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A Further Characterization of Testimonial Void in Dialogue with Other Forms of Testimonial Injustice

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## 1. Agreements or Quasi-Agreements

I am grateful for Shannon Brick's (2021) perceptive and stimulating critical commentary on my characterization of the phenomenon of 'testimonial void' (TV): a newly identified kind of testimonial injustice (TI) according to which "a speaker *withholds* epistemic materials on the basis of an epistemically and ethically faulty assumption that a hearer-to-be cannot do anything epistemically relevant with the materials" (Carmona 2021, 1; my emphasis).

I agree with a great deal of Brick's analysis, including her remarks that TV:

i) has revelatory implications for the virtue of testimonial justice (Brick 2021, 49), and;

ii) might be more difficult to detect than TI owing to credibility deficit (Brick 2021, 48).

Concerning the former, I concur that TV sheds light on the need to make sure that we become better sharers of knowledge and not solely better listeners. The first version of my paper had two main parts. Part I focused on the characterization of TV, while Part II addressed TV's implications for the remedy to ameliorate the expanded concept of TI. However, I soon realized that each part needed the length of a full paper and I therefore examine TV's implications for the remedy to ameliorate TI broadly understood in another paper which is currently under review. That said, I don't think that the pursuit of the virtue of testimonial justice is the best way to address the implications of TV regarding the remedy to fight TI broadly understood.

My reply will focus on Brick's remarks on my characterization of TV, the issue at stake in the paper that is the target of this exchange. After addressing the difficulties regarding the detection of TV in what follows in this section, I shall explore two areas of disagreement in the second section: one concerning the boundary between TV and pre-emptive testimonial injustice and the other concerning epistemic neglect.

### 1.1 (Experience of) Insult

I share the view that TV might *sometimes* be harder to detect than TI. Given that in TV *there is no actual epistemic interaction* between the would-be-hearer and the would-be-speaker, those who witness the injustice, including the victim and the wrongdoer, *might not be exposed to evidence* that someone has been wronged. For instance, consider that a prejudiced wrongdoer withholds epistemic materials from a would-be-hearer with whom they have no acquaintance in a case in which there is no interaction whatsoever. The wrongdoer could have *zero* exposure to their counterpart's epistemic aptness. Accordingly, there is little chance, if any, that the wrongdoer (or those who witness the injustice) can benefit from friction between evidence of epistemic aptness and prejudiced dispositions to act. By contrast, in cases of TI owing to credibility deficit, given that the hearer generally has the second move in the

epistemic exchange, “the very piece of testimony that she receives from the speaker might function as evidence (or counterevidence) of epistemic competence and/or sincerity” (Carmona 2021, 10). If there is no testimonial exchange, this kind of evidence is missing, “and lack of evidence makes those at the receiving end of the injustice more vulnerable” (10). For instance, victims are less likely to realize that they are the target of harm.

Focusing her worries on the would-be-hearer, this last point seems to be Brick’s main concern regarding the difficulties to detect TV. In her words:

Victims of testimonial void will, at least sometimes, be unaware of the fact that they’ve been wronged. Accordingly, it’s going to be much more difficult to track testimonial void than it is to track testimonial injustice, and this makes the former especially pernicious (Brick 2021, 48).

Brick’s discussion of the difficulties to track TV is closely connected to the central place she accords the notion of insult in her understanding of the phenomenon. Let me address her argument following its structure.

While making her case for the difficult detection of TV, Brick calls attention to TV’s counterfactual condition:

We ought to say that there is testimonial void whenever it is the case that, *but* for the ethically pernicious assumption on the part of the speaker, an individual would have been given some piece of information (2021, 47).

Brick (2021, 46) holds the view that my characterization of TV fails to identify this fundamental aspect of the phenomenon. Though my paper does not include the word ‘counterfactual’, I understand that TV’s counterfactual condition is entailed by my definition of TV as well as implicit in my examples and the discussion of the phenomenon throughout my paper.<sup>1</sup> For instance, consider the choice of the verb ‘withhold’ in the definition. The two meanings of the verb ‘withhold’ are “refuse to give (something that is due or is desired by another)” and “suppress or hold back (an emotion or reaction)” (Oxford University Press, 2020).

In cases of TV, the would-be-speaker *refuses to give*—in the sense of *suppressing* or *holding back*—certain epistemic materials to the would-be-hearer owing to epistemic vice. As I understand it, *withholding* epistemic materials for a reason entails that, if it wasn’t for that reason, you would have shared them. For *pretending* to exist, as we learn from Ludwig Wittgenstein’s conceptual (or grammatical) clarifications, sincere behavior is necessary (Wittgenstein 2004, esp. 35-36). Likewise, one cannot *hide* something that is always hidden, something that cannot be accessed (Wittgenstein 2004, esp. 35). In like manner, one can only

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<sup>1</sup> I am sometimes rather explicit. For instance, when discussing the interaction between TV and testimonial smothering through the example of Lola—a female academic who fails to share with her male colleague epistemic materials regarding gender inequalities in their department—I state the following: “when, other things equal, she would have shared them with a female colleague” (Carmona 2021, 8).

*withhold* something that otherwise one would have given. I would also say that one can only *hold back* epistemic materials that otherwise one would have shared or *suppress* information that otherwise one would have disseminated. In other words, one prevents something that otherwise would have occurred from happening: the sharing of information.

Brick (2021, 47) also states that I fail to identify the experience of insult as the primary harm of TI identified by Fricker (2007, 44). As a matter of fact, I have always had misgivings about the role of the notion of insult in Fricker's characterization of the primary harm of TI. I agree with Fricker that:

The epistemic wrong bears a social *meaning* to the effect that the subject is less than fully human. When someone suffers a TI they are degraded *qua* knower, and they are symbolically degraded *qua* human. In all cases of TI, what the person suffers from is not simply the epistemic wrong in itself, but also the meaning of being treated like that. Such a dehumanizing meaning, especially if it is expressed before others, may make for a profound humiliation, even in circumstances where the injustice is in other aspects fairly minor. But in those cases of TI where the driving prejudicial stereotype explicitly involves the idea that the social type in question is humanly lesser [...], the dimension of degradation *qua* human being is not simply symbolic; rather, it is a literal part of the core epistemic insult (2007, 44-45).

However, I am not sure whether the fact that one also suffers from “the meaning of being treated like that” entails, from her perspective, *awareness* of insult. Regardless of Fricker's own view, it can be interpreted that way. Observe that Brick (2021, 47-48, 50), unlike Fricker, uses the expression ‘the *experience* of insult’ to refer to such a characteristic layer of the harm of TI owing to credibility deficit. My feeling is that Brick's understanding of this layer of the wrong is more inclined toward awareness than Fricker's. By contrast, my view is that whenever there is degradation of someone *qua* knower in a testimonial exchange, whether the degradation *qua* human is symbolical or literal in Fricker's terms, this constitutes an instance of TI broadly understood. If one is so insulted, whether or not one realizes it, one is a victim of TI.

### **1.1 Detection of Testimonial Injustice Owing to Credibility Deficit Versus Detection of Testimonial Void**

Brick's ultimate purpose at this point of her reply is to argue that the experience of insult in instances of TV can be counterfactual. That is her reason for drawing attention to the fact that in TV there might be “no interaction whatsoever with the person who wrongs you” (Brick 2021, 48). Brick proposes this feature as a purported essential difference between TI and TV, since in TI, she seems to claim, the experience of insult is *generally* not counterfactual:

*Provided your epistemic confidence hasn't already been eroded by past testimonial injustices, it is easy to know you've been wrongly disregarded as not*

credible if you say something to someone and are subsequently ignored. That you have been wronged is registered by your experience of insult (Brick 2021, 48; my emphasis).

For my part, I am not that optimistic about our ability to notice when we are being subjected to credibility deficit. First, as Brick acknowledges, when TI is systematic, one's epistemic confidence is likely to be eroded. Consequently, one might not have appropriate expectations regarding how one ought to be treated in epistemic terms. In addition, in everyday brief testimonial exchanges, even regarding subjects whose epistemic confidence is intact, one might not have evidence to feel ignored. One can't always tell when one has been denied merited credibility. Accordingly, there might be insult but no insult experience. Consider that I am at the British Library and that I take a break for some fresh air. A passer-by asks me for directions to get to the UCL Institute of Education. I explain how to get there, and they thank me politely. I have no reason to think that my piece of testimony did not receive merited credibility. However, the truth is that, upon hearing my exotic Andalusian accent, the person ignores my advice and asks someone else when they are out of my sight. I don't feel insulted, though I am a victim of TI owing to credibility deficit. Besides, other people might witness it, so this particular instance of TI might contribute to strengthen prejudicial stereotypes.

The interaction does not need to be casual for the victim to have no experience of insult. For instance, one of my students might give less than merited credibility to everything I say on the basis that women are not really meant for philosophy. They don't ignore what I say, as they want to obtain a good mark in the exam. They also address me politely. I don't realize I am being wronged. Notwithstanding, my testimony does not receive merited credibility owing to gender prejudice.

That said, the fact that in TI owing to credibility deficit the epistemic exchange does take place makes a huge difference, as one has a greater chance of being exposed to evidence that one is being subjected to injustice. For instance, imagine that my dear passer-by can't help making a gesture of bewilderment upon hearing my accent. I might take it as a sign that they might disregard me as a knower. I could also have turned around at the right time and seen them ask someone else. By contrast, other things equal, lack of epistemic exchange makes exposure to evidence of TI in instances of TV less likely. Let me insist that this is the case for everyone who witnesses the injustice. Consequently, TV might be harder to detect.

However, I don't think we ought to overemphasize the difficulties to detect TV. It is important that we realize that TV is often open to view, and that we fail to notice it. Though there might be no epistemic interaction concerning the withheld epistemic materials, TV can take place in the context of another epistemic interaction. For instance, TV might be partial. Consider a student who gets feedback from a prejudiced teacher. The piece of feedback might be so poor that the student feels that the response is not thorough enough. In other words, the deficient testimonial exchange might make them realize that they are not receiving the epistemic materials they need. Likewise, one might find evidence of TV in one's epistemic environment. For instance, suppose that the same student observes that the

kind of feedback which their non-marginalized fellow classmates obtain is much more exhaustive than theirs.

We learn from Medina (2013, 61) that “credibility has an interactive nature”, to the extent that it is “comparative and contrastive”: “being judged credible to some degree is being regarded as more credible than others, less credible than others, and equally credible than others”. This raises a crucial point: “credibility never applies to subjects individually and in isolation from others, but always affects clusters of subjects in particular social networks and environments” (Medina 2013, 61). The same applies to epistemic aptness (what is wrongly assessed in cases of TV). Not being told information owing to the underestimation of one’s epistemic aptness rarely happens in isolation. For instance, girls in Francoist Spain were denied certain epistemic materials that their male counterparts did receive. Likewise, Greenleaf and Ripley, the male protagonists in *The Talented Mr Ripley*, unproblematically discuss with each other certain epistemic materials from which they agree that Marge needs protection. Similarly, women in *The Godfather* are kept away from the family business, which is understood as a man’s world. Instead of overemphasizing the difficulties to detect TV, I think we need to train ourselves in noticing these contrasts.

## 2. Disagreements

### 2.1. The Boundary Between Testimonial Void and Pre-Emptive Testimonial Injustice

In my characterization of TV, I explore the interaction between TV and other forms of TIs, including epistemic neglect, testimonial injustice owing to credibility deficit, and testimonial smothering. Brick (2021)’s piece is indicative of how insightful the examination of the interaction between TV and pre-emptive testimonial injustice (PTI) can be as regards the workings of injustice in our testimonial practices. Fricker (2007, 130-131) depicts PTI as a subtle form of TI that silences the marginalized knower by pre-judicially pre-empting their word. The essential idea is that certain people are never asked for information. As with TV owing to prejudice, in PTI prejudice “does its work in advance of a potential informational exchange: it pre-empts any such exchange” (130).

Drawing attention to the fact that we often consider sharing a piece of information with our fellow human beings with the purpose of finding out what they have to say about it, Brick (2021, 48-49) proposes that the boundary between TV and PTI might be “genuinely blurry”:

It is often to be unclear whether a given injustice is an instance of TV or PTI. At certain times, a biased assessment of the hearer-to-be’s credibility may be to blame. At other times, a biased assessment of their capacity to really hear and process what you’re saying may be more explanatory salient (Brick 2021, 49).

Accordingly, Brick adds that in most cases it is fair to say that “a biased assessment of both the capacity to receive and give knowledge explains why someone has been wrongly withheld information” (Brick 2021, 49).

By contrast, my view is that we need to take differences into account. I would be happier with the statement that TI ought to be understood as biased assessments of both the capacity to receive and give knowledge in our testimonial practices, so that the *category* of TI was inclusive enough to encompass credibility deficits as well as instances of TV (and, for that matter, other forms of TI). However, I believe we do need to be more precise in our definition of TV because the phenomenon does *not* jeopardize the capacities to receive and give knowledge *in equal terms*. The *primary* target of the injustice in TV is the capacity to *receive* knowledge, whereas the capacity to *give* knowledge is undermined only *indirectly*. Consequently, by drawing equal attention to both capacities in the definition of the phenomenon, one gives to the capacity to give knowledge undeserved prominence as far as TV is concerned. We learn from Brick (2021, 50) about Fricker’s reasons for emphasizing the giving side in respect of equality in the pooling of information. It is high time that the literature on epistemic injustice paid similar attention to *the receiving side*.

The fact that the intersection between TV and PTI deserves to be explored does not mean that they are not two different phenomena. If we really want to work toward equality in our epistemic relationships, we must pay due attention to the *diversity* of ways in which injustice might appear. In this regard, Brick (2021, 47)’s example of TV is somewhat dubious. From the beginning, the intention of the speaker in her example is to *listen* to what someone else would have to say on the possible competition that she predicts there will be between the new nail salon that has been opened in her block and the one that already existed. The information that the speaker possesses is minimal because she only noticed the new nail salon by chance when walking to the store. In fact, it is more than likely that the Middle Eastern storeowner from whom she decides to withhold the piece of news already knew that a new business has opened in the neighborhood.

My feeling is that Brick’s example of TV is an instance of PTI in disguise, as the real target of the injustice is *credibility* rather than the capacity to receive such epistemic materials. Let us imagine the kind of interaction that is prevented. Suppose the prejudiced speaker did interact with the storeowner, saying: ‘Did you notice the new nail salon?’ Asking for information might take many forms. A question does not need to have the form of a question. The statement ‘I just happened to notice that there is a new nail salon in the neighborhood’ would be likely to have the same effects. By suppressing that kind of interaction, the speaker ultimately prevents an utterance that would have functioned as a question.

The story could be different if the example was further qualified. For instance, consider that the reason why the prejudiced speaker does not share the piece of information with the storeowner is that she believes that he won’t be able to understand that she is trying to engage him in conversation. (I think individuals with Asperger’s syndrome are often treated in this way regardless of the degree of their symptoms. In consequence, they are often the target of PTI.) In other words, there is an expectation that the storeowner will not to be able

to interpret her piece of testimony in the appropriate way. In such circumstances, the *primary* target of the injustice is the storeowner's capacity to *receive* epistemic materials.

That said, epistemic injustice has different layers. As I argued, TV is also an extreme form of silencing because it can “wrong a hearer by *indirectly* pre-empting any sort of epistemic agency on her side, including proffering testimony” (Carmona 2021, 9; my emphasis). To put it another way, TV can *indirectly* pre-empt the would-be-speaker that there is in every would-be-hearer from giving testimony. In fact, when caused by situated ignorance, TV constitutes an *indirect* practice of silencing which adds to the erosion of the epistemic agency of its victims (Carmona 2021, 8). However, while in TV marginalized knowers are silenced indirectly as a result of being kept away from certain epistemic materials, in PTI credibility is the *primary* target of the injustice. Observe that what the wrongdoer fails to do in agential cases of PTI is to engage the victim's capacity to *give* epistemic materials. By contrast, the capacity that primarily fails to be engaged in TV is the one to receive epistemic materials. This failure (when systematic) is what ultimately silences, *indirectly*, the would-be speaker that there is in every would-be hearer in instances of TV.

To illustrate this point, I discussed the example of women in Francoist Spain who were deemed epistemically incompetent to receive epistemic materials relative to public life, as opposed to domestic life:

Without the relevant epistemic materials, they were unlikely to have the same confidence as men to participate in everyday epistemic practices, especially proffering testimony about those areas concerning the epistemic materials of which they had been systematically deprived, like those relative to how to act in what was a man's world (Carmona 2021, 8).

When we do not share information with someone owing to epistemic vice, we do much more than discredit them as a speaker on a given occasion. Returning to the idea concerning the epistemic potential of every human being, we reject both their extant capacities as well as their epistemic potential. Even if on a given occasion our epistemic counterpart cannot engage in an epistemically relevant manner with the epistemic materials that we have to offer them, they might be able to do so later. TV makes this course of events unlikely to occur. In this regard, TV is a form of objectification: it reduces the would-be hearer's epistemic agency to what they can do with certain epistemic materials on a given occasion, as if they were a lifeless unvarying object instead of a subject with possibilities of epistemic development (Carmona 2021, 9).

That said, I think that my disagreement with Brick concerning the boundary between TV and PTI is ultimately a question of attitude: she seems to be keen that the discussion on TI should remain as committed as possible to the terms of Fricker's framework, whereas I am keen to highlight the differences.



## **2.2. Children Do Have Extant Epistemic Competence**

In Brick (2020)'s characterization of epistemic neglect, the phenomenon is said to occur when educators (or those with similar responsibility) fail to extend 'hopeful trust' to children, that is, the kind of trust that is knowingly extended despite the lack of evidential support. This extension of hopeful trust "functions by instilling in the trusted person an attitude of hopeful self-trust" (Brick 2020, 493), which is essential to overcome one's present limitations and become a competent epistemic agent.

Testimonial void (TV) and epistemic neglect (EN) have a common feature: an epistemically and ethically faulty assessment of someone's epistemic potential. By 'epistemic potential', I understand "latent epistemic qualities and abilities that might be exercised and developed" (Carmona, 2021, 10). In EN, these latent epistemic qualities and abilities are not yet developed, whereas in TV they are developed yet (maybe) not manifest.

### **2.2.1. Two Kinds of Epistemic Competence, Two Kinds of Epistemic Trust**

With this difference in mind, Brick (2021, 49) finds my choice of girls' education in Francoist Spain as an example of TV 'curious', as she understands it to be an instance of EN. In her view:

If young children are denied a particular kind of education, it is not because their extant competence is being denied. It is because their potential competence is being denied (Brick 2021, 49).

By contrast, I shall argue that when young learners are withheld from certain epistemic materials, they can be at the receiving end of epistemic injustice regarding (at least) two kinds of epistemic competence:

- i) their existing epistemic competence: epistemic qualities and abilities that they have already developed, whether these are manifest or not, and;
- ii) their potential epistemic competence: epistemic qualities and abilities that do not yet exist but which they have the potential to develop, outstripping present limitations and past performance.

When young learners are not trusted with epistemic materials owing to presupposed incompetence to develop specific epistemic qualities or abilities, it is their potential competence that they are being denied. For instance, consider a teacher who is introducing their group of second graders to multiplication. They have prepared a handout in which multiplication is related to addition. They give a copy of this handout to every learner except for an intersectionally marginalized knower, as the teacher thinks that people with such a combination of identities cannot learn to multiply. The marginalized student would be a victim of EN, as it is their potential epistemic competence that is being denied owing to prejudice.

Now, suppose that the prejudiced teacher withheld the handout from the intersectionally marginalized knower on the assumption that they don't know basic addition (and that consequently they won't be able to do anything epistemically relevant with the handout). However, the marginalized learner does have the same knowledge of addition as their fellow classmates. In fact, all of them happened to learn together in first grade as much of addition as the handout requires. In my view, this would constitute an instance of TV because the prejudiced teacher fails to engage with the intersectionally marginalized knower's *existing* ability to 'add up'. In the absence of counterevidence, the prejudiced teacher ought to have *trusted* that the intersectionally marginalized knower would have developed the epistemic qualities and abilities that are generally acquired by second grade in that educational context. In other words, they ought to have trusted that that particular learner could be *as epistemically competent as everyone else at their stage*; namely, that they could have developed the same epistemic qualities and abilities as their fellow classmates and fulfilled their epistemic potential as much as them.

We need to pay attention to another essential dissimilarity between EN and TV, one concerning the kind of trust that needs to be extended with a view to avoiding each kind of injustice:

To avoid EN, the hearer needs to address the epistemic potential of children and extend *hopeful* trust *despite existing counterevidence* from past performance. Conversely, in cases of TV, the speaker's obligation, *in the absence of counterevidence*, is to accord the hearer a minimum level of competence and willingness, a kind of trust that, I would like to argue, finds its roots in a relational conception of human equality.

This kind of trust, which I call epistemic equality trust, is about someone's existing epistemic aptness, even when this is not manifest. It is a minimum of competence we ought to presuppose on the basis of the epistemic potential of every human being (Carmona 2021, 10).

My view is that the prejudiced teacher withholding a copy of the handout from their intersectionally marginalized student fails to extend them epistemic equality trust. Extending epistemic equality trust in the case of young learners entails taking into consideration the stage they have reached. One ought to extend epistemic equality trust regarding already developed epistemic qualities and abilities. Failing to extend such a form of trust might be harmful for the learner in question as they are misrecognized. Given the role that recognition has in the formation of one's identity, misrecognition might curtail not only one's epistemic development but also one's development as a human being (Taylor 1994).

This attitude is not incompatible with being alert to the possibility that any student may be left behind and the extra difficulties (and, for that matter, epistemic advantages concerning their understanding of injustice (Medina, 2013)) that marginalized students might have (for instance, not obtaining appropriate feedback from prejudiced teachers). However, when we

do not have evidence to think otherwise, we must trust that a young learner has acquired the skills that are supposed to have been acquired at that stage in their educational context.

### 2.2.2. The Example of Girls' Education in Francoist Spain

When exemplifying TV in the context of the education that girls received in Francoist Spain, I had in mind a specific example: how girls were kept away from epistemic materials concerning certain historical facts (Carmona 2021, 2, 5). The overall quality of primary education was extremely poor during the Franco regime. As far as history was concerned, the kind of epistemic materials that young learners received were poor, besides being overly simplified and indoctrinating. Once young learners assimilated a basic concept of history, they were competent to receive such basic historical facts. The teaching of history played a major role in children's indoctrination. They were exposed to a basic concept of history as soon as they started school. I would add that it was assumed that they did acquire it. Assimilating the historical epistemic materials that girls did not receive did not require the development of epistemic qualities and abilities other than those that girls already had and were assumed to have developed by then. In fact, girls were often deprived of epistemic materials concerning historical facts and historical figures that they already knew about. Accordingly, I think that the Francoist educational policy failed to engage their *existing* epistemic competence as regards such epistemic materials.

Let me add that boys and girls were subjected to Francoist educational policies *despite the actual exercise of their epistemic agency*. In other words, it was *assumed* that boys were competent to receive such epistemic materials and that girls were not. Accordingly, the Francoist educational policy did not respond to evidence of individual agents' past or actual epistemic performance. In consequence, *counterevidence* of girls' epistemic competence (in the sense that they had not yet developed the required epistemic qualities and abilities they needed) to deal with the withheld epistemic materials *did not exist*.

Accordingly, concerning such historical facts, the kind of trust that the Francoist educational system failed to extend girls was not *hopeful* trust because there was no counterevidence as regards their capacity to deal with such epistemic materials. If there had been evidence that girls in Francoist Spain were limited in their extant capacities to deal with such epistemic materials, the educational system ought to have extended hopeful trust to avoid TV. In the absence of counterevidence, at that stage of their epistemic development, epistemic equality trust regarding competence to learn all basic historical facts should have been extended to every child. But girls, for the mere fact of being female, were denied a minimum of competence that was assumed that boys had for being male. Actually, the fact that boys of the same age were able to handle a set of epistemic materials should have been understood as evidence of a similar competence in girls. But this extension of epistemic equality trust was denied to girls despite the absence of counterevidence.

By contrast, if girls in Francoist Spain had been denied the potential to learn to multiply *before* they actually learnt basic multiplication, as in the intersectionally marginalized knower's example, I agree that they would have been denied *potential* epistemic competence.

In any case, regardless of how we identify the kind of competence that was the target of injustice when girls were kept away from certain historical facts during the Franco regime, I would like to draw attention to my claim that, in certain contexts—for example, education or medical care—“the demands on would-be speakers are higher than usual”, in such a way that “avoiding TV might entail extending hopeful trust”, that is, extending trust in spite of counterevidence (Carmona 2021, 11). In this regard, avoiding TV in the case of the education of girls in Francoist Spain would have entailed extending hopeful trust *when needed*. Accordingly, even if I don’t agree with Brick about the kind of competence that is at stake in my example, I do agree with her that one might need to extend hopeful trust to avoid the injustice.

### **2.2.3. The Art of Extending the Right Kind(s) of Trust**

The fact that children ought to be extended hopeful trust despite existing counterevidence from past performance is not incompatible with extending them epistemic equality trust in the absence of counterevidence concerning their epistemic aptness. For that matter, both kinds of trust are compatible with the extension of evidence-based trust. Good pedagogical practice entails extending the right kind of trust to every epistemic agent in each situation. It might sometimes be required that one extends different kinds of trust at the same time. Consider a girl in third grade who has received regular schooling in today’s Spain. Regarding their already developed epistemic qualities and abilities, when these are not manifest, we would need to extend epistemic equality trust, that is, presuppose a minimum of competence that children at their stage in their educational context have generally acquired. If there was evidence that they had not developed such a minimum of epistemic competence, we would need to extend hopeful trust.

Extending the wrong kind of trust might be harmful. Consider a prejudiced teacher who thinks that girls can deal with the same epistemic materials as boys but that boys learn them faster. Accordingly, they fail to extend epistemic equality trust. This is compatible with extending girls hopeful trust because the teacher thinks that they have enough potential to learn such materials but do not have extant competence because they take longer to fulfill their potential abilities. Now, suppose that the girls in their class often finish their homework before the boys do. Notwithstanding, our prejudiced teacher does not change their mind and keeps thinking that girls are slower than boys. In consequence, instead of engaging with the girls’ homework, they wait for the boys to finish to check if they got the right answers. Such a prejudiced teacher would fail to extend girls evidence-based trust. In consequence, girls might feel neglected and ignored. It is plausible that they would feel confused and have misgivings about their own epistemic aptness, in such a way that they might slowly retreat from trying to participate in class.

Though in certain cases one needs to extend hopeful trust to avoid epistemic injustice, including TV, extending hopeful trust when one ought to extend epistemic equality trust (or, for that matter, evidence-based trust) amounts to a form of epistemic injustice as the epistemic agents in question are disregarded as knowers. They might not be disregarded

*completely*, as the wrongdoer does at least acknowledge their epistemic potential, but they are not regarded as competent as they merit owing to epistemic vice on the side of the wrongdoer.

Epistemic competence comes by degrees. One could conclude from Brick's (2021) discussion of my example concerning the education that girls received in Francoist Spain that (at least young) children are not competent epistemic agents in any situation. I would say that, though they are not *fully* competent, in the sense that they have much to learn both in school and from experience, they are competent *enough* to receive the epistemic materials they are supposed to receive by degrees. They might be imperfect knowers, but they *are* knowers. In this regard, I have misgivings concerning Brick's formulation that educators enable students to *become* knowers (Brick 2020, 493). When does one acquire a minimum of perfection to be regarded as a knower? 'When one has acquired a minimum of epistemic competence.' But when does one become a competent epistemic agent? Does one need schooling to become a competent epistemic agent? Is it enough with life experience? If so, how many years of life experience ensure that someone becomes a competent epistemic agent? These are tricky questions indeed. Our answers are likely to say more about ourselves than about the issue at stake.

I think the discussion needs to be oriented in a different direction. Epistemic competence is an ideal and competence is always context-dependent. Acknowledging what children have already achieved in certain contexts is at least as important as acknowledging what they can achieve. This is true both of what they learn at school and concerning practical issues that they learn in everyday life. Failing to acknowledge epistemic achievements might also be harmful. Acknowledgment of epistemic potential should go hand in hand with acknowledgment of epistemic achievements.

Having said all this, I do think that Brick (2020)'s original discussion of EN allows for children having extant epistemic competence.

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