonial) experience. Given this situation, it is vital for our ability to be knowers that we recognize that

> the presence of identity prejudice in the collective social imagination is an endemic hazard in the ongoing training of testimonial sensibility.[20]

Fricker calls the means applied by one's testimonial sensibility to combat this hazard "testimonial justice." What is interesting to note about testimonial justice is that it is a "hybrid" virtue that is both intellectual and ethical, since

> considered either as an intellectual virtue or as an ethical virtue [testimonial justice] contains the very same […] motivation: to neutralize prejudice in one's credibility judgment.[21]

Even if one does not accept Fricker's argument for a Nussbaumean perceptual and emotional response to testimonial situations, nevertheless, we can see that if our ability to judge testimony is to function properly, we must be equipped with the ethical/ epistemic ability to overcome our social and individual prejudices where they interfere with the operation of our testimonial sensibility.

C. Hermeneutic injustice

In addition to the problems with testimony, another form of epistemic injustice that Fricker points out is "hermeneutic injustice," in which, "a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences."[22] In this case, there are basic problems in society which hamper

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19. *Ibid*, p. 71.
20. *Ibid*., p. 86.
21. *Ibid*., p. 122.
22. *Ibid*., p. 1.

the ability to know. These problems go beyond even a basic "distributive unfairness in respect of epistemic goods such as information and education"[23] that we might admit as central to justice but consider only secondarily as a matter of epistemology. In cases of hermeneutic injustice, *ignorance* becomes a form of power. For example, before the term was coined, both the perpetrator of sexual harassment and its victim lacked knowledge of the concept and thus were subject to a certain kind of harm. (In the case of the harasser, the lack of this knowledge is a cause of the harm of not fully developing ethically as one might ostensibly like.) However, the harm caused by this ignorance falls disproportionately on the socially unempowered. Accordingly, there may be systematic social forces in place that ensure that the ignorance is not remedied, since its existence benefits the powerful. Even where such active forces do not exist, nevertheless, all things being equal, there will still be a passive force against the remedying of the ignorance, since the material resources that the marginalized have to bring to bear to the alleviation of the conceptual deficit are fewer than those possessed by the powerful. Accordingly, in order for our stock of knowledge to be increased, it is incumbent upon those interacting with others who may be suffering from hermeneutic injustice to be "reflexively aware of how the relation between his social identity and that of the speaker is impacting on the intelligibility to him of what she is saying how she is saying it"[24] and accordingly "to drop the presumption against acceptance, and also to assume some increased burden of seeking corroborating evidence."[25] Such behavior is, like testimonial justice, a hybrid virtue directed both at being able to know more and being able to be just toward others.

D. Individual goodness

However, it might be objected that while ethical knowledge is needed to conduct inquiry, this does not mean that one must be an ethically good person to be a good

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[23.] *Ibid.*
[24.] *Ibid.*, p. 169.
[25.] *Ibid.*, p. 172.

knower. To be sure, the relationship between ethical goodness and epistemic goodness is not one-to-one, since there are many cases of evil but knowledgeable people or good but ignorant people. Sarah Hoagland in "Resisting Rationality," for example, gives the example of anthropologist Caroline Bledsoe, who used her ability to listen sensitively to reports about the women of Gambia in order to learn that women there sometimes use birth control pills in order to increase their overall fertility and recommend to aid agencies more careful oversight in order to regulate the population growth of the region. In effect, she was advocating withholding birth control for the women there, so that they would die in childbirth and thus have fewer children.[26] In this case, it may seem that Bledsoe has become a good knower without becoming a good person. However, in doing so, Bledsoe has betrayed the people of Gambia in a way that will undermine future relations with them, just as, to use an example of Scheman's, in the United States, the more people in the African-American community considered AIDS to have been an "engineered microorganism" because their trust was betrayed in the Tuskegee experiments of 1932–1972. Scheman interprets Hoagland's call for "epistemological separatism" as matter of broken trust and remarks,

> We may be barred from pursuing more objective knowledge so long as the conditions of trust are lacking—so long, that is, as some pieces of the perspectival puzzle cannot be added to dominant accounts without betraying those whose perspectives they are.[27]

Accordingly, though there may be cases like Dr. Mengele or Imperial Japan's Unit 731 where being evil allows one to learn otherwise unlearnable things, nevertheless, as a whole, such methods damage one's ability to be a knower, both for practical reasons (such as that an unethical individual cannot effectively collaborate with others, as shown by Lysenkoism, and that being evil distracts one from the act of doing research, as shown by Mengele) and for the theoretically fundamental reason that one's ability to

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[26.] Hoagland, pp. 135–7.
[27.] Scheman, p. 41.

be a *justified* knower relies on the trust of others. As such, we cannot only think about knowing in terms ethical individuals, but we must also think about ethics of the political structures in which individuals interact and how those structures enhance or damage the justified attribution of trust.

IV. A community of inquiry as a good community

In cases of testimonial injustice and hermeneutic injustice, one's ability to come to know cannot be exercised either because the person one is taking testimony from is oppressed (as in the case of testimonial injustice) or because one loses confidence in one's ability to be a knower (as in the case where one repeatedly suffers a testimonial injustice) or because one is oppressed (as in the case of hermeneutic injustice). What all of these cases point toward is the normative importance for epistemology of the existence of a certain kind of social atmosphere in which knowledge can be cultivated. While Fricker does acknowledge the role of systemic forces in perpetrating epistemic injustices, she does not emphasize the need for social change in addition to personal virtues in order to redress some of these harms. However, Helen Longino in *The Fate of Knowledge*, advocates "contextual empiricism" by pointing out that "the practices which are generally accepted as yielding knowledge are social practices"[28] as a step toward dissolving the dichotomy between the view of scientific acceptability as purely sociological or the view of science as purely corresponding to the world. Accordingly, Longino criticizes those who separate the social and cognitive aspects of knowing and lays out four social norms for "assur[ing] the effectiveness of discursive interactions"[29]: Adequate venues for criticism, adequate uptake of criticism by the community, public standards for discourse, and the (tempered) intellectual equality of the participants of the dialogue. The goal of these norms is guaranteeing the ability of the community to create sociological pressures which over time help to keep scientific knowledge well anchored to the world.

[28.] Longino, p. 99.
[29.] *Ibid*., p. 129. Norms on pp. 129–31.

Longino's project is, however, somewhat problematic, since her definition of "knowledge as content" requires that the content be "epistemically acceptable" in a particular community and her definition of "epistemically acceptable" requires that a community meet her normative criteria for discourse,[30] which would suggest that individuals who are not members of a scientific community cannot know (or at the very least, the conditions of knowledge are not well met outside of "modern" civilizations). This result, however, seems perverse, since even communities that do not match all of Longino's criteria can still be made up of individuals who possess valuable knowledge, so long as the social mechanisms for vouchsafing epistemic inquiry that the communities do have are conducive to the goals implicit in the lived values of the community, such that their justifications for the claim to knowledge are really able to function as trustworthy justifications.

Moreover, even if the conditions of knowledge are relaxed, so long as the definition of knowing involves some content being accepted by a particular community, there will be no way to alleviate hermeneutic injustice, since the powerful in any community will be resistant to the claims of the marginalized (unless the society is already utopianly democratic). While Longino tries to defuse the tension between the potential for hermeneutic injustice and the need for the justification of knowledge to be social by having the tempered equality of the community be a normative condition for inquiry, it is not clear given her disclaimers and caveats on the need for equality that her formulation is sufficiently clear as to force the central groups to acknowledge the ways in which they are compromising the ability of marginalized groups to trust their judgments.

Nevertheless, Longino's work does have value as a way of pointing out the importance of general social conditions to the promotion of what Sandra Harding has called "strong objectivity." While Longino criticizes Harding's position as advocating mere

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30. *Ibid.*, p. 135–6.

"reflexivity" and self-examination,[31] a more nuanced reading of Harding is very useful for directing our attention to the ways in which the scientific community does not identify,

> social concerns and interests shared by all (or virtually all) of the observers, nor does it encourage seeking out observers whose social beliefs vary in order to increase the effectiveness of the scientific method.[32]

Because science has heretofore failed in this way, it is especially crucial going forward that we strengthen our objectivity by, as Longino suggests, adopting social norms that tend to increase the usefulness of scientific inquiry and by, as Harding suggests, reflexively examining ourselves so that we do not unconsciously fit our inquiry to the demands of the socially powerful but endeavor to bring the unique knowledge and knowledge capacities of marginalized groups to the center of society where they can be broadly beneficial to society as a whole. In order to undertake either of these projects then, we see that it is vitally necessary that we consider the ethical interaction of both ourselves and our research community in order to build robust procedures for objectivity. As Scheman points out, we must minimally be able to trust those who are in authority to provide us accurate scientific results. Without this trust, we cannot hope to build a scientific or social consensus. However, if trust is a condition of inquiry, then a certain code of ethics must prevail in society, since it is clear that real trust is founded on the trustworthiness of the participants in an exchange. Without bringing our ethical and political norms into play, we cannot see if our attributions of objectivity to a knower is properly warranted, since, not only does the claim of objective bring with it social power, the claim of objectivity moreover rests on the assumption of a certain productive arrangement of the social space such that individuals are sufficiently empowered to really test the impact of the claims they are making and sufficiently motiv-

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[31.] *Ibid.*, pp. 164–7. I would dispute this characterization of Harding.
[32.] Harding, p. 129.

ated to act in a manner worthy of the trust of their fellow members of society. The only arrangement for a society that can hope to fulfill these requirements for objectivity is an ethical one. Hence, ethical knowledge must have an impact on the practice epistemology through its recommendations for society as well as the individual. This is also the reason why Longino lists "uptake" as one of her normative social criteria for an objective community.[33]

Another difficulty for Longino's project is that although she attempts to avoid the pluralist/monist debate in the metaphysics of knowledge, her account nevertheless assumes that the pursuit of science-like objectives is a goal held by all societies (even if there might happen to be a variety of non-overlapping means to this end), and thus her criteria for objective knowledge production are normative for all societies. However, as Heldke and Kellert write,

> objectivity involves an obligation to respond to members of "the public" when they issue challenges to the validity or *usefulness of the inquiry being pursued*.[34]

As Mary Tiles explains in "A Science of Mars or of Venus?" an important shift that took place in the early modern period was a shift *away* from the "disinterested" pursuit of truth toward a Baconian view of knowledge as a means of control.[35] However, even if we retain a Baconian view of science (and we may choose not to), we are still entitled to question the relevance of the inquiry pursued by science, as for example in the case of the Davy lamp, which "solved" the problem of mine illumination while increasing the problem of mine explosions.[36] Accordingly the "usefulness of the inquiry being pursued" is an entirely legitimate topic of negotiation within and among the many different communities of inquiry that make up a society. Again, if better knowledge is more valuable knowledge, we need to ask in what ways it is more valuable. To return

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[33.] Longino, p. 129.
[34.] Heldke and Kellert, p. 363. Emphasis mine.
[35.] Tiles, p. 301.
[36.] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

to Scheman and Hoagland's example, from the perspective of the women of Gambia, it is not more valuable to reduce the fertility of sub-Saharan Africa than it is for the women there to survive childbirth. Building a social framework in which Westerners and Gambian women can not only interact successfully but also justifiably trust one another then will depend on the mutual understanding of one another's different goals. In other words, the pursuit of knowledge requires a society in which the members may rationally trust one another. However, if the goals of Western science are held as sacrosanct commitments for our theory of knowledge, then individuals with other goals may not be able to rationally trust the claims with which they are presented. As such, we may need to be willing to entertain other criteria besides those suggested by Longino if we find ourselves in a situation in which the goals of those on whom our claims will have an impact are different from conventional science.

By thinking about objectivity in terms of socially justifiable trust, we are able to see that a knowledge claim is a commitment to those who will be impacted by that claim, and it is this epistemic/ethical responsibility to others that gives what is held to be knowledge its normative force as something that should be accepted by all members of a community. Accordingly, such claims must take into account the goals of the various members of that community, even where they are pluralistic.

V. Social role of the knower in epistemology

If knowledge gains its assent commanding normativity from the trustworthiness of members in a society to one another, then an understanding of who those members are and how their responsibilities to one another can be demonstrated will be important to the resolution to the difficulties left in Longino's account. The role of the subject who knows cannot be omitted from epistemology without doing damage to its scope in practical applicability and its claim to normativity, since it is knowledge of the subject and

the role of the subject in society that undergirds the sense of responsibility inherent in an assertion of knowledge.

Traditionally, the word "objective" has been synonymous with dispassionate or disinterested. Such an objective perspective is one that all observers "should" take when confronted with evidence. Nevertheless, careful studies of the purportedly objective pursuit of knowledge by scientists often turn up hidden biases that corrupt their findings. However, as Tiles points out, even if it were the case that such a view from nowhere were realistically achievable, "[a]bsence of values is not a precondition of objectivity,"[37] or for that matter, a guarantor. To say that a particular way of looking at the world is the single objective way of looking at the world is an attempt to force others to judge the claims by the knower from that perspective. However, while such claims may be epistemically acceptable within the particular community that feels it has grasped the neutral perspective, if the political aims of that community are hostile or otherwise suspect, not only will members of other communities be wary of such claims, they *should* be wary about such claims, since their source is not trustworthy.

Solving these difficulties with the traditional notion of objectivity requires acknowledging that the knowing self is a socially-located, embodied self. This means that we must consider the subject as a knower who exists in a certain socially located perspective and as an embodied being with preexisting relationships to other members of a society. However it is not always the case that there is a healthy social relationship between the one making a claim and others on whom the claim will have an impact. Hence, if claims to knowledge are to be cross-culturally normative or normative even for different groups within a single culture that resist the claim, there must be a way of bridging the space between these groups that does not violate their claim to autonomy, since such a

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[37.] *Ibid.*, p. 304.

violation would entail a lack of responsiveness and responsibility to those on who the knowledge claim is imposed.

Accordingly, in order to make our commitments to those who are impacted by our claims more robust, what is needed is not the depersonalized, dispassionate, and detached perspective advocated by traditional positivists, nor a homogenizing view that claims to blend all perspectives into a single grand synthesis (since the synthesis cannot be trusted by those who cling to their unsynthesized perspectives), but a perspective that acknowledges its own partiality and interdependence on other views, which is mediated by an ethical understanding of our position toward others in society. In other words, we must be able to apply the "Copper Rule": "Do unto others what they would have us do unto them."[38] Regardless of whether metaphysical realism is correct or incorrect, objectivity in actual practice always rests on a subjective capacity for putting oneself in the shoes of others in order to find an inter-subjective perspective. Accordingly, an objective claim must rest not only on the facts about the world (though these are important, since without them our claims will not be of use to others as they will be contradicted by experience) but also on an understanding of to whom we are speaking and why we think they should listen to us. An attempt to cultivate knowledge without regard for cultural and ethical values will fail for several reasons, not the least of which are the impossibility of the task and the literal "worthlessness" of the goal. Since all perspectives are views from somewhere, what is needed is a view that is able to take on the perspectives of others responsively to create a strong objectivity.

One way of creating such bridges between persons is given by María Lugones in "Playfulness, 'World'-Traveling, and Loving Perception." In it, Lugones describes how her own relationship to her mother was damaged by what she calls "arrogant perception." Because she internalized a particularly objectifying way of looking at her mother,

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[38.] Copper Rule taken from Huang, p. 394. Notice that the "would" of "would have us do" indicates what they "would" advocate after a thoughtful reflection about their own position and values.

Lugones, "saw her as logically independent from me,"[39] and this damaged her ability to see things from her mother's point of view, which negatively affected their relationship. To overcome this mode of perception, it was necessary for her to recognize how her own perception of herself changed when she entered into different social "worlds," and then utilize that ability to recognize the change in herself as a way of generating empathy for other as a form of love:

> To love my mother was not possible for me while I retained a sense that it was fine for me and others to see her arrogantly. Loving my mother also required that I see with her eyes, that I go into my mother's world, that I see both of us as we are constructed in her world, that I witness her own sense of herself from within her world. Only through this traveling to her "world" could I identify with her because only then could I cease to ignore her and to be excluded and separate from her. Only then could I see her as a subject even if one subjected and only then could I see how meaning could arise fully between us. We are fully dependent on each other for the possibility of being understood and without this understanding, we do not make sense, we are not solid, visible, integrated; we are lacking. So traveling to each other's "worlds" would enable us to *be* through *loving* each other. [40]

What Lugones came to recognize through world-traveling was that just as she formerly believed her mother to be unnecessary to her, as a Hispanic women in an Anglo society, "Their world and their integrity did not require me at all."[41] Or at least, this was the self-perception of the society. In reality however, all of us are profoundly dependent on others for our own self-indentities, and even when she is in a society that marginalizes her, she is still a part of that society. By utilizing her social location as a woman in the margin of society who was also required to see herself as she was seen from the center, Lugones turned her socially disadvantageous position into a epistemically advantageous standpoint and gained an empathic ability that served to heighten her general epistemic abilities.

One major difficulty for creating an epistemology for a pluralistic and multi-cultural society is that, as explained above, knowledge claims are normative demands on others,

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[39.] Lugones, p. 279.
[40.] *Ibid.*, p. 280.
[41.] *Ibid.*, p. 279.

but since others may not share our viewpoint, these claims have the potential to be injurious to them. What Lugones' description of playful world-traveling offers is a way to think about the normativity of knowledge statements that does not rely on the arrogant claim that, as a member of a certain social group, one is in a position to judge the claims of those in other social groups without therefore collapsing into a non-judgmental relativism. What is needed is a way of recognizing how our self-perceptions can shift in different contexts that will allow us to lovingly enter into the perspectives of others without therefore claiming the prerogative of dismissing their knowledge claims out of hand. It is only by taking seriously the claims of others that we can hope to expand the horizons of our own understanding and make our own sense of objectivity truly robust. The issue of epistemic relativism is parallel to the issue of moral relativism discussed by Fricker, who explains that,

> we are entitled to appeal to thought which *they* could have had, given their full ethical resources, but failed to. […]
> To judge […] others in this way is not hubris, for we can acknowledge that "could do better" will be our own ethical epitaph too…[42]

In the same way, when we put a knowledge claim before others, what we should be doing is offering to them something that we could have accepted as knowledge had we been presented with the claim when in their position. It is only when a society is composed of members who are mutually able to practice such deferential understanding that it is maximally able to provide a well-grounded justifications for its knowledge claims.

The perspective of world-traveling also helps to mitigate the problem of hermeneutic injustice. In cases of hermeneutic injustice, individuals lose their ability to understand the causes of their suffering due to systematic pressures that help prevent the formation of concepts that would help alleviate the injustice. Since the problem in this case is ignor-

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[42.] Fricker, pp. 106–7.

ance, it is not enough merely to ask those who are suffering to explain their situation, since that ability has been stripped from them. Even if such knowledge were formulated, since it would not be "epistemically acceptable" to the community, under Longino's standard, it might be rejected in spite of its great explanatory value for members of marginalized groups.[43] However, by adopting the standpoint of others in beginning our mutual inquiry, we may be better able to receive the new concepts that would eliminate the injustice when they are proposed. As Harding explains, what is done by a method like world-traveling in which deference is practiced by more socially powerful members of society toward more marginalized members of society is the provision of an avenue for knowing that does not presume to take away the epistemic autonomy of others and thus betray one's responsibility to them:

> Far from licensing European-Americans to appropriate African-American thought or men to appropriate women's thought, this approach challenges members of dominant groups to make themselves "fit" to engage in collaborative, democratic, community enterprises with marginal peoples. Such a project requires learning to listen attentively[…] educating oneself[…] putting one's body on the line for "their" causes until they feel like "our" causes[…] critical examination of dominant institutional beliefs and practices[…] critical self-examination[…].[44]

Hence, to be truly "fit" to know, we must be thoroughly aware of ourselves as epistemic actors with an ethical responsibility for the trustworthiness of the claims that we make and an awareness of how those claims should appear to others.

VI. Objections and practical considerations

In this essay, I have shown that epistemology does derive an *ought* ("ought to believe") from an *is* ("*p* is justified and true"). Accordingly, epistemology brings with it some of the ethical concerns that are concomitant with other normative fields. The practice of epistemology has an impact on the lives of others, hence it must be practiced carefully, so as to keep from doing injustice to them. At the same time, the applied practice of epistem-

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[43.] Longino criteria do provide that consensus about knowledge must not be created by oppression, but this only further decreases the amount of knowledge which members of the community can rightfully claim to possess. It does not help the marginalized find a voice.

[44.] Harding, p. 135.

ology requires a community of others in which our claims to knowledge are justified and found to be reliable. Accordingly, our societies must be structured in an ethical way so as to encourage an awareness of the responsibility to others that is inherent in a knowledge claim. Doing this requires a social commitment to the ethical requirement of seeing oneself from the perspective of others and being aware of the ways that social power and identity can affect our claims. As a result, the ethics of trust must pervade our epistemology.

One possible objection to this proposal is a variant of the Meno problem: if we must be ethical to be good knowers, and we must know what is good in order to be ethical, how are we to achieve either goal? One answer to this problem is that as socially situated beings, we are not, like Descartes' *res cogitans*, required to work out our values from scratch, but may iteratively refine our understanding beginning with the ethical and epistemic values we already possess. However, even if this somewhat anti-foundationalist approach is rejected, the position presented here can be defended on the grounds that it is no more circular than the problem of epistemology already is in general. Foundationalist accounts already need to explain away the circularities involved in learning about learning. The burden added by requiring that the origin of ethical knowledge also be explained at the same time is not too steep given the other considerations that push us into having to accept that an ethical outlook is an important part of epistemology.

In this paper, I have not emphasized the role that the physical world plays in grounding our truth claims, but only for lack of time and space, not for lack of importance. Similarly, any epistemological project attempting to import other values into epistemology besides the traditional ones is of course subject to the accusation of potential Lysenkoism or relativism, but I feel that the charges are inapt here. In the case of Lysenkoism, it is clear that the Lysenkoist policies were promulgated not out of regard for their genuine acceptability to others (and especially socially marginalized others), but rather out of regard for their apparent acceptability to Stalin and other socially powerful

members of Soviet society. Thus, the recommendations here are in no way amenable to Lysenkoism as it existed in the Soviet Union. Now, it might be countered that an excess of concern for "PC" or a valorization of "victimhood" might lead to a cult of victimhood in which certain communities gain dominance in society by proclaiming that they are dominated. Certainly, this is a possibility. Indeed, part of the Soviet strategy was for those in power to claim that they were only wielding their power on behalf of the downtrodden proletariat. However, in this case, an objective (*i.e.*, mutually deferential and responsible) look at the situation would reveal that the Soviet authorities did in fact exert enormous social control over others, and thus they needed to be especially deferential toward others, which they were not.

This leads into the issue of relativism. For the feminist authors that this paper is relying on for background (and for myself), it is important to be able to assert truthfully that women have suffered because of sexism. Accordingly, the position that "sexism is real for me but not for you" is entirely unacceptable. Deferring to others does not always mean agreeing with others. In the case of hermeneutic injustice, in fact, it is very important to be able to articulate something that society as a whole may not be able to understand yet. However, when we make claims like these, we must make them with an understanding of why the claim should be considered justified even from the perspective of someone with a different perspective and values. Hence, the project presented here is not about relativizing knowledge but thinking about ourselves reflexively and ethically in order to create claims that are not only acceptable to ourselves (which would merely be belief) but robustly trustworthy for others (which is at the heart of justifiability) and so, we may hope, true.

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