

EDUCATION AND EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

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1. Introduction

In the history of philosophy, education is a somewhat forgotten issue. Plato and Aristotle were both deeply occupied with the contribution of education to ethics and politics, and many major philosophical questions in, for instance, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and Mill concern what and how the young should be taught. (For perspectives, see Rorty, 1998)

Happily, education is receiving new attention in epistemology. This is especially so in the fields of social epistemology (e.g. Goldman, 1999) in which the social arrangements by which knowledge is transmitted are studied and in virtue epistemology (e.g. Baehr, 2011) that studies the character of the individual knower and the experiences and practices through which good intellectual character develops. Both social and virtue epistemology have a strong normative focus and see epistemology's task not only as understanding what knowledge is, but as promoting good knowledge gathering practices. Furthermore, both these fields are deeply sensitive to the sub-optimality of many of our ingrained epistemic habits and practices (on the individual and social level).

In her account of epistemic injustice, Miranda Fricker draws explicitly on both social and virtue epistemology to develop her account of epistemic injustice. (See, e.g. Fricker, 1998; Fricker, 2007: 72–81) In particular, she sees the virtues of epistemic justice as developing through a process of individual and social 'training' and locates the source of the vices of epistemic injustice in sub-optimal or downright bad epistemic training. (Fricker, 2007: 82–85) Amongst those who consider themselves education scholars first and foremost, it is these critical perspectives on the epistemic dimensions of inequality and exclusion and how they operate in the classroom that have struck a particular chord.

In this chapter, I will give a brief account of some work on epistemic justice in education. I open with a discussion of epistemological thought about education to map the terrain (Section 2) before outlining features of the educational context, specifically, that make educational justice such a pressing concern (Section 3). Next, I outline some responses to problems of educational justice in education (Section 4) before concluding with a discussion of three challenges for thinking about epistemic justice in education (Section 5). Discussion of these challenges can fruitfully structure further research in the area.

2. The concept of 'education'

To most, 'education' means a social system organised to deliver teaching – in this sense, education is most often associated with schooling. Alternatively, 'education' may refer to a process or practice – in this sense, the word means something close to 'teaching'. In both senses, it is important to note, 'education' means more than being schooled in the formal sense. According to R.S. Peters, education is a normative concept: calling something an education involves the idea that something worthwhile is changed about a person (Peters, 1966: 24–25) that would not have occurred through purely natural development or growth.

Let us turn to the *activity sense* of education in particular. What we call 'teaching' happens in many contexts, not only in schools. Teaching goes on whenever one person intentionally brings it about that another person learns something. According to John Passmore (1980: 22), teaching is a triadic relationship of the following sort: in any situation in which teaching takes place, there is always a teacher *T* who teaches a learner *L* something *W*. A number of important philosophical points about education can be deduced from this very bare definition.

First, the something *W* – the object of what is taught – can be many things. It can be a piece of factual knowledge (such as that Toussaint Louverture led the Haitian Revolution) or an element of skill or know how (such as how to tie a reef knot). It can be some other epistemic good like understanding (understanding trigonometry), or it can be a whole range of moral, aesthetic, political or economic objects (e.g. how to be good, what is beautiful, how to be a citizen, how to work, etc.)

A second point to notice is that for genuine teaching to occur, there must be an element of wittingness and willingness on the part of both teacher and learner. The teaching must be purposeful on the part of the teacher – there is no teaching going on if the teacher is not trying to teach something. Similarly, for *L* to be taught something, they must learn it as a consequence of what *T* teaches (or how *T* organises a learning opportunity) and not by mere accident.

A third important point about teaching as triadic relationship is that it has an obvious success condition, namely, *learning* on the part of the learner *L*. The teacher *T* succeeds in teaching the learner *L* what is taught *W* only if the learner learns *W*.¹ Teaching may fail due to a number of reasons, because of something *T* does or does not do, because of something *L* does or does not do, because of the availability of time or resources, or a number of other things.

This brings us to a fourth matter. One way in which teaching can be unsuccessful is if *T* is not *competent* to teach *W*, that is, if *T* does not know *W* well enough or is not otherwise well-enough equipped regarding *W*. The teaching relationship assumes that the teacher has some degree of *epistemic authority* with regards to *W* (Shalem, 1999; also see Cooper, 2008). Teaching of *W* goes on when *T* knows (or in some other way comprehends or has mastered) *W* sufficiently well whereas *L* does not know *W* sufficiently well and *T* then manages to move *L* from their lesser knowledge or mastery of *W* to greater knowledge or mastery of *W*. If *T* does not know *W*, or perhaps if *L* already knows *W*, *T* cannot be said to be teaching *L* *W*. *T*'s authority over *W* need not be complete – we need not imagine that 'teachers always know everything'. However, when *T* does not have sufficient epistemic authority with regards to *W*, then teaching is either liable to be unsuccessful or, *in extremis*, cannot even be called teaching.

The question of the epistemic authority of the teacher is important, because the theory and practice of education has had such a difficult time with it. As Michael Hand holds:

Anxiety about the teacher-pupil relationship is a key motivator of the rejection of transmission models of teaching and learning, scepticism about school curricula, and the emphasis on children as constructors or co-constructors of their own knowledge.

(2015: 328)

The trouble is particularly acute for critical educators. As Carmen Luke drily notes (about feminist scholars):

[A]lthough feminist educators may claim to have dismantled the master(teacher)/slave(student) power dichotomy of pedagogical relations . . . [f]eminist educators, as any academic on the university payroll, *are* institutionally authorized because they are judged and named, at the moment of tenure or hiring, as authorities of knowledge.
(1996: 293)

In fact one can summarise the dispute between traditional and progressive educational thinkers in terms of how they view and are willing to enact epistemic authority in the classroom. Traditionalists, one may say, are comfortable with the teacher possessing epistemic authority and are inclined to see the teaching relationship as one where that authority plays a crucial role in making learning happen. Progressives, one may say, are uncomfortable with the view that it is the epistemic authority of the teacher that drives the teaching and learning relationship. For progressives, the role of the teacher is not to be the epistemic authority about a certain subject matter, but to be the facilitator or midwife for the student's learning (admittedly this, too, requires a certain form of knowledge or at least skill – pedagogical knowledge). Both traditionalists and progressives, one must admit, hold that both teacher and learner effort is necessary in the teaching situation (this is the third point above). Yet many theoretical debates in education are conducted in terms of how much the teacher's epistemic authority with regard to what she teaches matters.

3. Specifically educational dimensions of epistemic justice

Epistemic authority is, in itself, an entirely normal feature of our cognitive lives. About many things, someone else knows better than I do – because they have been there as an eyewitness whereas I have not, have tried something for themselves whereas I have not, have studied a matter in more depth than I, etc. Knowledge exchange is driven by the very fact that some know more about certain matters than others do. Fricker (2007) acknowledges this point and sketches an account of epistemic justice that is not without the notion of epistemic authority, but in which the main concern is that appraisals of epistemic authority are made correctly and fairly. This has both testimonial and hermeneutic elements. Epistemic justice requires both that testimony is given the appropriate credit and that our culture's modes of thinking and speaking about the world be so as to give everyone the communicative resources to understand and articulate both their own experiences and those of their social peers.

There are a number of dimensions along which one can evaluate educational institutions and practices for epistemic justice or injustice.

The level of credibility assigned to learners (or to children)

Most obviously, one must evaluate whether teachers in a given educational environment give learners enough epistemic credit. Epistemic injustice would occur if teachers systematically gave learners less epistemic credit than they deserve due to some negative identity prejudicial stereotype pertaining to learners in a particular setting (or perhaps to children, in general). This may be because teachers take learners' testimonies less seriously than they deserve to be taken, or it may be that the dominant culture or the way educational institutions are arranged may privilege 'adult' modes of thinking and talk, leaving children at an unfair epistemic disadvantage.

Which particular learners teachers credit

Teachers may give more epistemic credit to the views of students from epistemically privileged groups. On the testimonial level, they may believe or praise such students more often due to their identity as member of an epistemically privileged group. On the hermeneutic level, teachers, but, more so, the school's culture, language and ethos may give more credence to such students' perspectives, engage more naturally with these perspectives and fail to comprehend the perspectives of less privileged students.

What teachers teach

On the testimonial level, teachers may teach the books and scientific, historic and cultural achievements of actors from privileged groups more often than those from less privileged groups. In the testimonial sense, one may regard this as teachers giving more credence to actors from privileged cultures; however, in the hermeneutic (and particularly *educational* sense), the selection of what is taught – what makes it onto the curriculum – has a deeper significance. Teaching a canon of ideas and works by actors from a particular cultural tradition makes that form of culture accessible to students; conversely, not teaching other cultural traditions forecloses students' understanding of that cultural tradition. Educationalists alert to epistemic injustice ask how decisions about the curriculum enable or block students' understanding of particular social experiences and encourage or inhibit the ability of students from particular cultures to express their particular understanding of the world.

Which students are admitted to certain courses of study

Where schools, universities and other educational institutions operate selective policies of admission, there is the danger that fewer students from less privileged backgrounds will be allowed to study there. Excluding those from less privileged backgrounds from a given educational institution as 'unfit' to be educated there is, if unfair, a testimonial injustice; it would be an example of students from some backgrounds being undervalued in their capacity as knowers (the beneficiaries being students from privileged backgrounds who already benefit from credibility inflation). It also has a more subtle hermeneutic working. Judgements regarding knowledge or expertise of a subject is often – and quite properly – made on the basis of academic credentials. However, if it is a feature of the educational system that more members of privileged social groups are admitted to particular courses of study in the first place, this may mark out some endeavours as being 'for' members of those groups and not 'for' others (compare the over-representation of men in fields like mathematics and philosophy).

Who becomes teachers and scholars

The question of who is admitted to certain courses of study both at school and, later, at university level translates directly into who becomes the teachers, scholars, researchers, leaders and figure-heads in academic fields. If members of a certain privileged group are admitted as students in certain fields more often or are admitted to elite educational institutions in greater numbers, they have a much better chance of becoming a teacher or an academic in that field. Again, we may find that, testimonially speaking, the voices of some teachers are heard (literally!) in classrooms and conference halls more often. Hermeneutically, their experiences and concerns may dominate and shape the character of those fields more readily, making it harder for those with unfamiliar voices to be heard.

Which teachers students credit

It is common that, when teachers hail from a less privileged background, they are regarded as less effective as a teacher or are held to irrelevant standards. (It is well known that female academics, for instance, are evaluated more severely than male academics on their looks or dress by their own students in post-course evaluation exercises.) Teachers and students *both* are subject to the same common implicit biases.

Which students other students credit

Issues may arise as to which students occupy positions of leadership (such as student leaders or sports captains, which students are asked to represent others in sports teams, debates, plays and artistic performances, and so forth).

Above, I have provided some examples of educational injustices that arise specifically in educational settings. Because educational settings have many actors – teachers and pupils, but also school administrators, parents, etc. – a very large number of possible epistemic relationships exist between members of these groups, and in each of these different relationships it is possible that people are assigned the wrong amount of epistemic credit based not on how much epistemic credit they deserve, but on who they are. When negative stereotypes and biases lead to people being undervalued in their capacity as knowers, this is clearly prejudicial. When positive stereotypes and biases lead to some others' capacity as knowers being inflated, this may seem less injurious; however, those not accorded the same epistemic status may yet be harmed by comparison. In the educational setting, where comparisons regarding what both teachers and students know and can do are constantly being made (in student exams, teacher evaluations, etc.), it follows that the possibility of epistemic injustice in both directions should be a matter of real concern.

4. Approaches to epistemic justice in the education literature

In the education literature, issues to do with epistemic justice have received attention in a number of different forms.

The credibility assigned to children

A number of authors are concerned about the credibility assigned to children by adults, quite generally speaking. Murriss (2013: 245), for instance, holds that the '[h]earer's prejudices cause them to miss out on knowledge offered by the child', and Carel and Györffy (2014)² hold that children, especially, are prone to suffer certain forms of epistemic injustice. Murriss offers a radical answer to achieving epistemic justice in education. She holds that the relationship between teacher and learner needs to be conceived in more symmetric terms. In particular she holds that, given the right circumstances, the child can be an educator as much as the adult (Murriss, 2013: 249–250). Rather than conceiving education as a process by which knowledge is passed on from teacher to learner, Murriss (and others, for instance Biesta, 1994) insist that one must see teacher and learner as making meaning together in the classroom.

Hand (2015) disagrees. As we saw above, Fricker stresses that epistemic justice does not demand epistemic equality between speaker and hearer (Fricker, 2007: 19; Hand, 2015: 329). That some people know more than others is unthreatening in itself; it is when our judgements on who is a proper authority in some area become distorted through identity prejudice that injustice occurs. For the same reason, Hand holds that the mere fact that teachers know more than their students or pupils is not in itself a problem.

As we saw above, epistemic authority is a principle that underpins the possibility of teaching as a triadic epistemic relationship. If a teacher does not have epistemic authority³ regarding some content at all, we may question whether they are in a position to teach it. Importantly, the opposite is true too: if one assumes that a learner is in no position to *learn* what is being taught, one may question whether what is going on is teaching. Take this example: a teacher of mathematics appears to ‘teach’ a group of three-year-olds calculus. The teacher knows full well that the three-year-olds are just starting to count. Would one seriously consider it to be teaching if the teacher knew that nothing of what she says or demonstrates is likely to be absorbed by the children? Just as the teacher needs a degree of epistemic authority to teach, so the learner needs to have and be accorded a degree of epistemic receptivity – itself a form of epistemic authority! – in order to be liable to be taught.⁴

Rather than questioning the very basis of epistemic authority, what deserves to be investigated are (a) what *is* the appropriate level of epistemic authority that must be accorded to teachers and learners to make teaching at all possible?, (b) how are such judgements about epistemic credibility to be made?, (c) what departures from this ideal are unjust and which not? and (d) how does the way that our educational institutions are arranged contribute to (or perhaps prevent) such injustices? As Sayles-Hannon holds, students (and, one may add, their teachers) need to tread a line between gullibility (blindly accepting the words of others) and extreme scepticism to ‘develop a set of tools for examining the reliability of testifiers’⁵ (Sayles-Hannon, 2012: 381). Epistemic justice in the teaching situation would consist in teachers being accorded the right amount of authority and learners the right amount of receptivity that they deserve in order to make teaching possible. On the longer term, one may hold that the very point of education is to make it the case that learners can begin to assign the right amount of epistemic authority to speakers generally and that, in those cases in which they are *themselves* the epistemic authorities, they assume this responsibility and discharge it well. From a social epistemological perspective, one may say that part of the point of education is to prepare people to take part appropriately, fairly and *justly* in knowledge exchange.

The value of epistemic diversity

Questions around epistemic justice also surface in debates about the value of epistemic diversity in education. The question is whether there are differences in the epistemic orientation of people from different cultural groups and whether epistemic justice requires that we either make special arrangements for those who hail from (putatively) different epistemic cultures or actively seek to include more diverse epistemic perspectives within our educational institutions. Indeed, since the US Supreme Court’s decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), ‘affirmative action’ or ‘positive discrimination’ in university admissions is often justified in terms of the *epistemic* benefits of fostering an educational community that includes many perspectives.

Siegel (2006) holds that there is already much diversity in the practice and study of education. Siegel does not equate ‘diversity’ with ‘cultural diversity’. What is of epistemic relevance, he holds, is the diversity we find in educationists’ beliefs and belief systems, research methods and methods of inquiry, and research questions and cultures. While applauding the epistemic value of this diversity, Siegel takes issue with those who hold that we should accept incommensurability between the different beliefs, questions, methods and general research cultures that scholars bring to the study of education (Siegel, 2006: 7). He holds that the benefit of epistemic diversity is best felt when these different positions enter into debate, thereby unearthing the strong and weak questions, claims, methods, etc. in each other’s armouries. For critique of other positions to be possible, however, shared epistemic standards are needed (Siegel, 2006: 9). What goes for

debate in educational research, Siegel holds, also goes for pedagogy, practically speaking: diverse views are extremely welcome in the classroom, but for anyone to be able to learn something from classroom debate, it presupposes that certain rationally binding conclusions are reached. For this reason, Siegel (1995) holds that even quite radical pedagogy requires realist epistemology. Carmen Luke agrees. She asks:

How can we sustain critiques of injustice, subordination, imperialism, or exploitation without reference to some forms of normativity, benchmarks, or feminist 'master narratives'? This . . . illustrates the paradox of feminism's relation to authority – its anti-foundationalist stance and commitment to contingent identities and knowledge, and yet at the same time its political and theoretical mission of critique and transformation.
(1996: 295)

Jeff Frank (2013) connects Siegel's views on debate between diverse perspectives to questions of epistemic justice. Frank agrees that relativism leaves clashing perspectives unable to influence one another (and, so, undermines debate, as well as teaching itself). However, Frank holds that Siegel's realism also leaves an important question unanswered: why is it that, despite the fact that it has available a good set of critical logical tools, members of the dominant culture often do not realise their own prejudices? As Frank writes, of the ignorance of the dominant male culture *vis-à-vis* something like sexual harassment:

[W]e need to more effectively understand the reasons behind dismissals of harassment as a step to creating strategies that address this dismissal in epistemologically justified and politically effective ways.
(2013: 362)

Rather than seeing epistemic *diversity* as a particular good, Frank holds that we should strive for epistemic *justice* (2013: 365). For Frank there is no general benefit to hearing many different voices as such, but the field of education must remain aware of the influence of power on who is heard and must take due cognisance of the perspective of those without power. For this reason Frank suggests that epistemic diversity is not a good in itself, but is valuable insofar as it can lead to epistemic justice.⁶

Distributional concerns

Ben Kotzee (2013) holds that debates about educational justice have mostly addressed questions to do with the *distribution* of educational opportunities, such as places at particular schools or universities or funding of certain educational opportunities. The literature on educational justice often sees education in terms of finite goods, the distribution of which is zero sum: granting a certain education to someone denies someone else that same education. While this may be true as far as, say, school or university places go, the distribution of knowledge is not zero sum as an in principle infinite number of people can share the same knowledge. The only limits on sharing *knowledge* would be the (still difficult) ones of how effectively to communicate this knowledge in ways that are not so resource heavy as to make the acquisition of this knowledge zero sum practically speaking. Where access to certain forms of knowledge require long, intensive or expensive education, access to educational goods may begin to appear zero sum; however, advances in information technology already makes much knowledge more widely available than ever before.

Kotzee (2013) holds that educational justice should be reconceived not as distributive justice, but as epistemic justice. He holds that epistemic justice in education does not imply that one needs to embrace equality of either educational inputs or educational outputs. Rather, he follows Elizabeth Anderson (2007) and Debra Satz (2007) in holding that the education system should be sufficient to a given level. For Anderson and Satz, that level is the education that makes it possible to take part in the politics of the country as an effective citizen; for Kotzee, the level is that of possessing sufficient facility with science, broadly conceived, that a person may comprehend and, where appropriate defer to, scientific expertise formulated for public consumption.⁷

While Kotzee holds that a sensible epistemic division of labour may result in even quite marked inequalities in knowledge between people, one may well take a more egalitarian line and argue that it would be impossible to achieve hermeneutic justice in society at large without providing substantively equal educational input to all. In particular, achieving hermeneutical justice through education may well involve an attack on elite forms of education that provides the children of some (but not of others) with disproportionate cultural influence in our society and that, at the same time, holds up a certain culture as a pinnacle of education and refinement. Further debate is likely over whether it is epistemically just for certain educational institutions to expand the boundaries of science (to the possible detriment of equality) or must pursue a more egalitarian agenda in the name of hermeneutical epistemic justice.

5. Epistemic justice in education: particular challenges

As we saw above, the nature of education as an enterprise makes possible distinct forms of epistemic injustice that can (only) take place there. However, the relationship between teacher and learner is – no matter how kindly the teacher – one of epistemic authority, and this raises tricky questions for the very notion of epistemic justice. To conclude, I will briefly discuss three such questions.

(1) What is the difference between ‘uneducatedness’ and suffering from hermeneutical injustice?

According to Fricker, one suffers from hermeneutical injustice when one lacks the conceptual resources to express one’s experiences. Those who are ‘uneducated’ (or perhaps not yet educated – I simply mean those who have not undergone an education, because they are young, have not had the opportunity, etc.) lack the conceptual resources to express their experiences: does this mean that all those who are uneducated suffer from hermeneutical injustice? Admitting so would erase the difference between those who have not (yet) been educated and those who suffer an active epistemic injustice. One could say that the reason why the plain uneducated do not suffer from hermeneutical injustice is because, in principle, the resources are available to express their experiences. Society does not deny these resources, the uneducated simply have not acquired them yet.

The problem is this. After years of rights struggles for less privileged groups (e.g. the struggles for black rights, women’s rights, gay rights, disability rights, etc.), there *are* now much more refined conceptual resources available for articulating the experience of belonging to one of these groups. While we need not think the struggle for women’s rights, for instance, is close to complete, today there exists a body of feminist scholarship that, once mastered, helps women to understand and articulate their experiences of oppression (and similarly for other identity issues). Does this mean that women, now, do not suffer epistemic injustice any longer, but should simply educate themselves in feminist scholarship in order to find the conceptual resources to express their experiences? No. Many people who belong to disadvantaged social groups cannot

effectively articulate their experiences due to having been educated in a dominant culture in which they do not come into contact with critical scholarship of the sort described above. If we do not call this hermeneutical injustice, but say that people in this situation are simply *uneducated* in the politics of their respective identity groups, we are losing something from the picture.

The question is this. How easily should we admit that a person suffers from hermeneutical injustice in an educational setting? On the one hand, everyone has a degree of responsibility to *acquire* the conceptual resources necessary to participate in politics; education demands that learners, of whatever identity group, must engage in intellectual struggle to become capable of self-expression. As has become clear, however, achieving self-expression is made easier for some than for others by the education system. The question is how much responsibility rests on society to ensure that everyone can articulate their experiences and how much responsibility rests on the individual student to educate themselves in those strands of practical politics that will give them a voice.

Perhaps a thornier question is whether *all* learners' experiences deserve the possibility of articulation. What if the experiences in question are wrong or bad? Would we demand of the teacher of the white male skinhead who despises immigrants that she makes available to him the conceptual resources or argumentative space to articulate his views better? No. Most likely we would see the teacher's task as that of disabusing the learner in question of his malign view. The same would hold if a learner's experiences were not wrong as such, but were merely of poor quality. Take, for instance, the example of the art student from a developing country who paints nothing but shallow and sentimental representations of life in her home country (farm animals, sunsets, national heroes, etc.) Is it necessarily an hermeneutical injustice if her art teacher instructs her not always to paint 'life back home' but to broaden her subject matter and mode of expression? Doing so would be a crucial part of practical education in art and can be done without denying the basic validity of expressing a sense of place or rootedness through art. The point is that we will need criteria to distinguish between when someone is suffering a hermeneutical injustice and needs to be helped to express their point of view and when they simply stand in need of what we have always called 'education' and to help them *develop* their point of view in a positive direction.

(2) How do we change the epistemic social imaginary without dishonesty?

José Medina holds that epistemic credibility is not a zero-sum matter, but that it is not entirely non-positional either. According to Medina, the 'social imaginary' that governs who is accorded epistemic credit makes the experiences of some more readily visible than that of others and makes the experiences of others unintelligible or invisible (2011: 22–23).

The point is well-known to education theory and critical pedagogy, which stresses how important it is not only to scrutinise and criticise the claims of the dominant culture to possess unbiased knowledge, but also to carve out curriculum time to teach about different cultures and to *valorise* their achievements *performatively* (by the example of what culture the teacher holds up or enacts in the classroom). In the multicultural classroom, one can easily imagine a teacher who, attempting to shift the 'social imaginary' pertaining to knowledge, treats the views of students from the dominant culture in a critical, questioning fashion (in order to encourage criticism of that culture) and treats the views of students from non-dominant cultures generously (inviting admiration of that culture). The question naturally arises when such politics in the classroom (however well-motivated) lapses into dishonesty or simply replaces one facile interpretation of a culture with another. David Cooper, for instance, cautions that, were one to demand that teachers must always respect and accept the point of view of the student, this would lead to an automatic

disrespect for the teacher's own point of view and an abandonment of the ideal that the teacher should be truthful to her subject as she understands it (2008: 83).

Is treating the views of members of the non-dominant culture with kid gloves (i.e. too generously) not itself unjust? Some may hold that the less privileged cannot possibly receive too much epistemic credit. The problem is that part of the aim in the educational context is to teach respect for evidence and respect for the strength of the argument over personality. Teachers may do those who are given too much respect a disservice by failing to teach this basic lesson. Students from the dominant culture, subjected to criticism in ways others are not, again, may complain of hypocrisy and, likewise, find their respect for argument and evidence undermined. The question is how to reconcile efforts to shift the social imaginary through the performance of teaching with the duty to judge students' epistemic contributions individually and not in terms of their culture.

(3) *The question of education's double epistemic function*

Thus far, we have regarded the goods that an education promotes as epistemic in the sense of true beliefs, justified beliefs, knowledge or understanding. However, education not only makes available certain cognitions to people, but can also shape peoples' epistemic character – education can be *transformational* in the agential sense. (For more on what he calls the 'edificationist' conception of education, see Kidd, 2015.)

Education's double epistemic function can lead to the following sort of puzzle. Normally, when speaking about epistemic justice, we hold that a person should not receive too little epistemic credit, nor too much, but just the right amount of credit that is due to them (Fricker, 2007: 19). In educating children, we do, though, sometimes have reasons to give children *more* credit than they are due. This is if we want to motivate them to learn (compare how we sometimes tell average or poor students that they are doing well or working hard or that they are making good progress to keep them motivated). More darkly, teachers also sometimes give their students' ideas *less* credit than they are due for some pedagogical purpose (this is the approach of the 'hard task master' who motivates their student to better work by constant criticism). We may even employ such pedagogical tactics in the service of promoting epistemic justice. In the social justice classroom, for instance, the teacher may deflate the credibility of those from epistemically advantaged backgrounds in an attempt to 'teach them how it feels', or she may inflate the credibility she assigns to those from epistemically disadvantaged backgrounds in order to provide a sympathetic account of their self-understanding.

Admitting that it is a possible pedagogical trick to give a student *less* credit than they deserve is not to endorse oppressive or demeaning teaching methods. Philosophy knows the type of the hard task master teacher all too well, and while the subject has its share of mean-spirited teachers, even the kindest philosophy teacher routinely holds up their students' arguments to far higher levels of scrutiny and criticism than anyone would encounter in real life. Likewise, admitting that one may, for pedagogical purposes, give a student *more* credit than they deserve is not to advocate mollycoddling. Both approaches will be attended by some successes and some failures. Over-indulgence can lead to complacency or arrogance. Nitpicking can lead to a loss of confidence or aversion to learning. Even so, it is in the realm of possibility that teachers can either over- or under-value the opinions voiced by students based on what they think is in the long-term best interests of the epistemic character development of the student. Departing from giving due credit to a student's views may even be in the long-term epistemic interest of society as a whole. If a kindly teacher (or a hard task master!) motivates a young prodigy to genius by over- (or under-) valuing what they say on occasion, this may be in all of our interests. What departures from strict

epistemic justice in the classroom should be allowed and which not is an interesting question for future debate.

Related chapters 1, 2, 3, 26, 30

Notes

- 1 The relationship does not go the other way, because *L* can learn *W* independently. Learning is a success condition rather than a necessary condition for teaching because it is also possible for *T* to teach *W* perfectly well, without *L* ever learning *W*.
- 2 Carel and Györfy (2014) write about the medical context, but the point generalises. See also Burroughs and Tollefsen (2016).
- 3 In the proper sense of the term – this does not mean real or perceived power over another, but proper, rational authority regarding some matter *vis-à-vis* someone else.
- 4 In the context of the distribution of education, Kotzee and Martin (2013) hold that the right to receive an education means little if it is not ‘exercisable’ – what will be taught must be matched to what the learner can learn.
- 5 For a more critical view, see Stengel (2012).
- 6 For more on the epistemic diversity debate in education, see Ruitenberg and Phillips (2011), Robertson (2013) and Smeyers (2013).
- 7 Compare Kitcher (2011).

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