



JOURNAL ETHICS, ECONOMICS AND COMMON GOODS

N° 22 (2), JULY - DECEMBER 2025.

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ETHICS & COMMON
ECONOMICS GOODS

JOURNAL
ETHICS,
ECONOMICS
AND COMMON GOODS

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Journal Ethics, Economics & Common Goods, Vol. 22, No. 2 July-December 2025 biannual publication edited by the Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla A. C., calle 21 sur 1103, Col. Santiago, C.P. 72410, Puebla, Puebla. Tel. (222) 2299400, <https://ethics-and-economics.com/jeecg@upaep.mx>. Editors: María Teresa Herrera Rendón-Nebel. Exclusive use rights reserved No. 04-2022-071213543400-102, ISSN 2954 - 4254, both granted by the Instituto Nacional del Derecho de Autor. Technical responsible: Ana Xóchitl Martínez Díaz and Javier Joan Hernández del Ángel.

ISSN: 2954-4254

ESSENTIAL IDENTIFICATION

Title: Journal Ethics, Economics and Common Goods

Frequency: Bi-annual

Dissemination: International

ISSN online: 2954 - 4254

Place of edition: Mexico

Year founded: 2003

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Social and economic ethics is a rapidly changing field. The systems of thought and ideologies inherited from the 20th century seem to be exhausted and prove incapable of responding to the challenges posed by, among others, artificial intelligence, the transformation of labor and capital, the financialization of the economy, the stagnation of middle-class wages, and the growing ideological polarization of our societies.

The Journal Ethics, Economics and the Common Goods promotes contributions to scientific debates that combine high academic rigor with originality of thought. In the face of the return of ideologies and the rise of moral neopharisaisms in the Anglo-Saxon world, the journal aims to be a space for rational, free, serious and open dialogue. All articles in the journal undergo a process of double anonymous peer review. In addition, it guarantees authors a rapid review of the articles submitted to it. It is an electronic journal that publishes its articles under a creative commons license and is therefore open access.

Research articles, research reports, essays and responses are double-blind refereed. The journal is bi-annual and publishes two issues per year, in July and December. At least one of these two issues is thematic. The journal is pleased to publish articles in French, English and Spanish.

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RESEARCH
ARTICLES

EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE: A NEW FORM OF MODERN SLAVERY

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to show that though the modern conception of slavery includes loss of freedom of self-expression and violation of the human right to a dignified existence, it ignores a subtler form of slavery which is 'epistemic injustice'. Epistemic injustice is the result of a dominant euro-centric conceptual scheme, framed in terms of modernist conceptions of 'rationality' and 'humanity' and what is termed as 'scientific knowledge. Such a framework adopts a narrow view of who is a 'rational knower' and 'what is a source of rational scientific knowledge. Critiquing this framework, the paper states that epistemic injustice not only affects individuals but entire communities, more specifically indigenous communities, and their knowledge systems. Epistemic injustice is considered to involve three aspects: the involuntary aspect, the exploitation aspect, and the effective control aspect due to asymmetrical power relations besides the loss of self-identity, recognition, credit deficit, testimonial injustice, hermeneutic injustice, and loss of collective capability for human development. Considering Indigenous Knowledge systems and a relevant case study Ima Keithal (Mothers Market), the paper attempts to show that individual and collective epistemic injustice, in all its forms, affects sustainable business practices that lead to environmental harm and gender injustice..

Key Words: Epistemic Injustice, Modern Slavery, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Scientific Knowledge, Epistemic Injustice and Collective Human Capability, Environmental Justice and Gender Justice..

JEL: Z00

Introducción

The concept of slavery refers to the act of owning a person as property, particularly their labor. Slavery is generally associated with compulsory labor, and the party holding the slaves in bond determines where they are to live and work. The act of enslaving someone is the act of placing them in slavery. Article 1(1) of the 1926 League of Nations Slavery Convention, which is generally accepted as the legal definition of slavery, states: “Slavery is the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised.” It is considered that slavery is the violation of the human right to a dignified existence since it involves the loss of freedom of self-expression for the slave. In defining a minimum level of living that no one should be able to fall below, human rights create a moral framework that everyone should adhere to. In this context, Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights prohibits slavery and servitude in all forms. Slavery was legally banned worldwide in the 1990s when the term “death of slavery” was proclaimed. Even so, slavery persists across the globe in varying forms.

A comprehensive normative guideline on slavery’s current definitions is provided by the Bellagio-Harvard Guidelines on the Legal Parameters of Slavery (2012). The guideline defines slavery as controlling or enslaving an individual so as to significantly impair their liberty with the intention to exploit them for profit, use, or disposal. A common approach to achieving this is through coercion, deception, and/or force. (Mende, 2019, p231)

This paper aims to consider the case of epistemic injustice as a form of ‘modern slavery’ since it involves some essential defining features of what constitutes slavery. The concept of epistemic injustice and its instances may have been around for ages in different societies, but the term ‘epistemic injustice’ is fairly new in the discourse of Virtue Epistemology. The paper proceeds by first delineating the nature and defining features of slavery and modern slavery (Section 1). Section 2 delves into the philosophical context of the concept of modern slavery, highlighting the euro-centric underpinnings of this colonizing concept. Section 3 takes up modern instances of epistemic injustice and discusses the different kinds of epistemic injustices and their socio-genesis. It argues to establish that epistemic injustice is a form of slavery since it is a violation of human rights and human capabilities. Epistemic injustice not only affects individuals as ‘knowers’ but also as victims of epistemic marginalization. Section 4 takes up the issue of epistemic injustice caused by neglect of indigenous knowledge systems in business practice, taking a relevant case study, Ima Keithal (The Mothers Market).

Section 1 : Modern Slavery: Origin and Forms

The scourge of slavery has many forms. There is no single uniform definition of slavery. Prior to the seventeenth century, in European, as well as many other societies, slavery was a social status that used to

be ascribed only under particular circumstances, or to particular 'kinds' of human beings. For instance, slavery was often used as a punishment for convicted criminals or as a way of enslaving those captured in war. Classical social contract theory, which rejected all forms of tradition-based, naturalized authority and emphasized consent as necessary to the legitimate exercise of authority, provided a lens through which the master-slave relationship was simultaneously defined and made morally questionable by its non-consensual nature. In the view of social contract theorists like Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, slavery involved the non-consensual exercise of authority. (Davidson, 2015, p.28) Hobbes provides a very straightforward answer to the question, 'What is slavery?' According to Hobbes, people tied to shackles are slaves; those not shackled have consented to their masters' dominion and are thereby not slaves. (Davidson, 2015, p. 30) There has also been a suggestion that slavery reduces human beings to merely a thing that can be used to carry out another's will, while free and equal political subjects in modern liberal democracies are viewed as disembodied: rational, abstract, universal, individuals. (Davidson, 2015, p.18)

It is important to note that slavery and slavery-holder relationships have varied greatly throughout history and will continue to do so. Coming to modern slavery, it can be said that modern slavery is very similar to slavery in the past, but it also differs from it. A recent article by Todd Landman, "Measuring Modern Slavery: Law, Human Rights, and New Forms of Data" states that modern slavery shares several attributes with other human rights violations. As with arbitrary detention, torture, disappearances, and extra-judicial killings, much of the practice of modern slavery is hidden from direct view. Although workers may work in plain sight, the conditions under which they do so, whether they are being coerced, unpaid, or free to leave their workplace, are not readily apparent. (Landman, 2020, p. 311) By comparing modern slavery with slavery in the past, Kevin Bales, Zoe Trodd, and Alex Kent Williamson (2009) try to distinguish the two. Firstly, modern slavery is globalized, meaning that slavery in different parts of the world is becoming more similar. Regardless of where slaves live, their role in the world economy is becoming increasingly similar. The way slaves are used and the contribution they make to the world economy are becoming increasingly similar. No matter where slaves are located or used, they have remained disposable entities meant to provide cheap labor. The problem has further been aggravated by practices such as outsourcing, subcontracting, and informal hiring of temporary workers. Slave labor victims are readily concealed within the workforces of companies and organizations as a result of these practices. The lack of favorable labor laws in most countries have also contributed to slavery. Secondly, while the slave trade was a means of establishing colonies and empires in the past, today slavery is illegal everywhere, generally being conducted by small criminal businessmen. No country's economy relies heavily on modern slavery. Bill of sale and titles clearly demonstrated slave ownership in the nineteenth-century American South, but that is not the case today. A third change has been the reduction of the length of time slaves are kept. In the past, slavery was a lifelong condition, but today it is often temporary, lasting just a few years or even a few months. In addition, slavery is no longer based on racial differences. (Bales, et al 2009: 28) According to Bales, Trodd, and Williamson, today,

slavery manifests itself in four forms worldwide. Slavery in one form is chattel slavery, which is closest to old slavery in which a person is captured, born, or sold into permanent servitude, with ownership often asserted. Bonded labor, or debt bondage slavery, is another form of slavery. It is an extremely common form of modern slavery, where a person pledges himself/herself in return for a loan, but whose length and nature of service are not specified, nor does their labor reduce the debt. Thirdly, there is contract slavery. Currently, this is the fastest-growing and second-largest form of slavery. The system hides behind modern labor relations: contracts guarantee employment for workers in a workshop or factory, but in reality, they are enslaved when they arrive. Forced labor is the fourth form. Slavery is a form of forced labor, regardless of who practices it, but this term indicates slavery that is practiced not by individuals, but by governments or other official groups. Some countries, such as Uzbekistan, send school as well as college students to work in cotton fields for up to three months a year. The children have no choice and are paid little or nothing for their labor. Another form of slavery, ritual slavery, accounts for a lower proportion of slaves today. Ritual slavery is perpetuated by factors such as race, religion, and ethnicity. (Bales et.al, 2009,p. 33-34)

Though slavery has taken many forms throughout history, regardless of cultures and societies, the core elements of violent control and exploitation have remained the same. Among the many ways slavery and similar practices are getting manifested in modern times are human trafficking, child labor, forced marriage, debt bonds, child pornography, and bonded labor. These instances result from the violation of human rights and the loss of freedom that are the result of power relations that are characterized by discrimination along caste, class, race, gender, ethnicity, region, nationality, and their intersectionality. According to Bales et al, modern slavery is to be viewed as an oppressive relationship in which one person is controlled by another through violence, psychological coercion, threats, or threats of violence. In addition to losing free will and mobility, slaves are exploited economically and receive nothing more than their subsistence wages. (Bales et al, 2009, p. 31)

A recent discussion of the problem of differing definitions of slavery is explained by Kevin Bales, who notes that legal definitions seek to locate particular human activities within the rule of law, whereas social science definitions seek to describe them as social phenomena. According to Janne Mende, modern slavery has neither a clear definition nor a defined scope, but international documents, contemporary policies, activists, and scholarly perspectives all contribute to creating an image of it. As a result, modern slavery can be summarized by three denominators. First, there is the control of one individual over another, second, there is an element of involuntary involvement, and third, there is an element of exploitation in the relationship. (Mende, 2019)

Section 2 : The Eurocentric Context of Modern Slavery

Forms of slavery that maintain effective control and coercion over people and thereby exploit them have surfaced in a variety of forms in our social, political, and economic relationships. In most discourses about slavery, issues related to economic and sociopolitical structural forces as well as involuntary control relations have been discussed. The philosophical background that undergirds the essential features that define 'slavery' across periods of time and space, cultures and contexts is to a great extent eurocentric and can be traced to the views of philosophers like Immanuel Kant, Jean Paul Sartre to mention a few. This is evident from Sartre when he states,

"It is the enforcement by a minority of three million people of European origin of a policy designed to keep in slavery..... 14 million inhabitants of African or Asian origin or of mixed descent. These 14 million inhabitants have no political rights. They cannot vote, hold meetings or belong to trade unions....." (Sartre, 1966).

Historically, eurocentrism is what led to privileging and legitimization of certain forms of conceptual schema. "Eurocentrism can be defined as a cultural phenomenon which views the histories, life-worlds, cultures of non-western societies from the lens of the Western perspective. Eurocentrism projects Western Europe, Americas and Australasia or 'the West' as a universal signifier, and advocates for the application of a Western model based on Western values rooted in Enlightenment like: rationality, certitude, objectivity, verifiability, individuality, human rights, equality, democracy, free markets etc." (Gautam and Singh, 2021, p 154–155) ((Pokhrel 2011; Baxi 2002) It may be true that slavery, which was the result of colonialism and imperialism and which used to be expressed in the form of masters owning slaves, has ended in some form in today's world, but its place has been taken over by what Upendra Baxi refers to as the epistemicide or subordination of global south by global north power or even vassalage (Baxi, 2018, p. 25).

The eurocentric conception of human nature that was typically advanced to morally justify slavery can be found in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Kant's philosophy interweaves the concept of rationality and autonomy with a conception of human nature. Kant conceived of human beings as rational subjects rather than biological beings. Whenever he talked about respecting humanity in person, he meant respecting the dignity of humanity as rational nature. In speaking about humanity as a moral end, as something worthy of respect, and as something that deserves dignity, Kant referred to the rational nature of humans. (Neumann, 2000, p.288) According to the second formulation of Kant's categorical imperative, we ought to treat everyone including ourselves as an end in themselves. The dignity and intrinsic value of another person as a rational and autonomous being are respected when we treat them as an end in themselves. The concept of seeing an individual as free and rational involves recognizing that they are capable of choosing their goals and projects on the basis of moral principles known by reason and acting on a personal view of what is morally right. In order to respect the autonomy of

others as rational agents, we must respect their goals, projects, and actions, chosen according to their conception of what is right. (Gauthier, 1993, p. 24). Though Kant emphasized the rational nature of humans and how rationality made humans moral creatures, Kant was of the view that not all so-called ‘humans’ should be considered humans. For, in his view, many creatures (bipeds) lacked rationality and did not deserve to be called humans. This was typical of eurocentric thought. (Rorty, R, 1998) Kant’s philosophy provides some insight into slavery. Historically, slaves were considered to be primitive and non-rational and in the pretext of their primitiveness, they were denied autonomy and their enslavement was considered morally acceptable. Individuals who were enforced into slavery included those who used to be considered less ideal or more primitive forms of human beings, including women and people taken to represent a more primitive and earlier stage of human evolution. They were thought to be lacking in rationality, which invited rational conquest and re-ordering by those who were deemed to be the best examples of reason, namely elite white males of European descent and culture. (Plumwood, 2002, p. 7-9)

In his works, Jean-Paul Sartre distinguishes between two types of being: *en-soi*, or being-in-itself, and *pour-soi*, or being-for-itself. As per the concept of *en-soi*, beings have a definable essence yet are not conscious of themselves or the totality of their essence. If one were to treat an entity as being in itself or *en soi*, one would be treating it as an object rather than a subject. As opposed to the concept of *en soi*, *pour-soi*, or being for itself, refers to a being that is identified through possession of consciousness, and specifically, through awareness of its freedom and existence. If one treats an entity as being for itself, it is perceived as a subject rather than an object. Treating an entity or group as a subject has its own significance. Such entities are presumably viewed as free entities that can make decisions for themselves, thus choosing projects on their own. The treatment of an entity as an object robs it of the right to make its own informed decisions and forces it to follow the dictates of others. Modern slavery can very well be seen as a continuing tradition of treating slaves as *en soi*, or as beings in itself. They are considered entities not worthy of choosing what they would like to work on and what moral and conceptual schema they would like to adhere to.

A fall out of ‘eurocentrism’ was that it not only ‘naturalized’ the phenomenon of slavery but it also determined the contours of ‘knowledge’ itself in the sense of defining what could be considered ‘scientific’ knowledge, a ‘reliable’ and ‘authentic’ source of knowledge as also methods of determining what could be counted as knowledge in the first place. Knowledge forms which were in alignment and conformity with western values rooted in enlightenment like rationality, certitude, objectivity, verifiability were the ones which were accorded the status of scientific knowledge, relegating to the margins sources of knowledge that did not meet the set criteria, thereby also affecting the credibility of those who possessed such knowledge. Slavery in modern times, thus cannot simply be understood merely in terms of objectification and subjugation of some individuals under the pretense of considering them non-rational or being in itself. Modern slavery is also characterized by the subjugation of conceptual schema

of marginalized social strata within the framework of eurocentrism. This form of slavery however is less acknowledged.

In this light, Edward Said's insights (1977) in *Orientalism* are particularly valuable, as they uncover how cultural representations and relations of imperial power have profoundly influenced the West's construction of the East. A central premise of Edward Said's argument is the inseparable connection between knowledge and power. The West, he contends, systematically produced bodies of "knowledge" about the East that served to define, regulate, and ultimately dominate it—thus providing an intellectual and moral justification for colonialism and imperialism. Said's theory of postcolonialism rests on his critique of the fabricated image of the Orient, constructed by Western scholars, poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and colonial administrators. This representation consistently portrays the Orient as primitive, irrational, and uncivilized, standing in deliberate contrast to the rational, advanced, and civilized West. In his seminal work *Orientalism*, Said describes this as a "style of thought" based on an ontological and epistemological division between "the Orient" and "the Occident." For Said, the colonial enterprise imposed Western language, culture, and values while marginalizing and distorting the histories, traditions, and identities of Oriental peoples. What particularly angers Said is the way Orientalists have stereotyped and homogenized vastly diverse societies, erasing their distinct cultural and national characteristics in the process of constructing an image that legitimized Western domination. (Hamadi, L., 2014)

Section 3: The Nature of Epistemic Injustice and Its Various Forms

Socio-economic and political injustices have bred inequalities cutting across race, caste, class, and gender from time immemorial and various ethical issues surrounding such inequalities have been discussed at length for ages. But a form of inequality, one that affects our relationship to ourselves as the knowing subject and others as the known 'object' has not been discussed to that extent. This type of injustice is due to the play of 'social power equations' among individuals belonging to different categories of people. It affects, in subtle ways, the level of credence attributed to the knowledge or information 'imparted' or 'received' in the knowledge producing situation. According to Medina, "social injustices breed epistemic injustices"; they are like "two sides of the same coin, always going together, being supportive and reinforcing each other" and "take place in complex and diverse communities under conditions of oppression" (Medina, 2013, p 27). In that sense, social injustice and epistemic injustice are integrally related.

Although the phenomenon of epistemic injustice has been around for centuries, as a concept, with wide ramifications, it gained prominence in the writings of virtue epistemologists like Miranda Fricker (2007) and in feminist and race theories. (Medina, 2013). In this section we will discuss the nature of

epistemic justice, its various forms and how it can be considered as a form of ‘modern slavery’ based on what we have gathered from the previous section. So, what exactly is ‘epistemic injustice’ - the epistemic aspect of social injustice? Before we describe the nature of epistemic injustice and its different forms and their causes, let us consider some examples.

Is it not an uncommon phenomenon that due to racial and/or gender prejudices, the testimony of a black woman is given less credence than if the same was offered by a white male? Or, that the technical and other capabilities of women in general are considered less reliable and less accurate because they are more likely to get swayed by emotions than act according to reason? Or, that knowledge sourced from indigenous systems of knowledge is considered less ‘scientific’ than knowledge sourced from traditional/analytic knowledge systems. Again, testimonials are discounted if the patient is elderly because she may be repetitive and, perhaps, incoherent and slow. Often, in a classroom, the questions raised by a student who is poor, or a foreigner, or a person with disability are ignored or given less importance owing to a prejudiced perception about her class/caste, or immigration status, or not being ‘able-bodied’. This ‘lack of credence’ in each of the above cases results from certain preconceived ideas of capabilities arising from certain misconceptions and misperceptions of identities; in short, certain stereotypes that have their genesis in social conditions that have prevailed over a long period of time and that have seeped into epistemic relations obtaining between individuals and communities. Almost, inadvertently, we begin to doubt/discredit or discount their capacities to know, understand and express subjective experiences articulately. Needless to say, such stereotyping causes long lasting damage to the lives of individuals and communities. Inequalities arising out of such unjust situations are instances of epistemic injustice.

According to Miranda Fricker, epistemic injustice refers to a form of injustice that is ‘a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower’. As rational beings and in our capacity as knowers, we can not only interpret/understand our own experiences but also inform others about those experiences. In that sense, being a knowledge ‘giver’ and a knowledge ‘seeker’, both are integral parts of human nature. They are also important (as we shall see) for an empowered human agency and the sense of self-esteem. But, the natural ‘give’ and ‘take’ aspect of the knowing/ learning process is at times affected adversely by ‘social power relations’ that prevail in society on account of differences of caste, class, race, gender, nationalities, etc. In Fricker’s view the use of social power is to effect social control actively or passively through evoking a sense of ‘identity power’ (Fricker, 2007, p.13). Fricker illustrates how men may exercise social power/control over women, subtly or indirectly, by means using gendered ‘identity power’. (Fricker, 2007, p.14-15) And, this can happen where ‘identity power’ is determined by other stereotypes too that affect discursive exchanges in our epistemic relations. The exercise of ‘identity power’ in a highly male dominated society can cause women in that society to lose their credibility, i.e., they are not regarded as ‘authentic’ knowledge givers or knowledge seekers. This not only affects their levels of confidence to express their unique gendered experiences but, in the long

term, also affects their abilities and skills. Gendered epistemic injustice creates stereotypes detrimental to women resulting in a gender imbalance in some professions.

According to Fricker there are two types of epistemic injustices to begin with. One that she calls distributive epistemic injustice and the other discriminatory epistemic injustice. If education is a resource that should reach everyone then if certain individuals/ communities are deprived of this resource on account of racial/casteist or even gendered prejudice then it counts as distributive epistemic injustice. It is a well-known fact that there was a time in India when on the basis of caste, many deserving individuals were deprived of the basic right to inclusive education; the case of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar instantly comes to mind. In many conservative ancient Indian societies, the girl child was denied the right to education. Now, perhaps, distributive injustice is no longer that pervasive. But discriminatory epistemic injustice still persists. Two kinds of epistemic injustices fall under this category. They are testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice.

Social prejudices or stereotyping that harm the testimonial credibility of the information/knowledge given by an individual or community about their own experiences are forms of testimonial injustices. The examples stated above are all cases of testimonial epistemic injustice. Testimonial injustices that persist over a prolonged period of time have a detrimental effect on the human agency, human capability and sustainable human development of those affected. Their sense of self-confidence and self-esteem is lost. They start doubting their ability to understand their own experiences as also their ability to make their experiences intelligible to others. Consequently, other people also start failing to understand them. For example, it is not uncommon for people to say that the sexual preferences and experiences of people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community are beyond comprehension; that the experiences are not 'normal' or 'natural'. The deliberate attempt to cast their experiences as unintelligible results in a form of hermeneutical epistemic injustice. This typically happens in racial, casteist and sexual stereotyping and prejudice.

Cases of epistemic testimonial and/or hermeneutic injustices are not isolated instances that can be ignored. They have their genesis in social conditions which perpetuate such injustices against individuals and some communities, impacting the individual's life or the community's survival and development. These are no less grievous offenses than more familiar forms of socio-economic and/or political injustices. In fact, they are concomitant results in the domain of power inequalities.

Section 3.1: The socio-genesis of epistemic injustice

Inequalities arising out of an epistemically unjust situation have a social genesis. Both Fricker and Medina emphasize that the social positioning of an individual/community in the power equation of

dominance creates inequalities going beyond the typical socio-politico-economic inequalities and impacts the social practice of knowledge acquisition and knowledge expression. (Medina, 2013; Fricker, 2007) In fact, the socio-genesis of knowledge also affects the scientificity of knowledge. It is well known that the understanding of 'knowledge' as a phenomenon that is affected by the social positioning of the knower and known, as also by the context in which knowledge is given or received is opposed to the traditional conception of 'scientific knowledge' that assumes that the subject of knowledge is 'universal and culturally neutral' and demands that the object of knowledge be studied in abstraction from its specific 'social situatedness'. (Haraway, 1988)

For that reason, knowledge of the less powerful partner in the epistemic situation is regarded as having less credence, relegated very often as being unscientific, and therefore, of no value. Knowledge systems of indigenous communities is an apt example of this. But a socially situated conception of knowledge affords the possibility of exploring the inter-dependencies and interrelations of reason, power and epistemic authority, as also the socio-cultural origins of knowledge. In taking account of 'social situatedness' it can 'red flag' the inadequacies of knowledge as also the ethical issues that the interrelations and interdependencies of reason and power raise in the knowledge situation, and in the process, highlight the important interface of ethics and epistemology.

In addition to pointing out the social genesis and situatedness of knowledge vis-a-vis the social positioning of the knower and the known, Medina also makes other interesting points. He points out that the social positioning or epistemic stance of the knower and the known in the power equation, is not a deliberate one-time stance adopted by an individual in a knowledge situation. Rather, the epistemic stance that an individual or a community takes is something that it has learnt to adopt because of a prevailing environment of 'dominance' between the two engaged in this power relation where one is privileged and more dominant/powerful than the other. Neither party consciously takes on the stance. It is rather an attitude that becomes 'second nature' influencing the epistemic stance/attitude adopted in a knowledge situation. It is, as Medina puts it, caused by 'social positionality and habit-forming processes of socialization" (Medina, 2013, p.40). In that sense, it is culturally imbued and has an influencing effect on the parties involved. Both the privileged and the not so privileged adapt to their epistemic situation. In such instances of 'adapted preference', the less privileged party is comfortable and 'happy' in its subservient role and position and the privileged party is comfortable in its delusion (false belief) that it is naturally more 'superior' than the less or under-privileged.

Both Fricker and Medina attribute epistemic injustice to the power positioning (defined in terms of socio-economic and political power) and ensuing relationship between the knower and known where the more powerful is the 'privileged' and the less powerful is the 'suppressed' party. Medina also makes an interesting point. He holds that contrary to the belief that injustices are committed by the former against the latter, epistemic injustice is actually disadvantageous or harmful to the privileged and, sur-

prisingly, advantageous or 'beneficial' to the 'suppressed'.

According to Medina, epistemic injustice operates negatively both for the knower and the known because it stems from certain prejudices and stereotypes such as race, caste, class, gender, etc. How prejudices and stereotypes affect both the privileged and suppressed in a knowledge situation is explained by Medina. He points out that both epistemic vices and epistemic virtues are operational in instances of epistemic injustice. Knowledge gathering is a painstaking process that is harmed by what Medina calls 'active ignorance' that is typically exhibited by the powerful and privileged. The disadvantages or harms to the privileged class arising out of 'active ignorance' are threefold, viz, epistemic arrogance, epistemic laziness and epistemic close-mindedness. Epistemic arrogance is the attitude that one knows it all and therefore, can ignore the views of others; epistemic laziness is the attitude that one need not know the view of others since they are inconsequential. This creates many 'blind spots' in the knowledge process itself. And, epistemic close-mindedness is the attitude of 'closetting' one's own views and not willing to see the other's point of view too. These clearly are epistemic vices that hamper and derail the process of gaining knowledge. So, though the privileged are apparently in a more powerful social position, indulging in 'active ignorance' is a disadvantage to them. On the other hand, the less powerful are gainers of epistemic virtue in a knowledge situation though they are the victims of epistemic injustice. Medina explains how. In Medina's view, epistemic virtues are advantages that accrue to the suppressed class of individuals. These fall under the umbrella concept of 'Subversive Lucidity' and consist of three virtues which are - humility, curiosity/diligence and open-mindedness. (Medina, 2013, p. 42) He explains how these virtues are essential for gaining knowledge. Thus, Medina goes beyond Fricker to show how epistemic injustice is not a one-sided phenomenon affecting only the suppressed class in the power binary but is an undesirable phenomenon adversely affecting the privileged class too.

Section 3.2: Epistemic Injustice: A Form of Modern Slavery

One of the aims of this paper is to explain how epistemic injustice is a form of 'slavery', a subtle, perhaps, unintended form of slavery. We have already examined the different definitions of 'modern slavery' and how different forms of modern slavery differ from slavery traditionally understood. One can elaborate and add a little more to our understanding of modern slavery deriving from what Medina has to say about epistemic injustice and in that respect show how epistemic injustice also is a form of modern slavery. Let us take an analogy. When one is 'actively ignorant', one loses out on the natural process of knowledge acquisition which is characterized by humility, open-mindedness, curiosity and a non-prejudicial mindset. In a sense, one becomes subservient or servile to external forces that determine what we should know or not know.

Interestingly, in contemporary times, a significant factor that acts as an external force in influencing and regulating our lives, is technology. It acts as the 'external influencer' and inadvertently determines our beliefs, preferences and choices. For example, data mining and its use in influencing public opinion is a telling example. When an external force like the use, or rather misuse of technology, plays a significant role in how we think and behave, then that can also be considered as an epistemic injustice because it hampers or compromises free thinking, (essential to what it means to be free, and not a slave to some other power). Here of course it is not a section of society/ a specific marginalized community that is the victim of epistemic injustice, but society in general. That is the predicament of modern-day society that has become a 'modern slave' of technology. In this context, a more familiar example can also be cited. When a person forwards the 'forwarded messages' s/he has received, her/his own capacity to think through/ or verify the contents of forwarded messages is diminished. The person, out of habit, instantly forwards the message to others, and they, to still others. In forwarding messages, one is indulging in an epistemic vice that strips us of our own capacities to seek, understand, and verify the information we receive. It is as if our knowledge and our capacity to know are controlled by forces external to us and not by us as genuine seekers of knowledge. When an external force determines/controls who we are, what we ought or ought not to know, how we ought to or ought not to respond, we have become enslaved.

Both in the case of testimonial injustice and also in the case of hermeneutic epistemic injustice, our capacity to understand the experiences of others and our own capacity to express our specific experiences to others is enslaved by external social forces that consist of racial, casteist, gendered and other narrow-minded stereotypes and prejudices. As was mentioned before, these are not deliberate, one-time attitudes adopted but over a long period of time become 'second nature' to us, so much so that we do not see anything wrong or unjust in adopting such discriminatory stances. Such stances become naturalized and normalized. In the Nazi dictatorial regime, basic human rights were denied to some because the perpetrators of the Nazi crimes believed that those people were not 'fit' to be considered humans. They were aberrations to humanity and this discriminatory idea was the natural and normal thing to accept. There were humans and there were 'lesser humans' or 'sub-humans' who were seen to be irrational animals only and whose existence was to be subservient to the real humans. Like animals they had no rights, no freedom. Hence, they were reduced to being mere 'slaves'.

In the typical instances of 'modern slavery' like human trafficking, child labour, prostitution, illegal immigrants, the individuals have human rights in principle, but no freedom to exercise those rights. The loss of this freedom is the cause of their slavery. Similarly in situations of testimonial and hermeneutic epistemic injustice, the victims have the human right to acquire knowledge and express that knowledge freely but covert, external forces of oppression and suppression operational in the processes of acquiring and expressing that knowledge prohibit them from exercising these rights. The forces that create room for prejudices and stereotypical thinking have their genesis in social conditions prevailing in society. In this sense, we are slaves of external epistemic forces and hence, epistemic injustice is a modern form

of slavery. The three features of modern slavery (Mende, 2019) mentioned in Section 1 above also go on to establish that epistemic injustice can be considered as a form of modern slavery. Next, we will attempt to show how, like traditional slavery, epistemic injustice as a form of modern slavery affects human capability as understood in the capability approach to human development.

Section 3.2.1: Epistemic injustice and its impact on collective human capability

In order to draw some relationship between epistemic injustice and loss of human capability, we need to know how the capability theorists understand the concept of 'capability'. Sen explains the concept by first distinguishing what he calls human 'functionings' from human 'capabilities'. For Sen, the level of a person's 'functioning' is the set of what the person does and becomes by doing those things in his/her real life. And, 'capability' refers to the set of what a person could have done and become in life given suitable opportunities and freedom to choose amongst those opportunities available to him/her. To determine the level of one's capability is an important index to make interpersonal comparisons, i.e., to compare one's present condition with what one could have been if one had more opportunities in life and the choice to utilize those opportunities. According to Sen, if only 'functionings' were taken into account then that would mean "pushing people into particular ways of 'doings and beings' producing stereo-types and stifling choices. In contrast, focusing on capabilities creates spheres of choice where people could themselves choose the types of functionings they consider to be valuable." (Alexander, 2004, p. 454) As Sen puts it, "[I]n assessing our lives, we have reason to be interested not only in the kind of lives we manage to lead, but also in the freedom that we actually have to choose between different styles and ways of living. Indeed, the freedom to determine the nature of our lives is one of the valued aspects of living that we have reason to treasure." (Sen, 2010, p.227)

Capability, understood in the above sense, clearly shows that when epistemic injustice occurs, it affects people's 'capabilities' vis-a-vis their role as knowledge 'seekers' and/ or knowledge 'givers'. The victims of 'epistemic injustice' are, either deprived of opportunities because the opportunities are not available to them (cases of distributive epistemic injustice) or they cannot make use of the opportunities available because of fear, lack of self-confidence, lack of self-esteem resulting from the dominance of the privileged/ dominant group. They cannot live a life they value and perpetually get marginalized. In the case of hermeneutic epistemic injustice, the case of the LGBTQIA+ community can be cited. The community continues to live in the 'closet' for fear of being discriminated against because their sexual and lifestyle preferences are not fully and 'really' understood or recognized by the state and/or by the people. Their freedom to live a life they value is compromised. Similarly, when testimonial epistemic injustice occurs as a result of the biases held against the dalits, the blacks, the poor and women (when their technical and entrepreneurial skills are undermined) and people belonging to indigenous communities, their freedom and chances of living a life they value is jeopardized. In this way, in each case of epistemic in-

justice, the capabilities of the victimized are affected. Such injustices not only affect individuals but also the communities to which they belong. The community continues to remain in the margins, deprived of opportunities of human development although the resources of human development and rights to those resources exist in principle.

It is not that there are no laws against the root of such injustices. The laws are in place and the discrimination that results in forms of injustice are in violation of existing laws. Thus, despite the fact that the laws are in place, justice fails. This is well expressed by Amartya Sen in his distinction between ‘nīti’ and ‘nyāya’. According to Amartya Sen, a society’s justice cannot be judged merely by the rightness of its rules (nīti), but must also be evaluated by the fairness of actual life conditions (nyāya). He draws on the Indian philosophical tradition (notably from sources like the Mahābhārata and Arthashastra) to suggest that justice must be grounded in public reasoning and the elimination of manifest injustice rather than in the abstract pursuit of perfect institutions. Wherever and whenever epistemic injustice occurs, the laws and institutional frameworks that guarantee human rights may be fully in place; yet, the prevailing social conditions often fail to enable the lived experience of justice. Epistemic injustice, in all its forms, represents a situation in which nīti prevails but nyāya fails to materialize. (Gautam, 2021)

At this point, it would be interesting to note the connection between indigenous knowledge systems, their alleged ‘unscientific’ character, and the epistemic injustice caused to indigenous communities by not giving due credence to their knowledge systems. The connection between knowledge that was traditionally regarded as scientific on account of its rigor and objectivity, and rationality has already been discussed earlier in the paper. It is alleged that indigenous knowledge systems are not ‘rational’ and therefore not ‘scientific’ because they lack the rigor and objectivity and are not as well documented. Indigenous communities of the world that rely on such knowledge systems have been marginalized and the epistemic resources they hold have been neglected. But these resources are not only rich systems of knowledge, they are ecologically more viable as epistemic resources to be applied to understand the environment and its sustainable use. In the following section of the paper, we will see how the lack of acknowledgement of the authenticity of these knowledge systems has led to unsustainable human development both in business practices and in public policy and how this neglect is detrimental to our ecosystem.

Section 4: Epistemic Resources and Responsible Epistemic Innovation

In the preceding section, an attempt was made to understand the concept of ‘epistemic injustice’ and how it amounts to a form of modern slavery in terms of stripping its victims of substantive freedom which is an aspect of human capability and human dignity. This section will discuss how business practices and public policy in general can raise concerns of social injustice, and epistemic injustice spe-

cifically. The aim is to show that if business practices and policies governing them have to be equitable then the phenomenon of epistemic injustice also needs to be taken into serious consideration besides socio-economic and political injustices that already exist in societies. The discussion will include epistemic injustice that results in marginalized communities of indigenous people when their knowledge systems are ignored on grounds of being 'unscientific' and 'irrational'. When indigenous knowledge systems are not adopted as 'authentic' epistemic resources then business practices are not sustainable and result in environmental and gender epistemic injustice. Where these knowledge systems are given due credit, businesses thrive.

Epistemic resources are always expanding, a phenomenon termed as 'epistemic innovation'. New concepts, categories and other means and methods of better understanding our experiences of the constantly changing world around us are always springing up. These are 'vital to changing the conversation about social and environmental injustices' (Ottinger, 2022, p. 2). According to Ottinger, "Aligning epistemic innovation with social goals and values demands creating concepts, categories, and metric more adequate to the experiences of marginally situated people and helping those resources to become part of our social pool" (Ottinger, 2022, p.15)

For example, in Ottinger's view, the concept of 'sexual harassment' expands 'hermeneutical resources', and the concepts of 'sustainable development' and 'bio diversity' become relevant for environmental governance. Likewise, the concept of environmental justice as it is understood in the discourse of environmental ethics goes beyond the idea of social justice. In fact, the concepts of 'intergenerational justice', as also the concept of 'epistemic injustice' are additions to the ever-expanding repertoire of epistemic innovations. These are clear instances of what Ottinger terms as 'epistemic innovation' where a new category/concept springs up to understand the challenges of our changing situation and the experience of it.

According to Ottinger, epistemic innovation must align with experiences of marginally situated people. Marginally situated people could include women in some contexts, indigenous people, people with disabilities, elderly, the infirm or the poor. When epistemic innovation fails to understand the experiences unique to such people, it amounts to epistemic injustice. In this sense, Ottinger emphasizes that epistemic innovation must also be 'responsible innovation'. Quoting Fraser (2000) Ottinger says that epistemic innovation is 'an important ingredient in the pursuit of social justice' and that it 'has significant potential to contribute to the central goals of RI.' (Ottinger, 2022, p.2)

According to Ottinger RI or responsible (epistemic) innovation involves two things. First acknowledging the restrictive nature of "resources that one takes for granted, even when they are well institutionalized and seemingly neutral 'scientific' tools". (Ottinger, 2022, p.13) This becomes relevant in the context of indigenous knowledge which is generally dismissed as unscientific'. Second, it would involve "listening for the experiences to which one cannot relate, and recognizing others' attempts to convey them as

epistemic contributions.” (Ottinger, 2022, p.13) This would bring in diversity and heterogeneity in the pool of epistemic resources and facilitate epistemic virtue (Medina 2013)

It is against the backdrop of the idea of ‘responsible epistemic innovation’ that we look at the status of indigenous knowledge systems. The objective is to determine how in its ‘neglect’ there is epistemic injustice. What is required is the responsible use of such knowledge systems. In addition, we look at the case study of Ima Keithal (the Mothers Market) which is a good example of epistemic and gender justice that is also a sustainable business practice. It thus serves as an example of responsible epistemic innovation.

4.1: Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS): An Important Epistemic Resource

As a collective understanding of a particular ecosystem, Indigenous knowledge systems refer to that knowledge which has been passed down, often orally, through generations by the indigenous people living on that landscape for thousands of years. Traditionally, the term indigenous knowledge pertains to a collection of knowledge, know-how, practices, and representations developed and maintained by individuals with extensive experiences of interacting with the natural world. As part of traditional ecological knowledge, non-human entities are respected, human and non-human bonds are considered when making decisions, local environments are given priority, and humans are acknowledged as a part of the ecological system. (Von Der Porten. et al, 2016. p. 217-218)

It has been reported by Barnhardt et al that indigenous populations around the world have maintained their unique worldviews and knowledge system despite undergoing major social upheavals. There are many core values, beliefs, and practices associated with indigenous worldviews that have survived and are beginning to be acknowledged as being as valid today as they were decades ago. Each indigenous culture has its own way of looking at and relating to the world, and others. It is customary in indigenous cultures to construct their educational processes around observing natural processes, incorporating survival techniques, obtaining sustenance from plants and animals, and using natural materials to create tools and implements. Scientists, educators, and laypeople alike can benefit from the deep knowledge indigenous people possess as they strive to live a more satisfying and sustainable life (Barnhardt, et al, 2005, p. 9-10)

While some scholars (Barnhardt. et al, 2005) have emphasized the importance of indigenous knowledge, there have been many thinkers (Agrawal, 2014) who have examined the reasons why indigenous knowledge is not considered “scientific” knowledge, even though it has many similarities with scientific knowledge. The fact that IKS has been neglected as unscientific and not utilized in business practices is a matter of epistemic inequality.

Epistemic injustice, in all its forms and dimensions, is a much-neglected resultant phenomenon that is associated with development that is non-sustainable. Development that tends to ignore the vast resource of indigenous knowledge that is untapped and has remained in the margins for centuries on grounds of being 'unscientific', fails both on grounds of environmental injustice and epistemic injustice. Now, more than ever before, businesses are realizing the importance and significance of indigenous knowledge as a great epistemic resource.

Indigenous Knowledge systems throw up newer ways of understanding our experiences of nature and our relationship with nature. The concepts and ideas that encode these relationships have long remained in the margins like the indigenous people of the world. To attempt to discover these concepts and categories is a classic example of epistemic innovation that is also 'responsible epistemic innovation'. Indigenous knowledge systems are instances of epistemic innovation. They need to be a part of responsible innovation and need to be included in the framework of sustainable business practice. The inclusion of epistemic responsible innovation will achieve two much aspired social goals - environmental justice and epistemic justice. Indigenous knowledge about the use of natural resources for sustainable human development helps achieve both. It also promotes other social justice goals such as gender justice. This is illustrated by the case study of Ima Keithal where environmentally conscious women are using indigenous knowledge to produce and market goods.

4.2 : Ima Keithal: A Case Study in Epistemic Injustice

Business practices must recognize the importance of responsible epistemic innovation to address concerns of social and environmental justice where gender justice is an important aspect of social justice. Ima Keithal, or the 'mothers' market' is an 'all women's market' run entirely by women belonging to marginalized communities of the north eastern state of Manipur in India.

The Ima Keithal is a vibrant commercial hub where women from different ethnic groups – Meitei, tribal and Meitei Pangal (Muslim) – and different religions come together to share and manage a socio-economic space. Studies suggest that the market's female-only workforce originated as a result of the enforcement of the Lallup-Kaba, an ancient forced labor system in Manipur that sent men of the Meitei community to cultivate faraway lands and fight wars. The women stayed back in the villages, working in their own paddy fields, taking care of their household and selling their farm produce in improvised markets. This led to the creation of markets where women played a central role, the most important and largest one being the Ima Keithal. Ima Keithal shows how the resilience and efforts of women of a marginalized, exploited community have helped in not only securing socio-economic security for themselves, but also for generations to come. Over time, the women have been able to

sustain, rather, strengthen the age-old tradition and maintain the indigenous way of life. Ima Keithal is a success story of preserving the local indigenous culture and heritage, conserving the environment and adding to the state revenue by promoting tourism – all marks of sustainable human development. (Motilal et al., 2021, p.130-131)

Ima Keithal has provided the women of that region an opportunity to become successful business entrepreneurs and a forum to express their collective political will against oppressive forces thereby empowering them to take charge of their lives. Turning adversarial situations to opportunities for self-growth and empowerment, the women of Ima Keithal have proven that the collective will and power of empowered women can bring changes not only to their lives but also to the lives of generations of women to come. It is their resilience and their grit not to submit to submissive forces that has been the sustaining force behind the increasing number of Ima Keithals that are coming up in different regions of the state of Manipur.

This case study aligns well with Medina's observation about how epistemic injustices have fostered resistance movements for social justice and empowerment. (Medina, 2013) Through centuries the women of Ima Keithal have resisted and revolted against dominant social, political, economic and commercial forces that have sought to crush their abilities on grounds of gender and ethnicity; a double 'whammy' for being females as well as belonging to the margins. Being women, their ability as business entrepreneurs was called in question, a case of testimonial epistemic injustice and as belonging to marginalized communities their indigenous knowledge was questioned - a case of hermeneutic epistemic injustice.

Section 5: Three Challenges of Responsible Epistemic Innovation

There is a growing consensus that the inclusion of knowledge claims of marginalized communities in business practices is vital to effective business practices, and they are also gradually being incorporated into the process, as people are beginning to recognize that there has been epistemic injustice in a variety of areas. In the wake of human rights activism, public awareness is growing, and improvements are happening. Nevertheless, there are still challenges to overcome.

First, as Ottinger puts it, responsible epistemic innovation that pays serious attention to the 'experiences' of people belonging to 'marginalized' communities is often 'dismissed by dominantly situated knowers. (Ottinger, 2022; Pohlhaus, 2012; Dotson, 2014) As Ottinger states. "If hegemonic concepts and methods are taken by dominantly situated knowers as the only appropriate foundation for making new knowledge, epistemic innovations built on alternative ways of looking at the world become unrecognizable as resources for knowing. Any knowledge made with these resources can then be said to be simply wrong, because it rests on a failure to understand or appropriately apply the 'correct' epistemic resources." (Ottinger, 2022, p.13) This is termed as the "error problem" by Ottinger.

The second challenge is 'the data deliberation problem'. New concepts and interpretive frames need to be linked to data and new measurement techniques, and vice versa, in order for the concepts to have epistemic value as resources influencing policy. Otherwise, they would be dismissed as being "unscientific" or "subjective data". Additionally, the extent of data, i.e., larger data sets intensify the challenge.

The third challenge that Ottinger mentions is the "inclusion problem". As she puts it,

"This justice-oriented notion of responsible innovation is potentially in tension with certain ideals of inclusion. If 'inclusive deliberation' is taken to mean a process that includes all stakeholders and treats dominantly and marginally situated knowers equally, there is great danger that emergent epistemic innovations will be shut down as error or dismissed, to paraphrase Pohlhaus (2012, 722), as making something out of nothing." (Ottinger, 2022, p. 15)

Conclusion

This paper attempts to offer a scholarly analysis of slavery and modern slavery, in order to determine their natures and distinguishing characteristics. A key part of the analysis included illustrating modern slavery's philosophical context and emphasizing its Eurocentric origins. The paper then goes on to examine modern examples of epistemic injustice, in different forms, in order to prove that epistemic injustice is a form of slavery. Epistemic injustice not only affects individuals as 'knowers,' but also entire communities as well. There is no denying that marginalized communities, including indigenous and LGBTQ communities, have suffered epistemic injustice. The failure to incorporate the knowledge systems of marginalized communities into business practices has also led to epistemic injustice.

In conclusion, one can say that epistemic injustice is a form of 'modern slavery' which needs to be addressed and redressed through 'responsible epistemic innovation'. To counteract epistemic injustice, promote recognition, and advance social justice, epistemic resources that represent marginalized groups' experiences are needed. An epistemic innovation that is responsible is also needed to facilitate robust anticipatory governance and policy implementation. It is only then that we can alleviate this form of 'modern slavery'.

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No. 22 (2)
July - December 2025.