Epistemic Gatekeepers and Epistemic Injustice by Design

Fiduciary Failures in Institutional Knowledge Gatekeeping

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Abstract

In this paper, I critically examine institutional epistemic gatekeepers—including academic platforms such as PhilPapers, JSTOR, major publishers, and academic repositories—as fiduciaries entrusted with safeguarding epistemic diversity, justice, and integrity. I argue that current institutional policies systematically domesticate and marginalise diverse epistemologies through restrictive registration requirements, monomodal publication frameworks, opaque peer-review processes, and disciplinary siloisation. Drawing on my original scholarship and recent critical insights—particularly concerning epistemic humility, epistemic transposition, and epistemic domestication—I critique these gatekeeping practices as fiduciary breaches that exacerbate socioeconomic, academic, and epistemic stratification. I advocate concrete fiduciary and epistemic reforms, including transparent review processes, representational inclusivity, multimodal and multilingual scholarly frameworks, and institutional oversight committees committed to epistemic plurality and accountability. Ultimately, this

paper calls upon scholarly communities and institutions to actively honour their fiduciary responsibilities, thereby fostering genuine epistemic openness, plurality, and justice.

Keywords

epistemic gatekeepers, epistemic injustice, epistemic domestication, fiduciary responsibility, epistemic humility, epistemic transposition, multimodal epistemologies, multilingual scholarship, epistemic exclusion, institutional gatekeeping, representational diversity, academic stratification, epistemic plurality, epistemic accountability, interdisciplinary scholarship, epistemic marginalisation, microfascism, epistemic democracy, scholarly communication, institutional reform

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1. Introduction and Overview

1.1 Why I Am Writing This Paper

In this paper, I critically examine PhilPapers—a prominent online platform for philosophical research—as an exemplar of an epistemic gatekeeper. An epistemic gatekeeper is an institution or platform that controls access to, and validation of, scholarly knowledge, thereby shaping and often constraining scholarly discourse, participation, and innovation. Platforms such as JSTOR, major academic publishers, and institutional repositories likewise function as epistemic gatekeepers, entrusted with fiduciary responsibilities toward scholars, society, and knowledge itself. These institutions bear ethical and epistemic obligations to uphold epistemic integrity, promote genuine epistemic plurality, and foster innovation {Kahl 2025, 'Epistemic Humility and the Transposition of Ethical Duties into Epistemic Duties'}. However, prevailing institutional practices—including restrictive registration policies, rigid monomodal publication standards, monolingual frameworks, opaque peer-review processes, and narrow disciplinary categorisations—actively domesticate knowledge, marginalising epistemic diversity and innovation, and undermining democratic epistemic practices {Kahl 2025, 'Foucault's Dream: On the Domestication of Knowledge and Epistemic Subjugation'}.

Elizabeth Anderson's conceptualisation of democratic epistemology emphasises that democracy is not merely political governance but inherently epistemic, relying upon institutions that actively enable participation from diverse epistemic communities in knowledge production {Anderson 2006}. Anderson argues that genuine epistemic democracy demands institutions that value and incorporate diverse voices, enhancing epistemic openness and accountability. The restrictive practices of epistemic gatekeepers run contrary to these democratic ideals, systematically excluding many epistemic agents from meaningful scholarly engagement, thus undermining the very principles of epistemic justice.

Addressing these fiduciary and democratic breaches is crucial for fostering genuine epistemic plurality and innovation. By highlighting fiduciary responsibilities alongside democratic epistemic imperatives, my aim is to prompt meaningful institutional reform, encouraging scholarly platforms to fulfil their obligations toward authentic epistemic diversity, innovation, and justice. This paper argues that the fiduciary duties of scholarly platforms—encompassing care, loyalty, transparency, and good faith stewardship toward scholars, society, and knowledge—extend beyond administrative compliance. Breaching these fiduciary duties significantly harms scholarly integrity, epistemic democracy, and societal discourse, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive epistemic reforms grounded in democratic epistemology.

1.2 My Experience with PhilPapers: Contextual Background

PhilPapers is widely recognised as a crucial platform for philosophical research and discourse. However, upon attempting to register as an independent researcher without institutional affiliation, I encountered immediate and revealing barriers. The requirement of an institutional email suggests underlying epistemic gatekeeping, systematically privileging institutionally affiliated scholars and implicitly marginalising independent voices. This reflects institutional epistemic domestication, a concept I critiqued in earlier work {Kahl 2025, "Foucault's Dream: On the Domestication of Knowledge and Epistemic Subjugation"}.

My experience with submission and peer review on PhilPapers further revealed troubling opacity regarding reviewer identities, selection criteria, and evaluation standards. Limited transparency raised concerns about implicit biases, ideological conformity, and representational inadequacies, deeply problematic for a platform

claiming epistemic openness and fairness. Additionally, I observed significant structural limitations in PhilPapers' categorisation systems, which actively discourage multidisciplinary scholarship and limit knowledge to rigid, narrowly defined epistemic categories. This epistemic siloisation implicitly undermines innovation and interdisciplinary epistemic integration, further perpetuating epistemic injustice.

1.3 Issues I Address in this Paper

To structure my critical inquiry clearly and systematically, I address the following interconnected issues, each emerging directly from my experience and broader philosophical analysis:

- **Institutional gatekeeping**: Institutional affiliation requirements exclude independent scholars, exacerbating epistemic inequalities.

- **Opaque peer review processes**: Lack of reviewer transparency implicitly fosters biases, undermining the fairness and epistemic reliability of scholarly evaluation.

- **Linguistic marginalisation**: Monolingual publication and categorisation policies exclude multilingual and transcultural epistemologies, significantly diminishing epistemic diversity.

- **Exclusion of multimodal epistemologies**: PhilPapers' rigid textual formats implicitly marginalise embodied, visual, performative, poetic, and interdisciplinary epistemologies, restricting epistemic plurality.

- **Discouragement of multidisciplinary scholarship**: PhilPapers' categorisation systems limit epistemic inquiry to narrow disciplinary silos, actively discouraging multidisciplinary exploration and innovation.

- **Representation and diversity concerns**: Limited visible representation of gender-diverse and minority scholars implicitly reinforces epistemic marginalisation.

- **Fiduciary breaches and epistemic injustice**: PhilPapers' neglect of fiduciary responsibilities toward scholarly openness, epistemic diversity, and knowledge itself constitutes significant fiduciary-epistemic breaches.

- **Epistemic domestication and flattening of knowledge**: Institutional gatekeeping practices domesticate philosophical inquiry, reducing complex epistemic contributions to consumable, institutionally convenient forms {Kahl 2025, "Foucault's Dream: On the Domestication of Knowledge and Epistemic Subjugation"}.

- **Recommendations for fiduciary and epistemic improvement**: I propose specific institutional reforms aimed at enhancing epistemic justice, plurality, and fiduciary accountability.

1.4 My Contribution and Methodological Approach

This paper represents an original synthesis and significant extension of my scholarly contributions. I have introduced and theorised multiple neologisms—particularly epistemic domestication, epistemic subjugation, epistemic transposition, and epistemic siloisation. The concept of epistemic transposition, introduced in my recent work {Kahl 2025, 'Epistemic Humility and the Transposition of Ethical Duties into Epistemic Duties'}, reframes ethical fiduciary obligations as epistemic duties toward knowledge itself, grounded in epistemic humility.

In this paper, I build upon my exploration of epistemic fiduciary duties, institutional governance, epistemic plurality, multimodal epistemologies, and multidisciplinary scholarship, rigorously articulated in my earlier publications—including 'Who is Afraid of Free-Range Knowledge?' {Kahl 2025}, 'Epistemocracy in Higher Education' {Kahl 2025}, and "Directors' Epistemic Duties and Fiduciary Openness" {Kahl 2025}.

My methodological approach combines reflective narrative drawn from direct experience with PhilPapers, rigorous conceptual analysis informed by fiduciary theory and epistemic justice literature (Fricker 2007; Barnett 2020; Anderson 2012; Medina 2013), and critical evaluation of institutional practices. My goal is to provoke meaningful institutional reflection and clearly advocate reforms designed to fulfil fiduciary obligations toward authentic epistemic plurality, innovation, and humility.

Ultimately, I advocate for a philosophical community committed to epistemic humility, multimodal complexity, interdisciplinary integration, and authentic epistemic plurality—critical for responsible, inclusive, and genuinely reflective philosophical inquiry.

2. Fiduciary Theory and Epistemic Responsibility

2.1 Understanding Fiduciary Responsibility in Scholarly Contexts

In this chapter, I introduce fiduciary theory as a critical analytic framework for assessing the responsibilities scholarly platforms—such as PhilPapers—owe toward their epistemic communities. Fiduciary relationships traditionally involve trust, loyalty, and diligent good-faith obligations owed by fiduciaries toward their beneficiaries, typically conceptualised within financial, legal, or corporate governance contexts {Frankel 2011; Smith 2014; Miller 2014}. Recently, however, my scholarship has significantly extended these fiduciary principles into epistemic contexts, positioning academic institutions and knowledge-sharing platforms as fiduciaries responsible for ethically stewarding epistemic resources and scholarly practices {Kahl 2025, 'Epistemocracy in Higher Education'}.

A particularly innovative theoretical advance in my scholarship is the concept of epistemic transposition, first introduced and thoroughly articulated in my paper 'Epistemic Humility and the Transposition of Ethical Duties into Epistemic Duties' (2025). Epistemic transposition reframes fiduciary obligations—traditionally viewed merely as ethical duties owed toward individuals—as epistemic duties owed directly toward knowledge itself. This significant reconceptualisation broadens fiduciary theory by identifying obligations such as openness, honesty, and loyalty not just as relational ethical virtues, but as intrinsically epistemic duties rooted in epistemic humility.

Under this expanded fiduciary view, scholarly platforms are entrusted with active stewardship of epistemic resources. Fiduciary stewardship in this epistemic context implies direct duties to safeguard epistemic integrity, fairness, accessibility, and diversity. Scholarly platforms thus have fiduciary obligations to their epistemic communities—affiliated scholars, independent researchers, students, and the broader society—requiring equitable access, representative inclusion, and transparent scholarly governance.

2.2 Institutional Responsibility and Epistemic Justice

Fiduciary responsibilities align closely with principles of epistemic justice, advocating fairness, openness, and equity within knowledge production and dissemination processes. Elizabeth Anderson (2012), for example, argues convincingly that genuinely democratic epistemic institutions must actively foster authentic pluralism and meaningful inclusion—not merely as policy but as consistent institutional practice. Institutions must actively cultivate spaces where diverse epistemic voices are genuinely represented and engaged, not marginalised or epistemically flattened.

In a related vein, Ronald Barnett's (2020) concept of the 'ecological university' emphasises institutional responsibility for cultivating robust epistemic ecosystems. According to Barnett, universities and similar scholarly institutions bear obligations to nurture intellectual diversity, encourage critical and reflective inquiry, and maintain epistemic openness.

Extending beyond Barnett's framework, my scholarship introduces fiduciary theory into epistemic contexts. Drawing upon my concepts of epistemic transposition and epistemic humility {Kahl 2025, "Foucault's Dream: On the Domestication of Knowledge and Epistemic Subjugation"; Kahl 2025, 'Epistemic Justice and Institutional Responsibility in Academia'}, I identify institutional duties to actively counteract epistemic harms—such as marginalisation, subjugation, and domestication of knowledge—as fiduciary responsibilities owed directly to knowledge itself. Epistemic humility, defined here as an institutional virtue involving active recognition of epistemic limitations, responsiveness to criticism, and openness to alternative epistemic perspectives, thus becomes foundational. Institutions fail their fiduciary obligations not only when acting unethically toward individuals but also when neglecting their epistemic duties toward nurturing knowledge in its inherent complexity and diversity.

Institutional practices inspired by epistemic transposition might operationally include establishing epistemic accountability committees tasked with safeguarding epistemic plurality and addressing epistemic injustice. This approach translates theoretical fiduciary obligations directly into concrete institutional practices, enhancing both epistemic integrity and justice.

2.3 Applying Fiduciary-Epistemic Duties to PhilPapers

To concretely apply fiduciary theory and epistemic justice principles, I critically evaluate PhilPapers' current operational practices and policies. PhilPapers, as an influential philosophical repository, has fiduciary obligations to uphold inclusive, equitable, and transparent scholarly practices. However, several of its operational policies presently undermine these fiduciary-epistemic responsibilities.

First, PhilPapers maintains restrictive registration policies, requiring an institutional email address for contributors. This requirement excludes independent researchers, effectively limiting epistemic participation and reinforcing existing institutional inequalities. Such institutional gatekeeping directly contradicts fiduciary duties of openness and epistemic justice by marginalising independent scholars who could substantially contribute to philosophical discourse.

Second, PhilPapers employs peer-review processes characterised by opacity and limited transparency regarding reviewer identities, criteria, and decision-making. This lack of transparency fosters potential implicit biases and epistemic marginalisation, thus failing to fulfil fiduciary responsibilities toward fairness, accountability, and epistemic humility. PhilPapers thereby risks becoming a site not of epistemic openness, but epistemic exclusion —reinforcing rather than challenging epistemic hierarchies and orthodoxies.

Third, PhilPapers predominantly privileges monolingual, text-based, and linear scholarship. This institutional choice marginalises multilingual, cross-cultural, and multimodal epistemologies, thereby significantly diminishing epistemic diversity and complexity. This epistemic flattening constitutes a breach of fiduciary duties toward actively stewarding knowledge, precisely as my epistemic transposition framework identifies. PhilPapers thus implicitly contributes to epistemic domestication—simplifying and standardising philosophical knowledge to fit institutionally convenient forms, at the cost of richer epistemic diversity.

Through the lens of epistemic transposition, PhilPapers' fiduciary failures emerge as epistemic harms. The platform fails not only in duties owed ethically toward individual scholars but also fiduciary duties owed directly to knowledge itself. These fiduciary breaches compromise PhilPapers' epistemic integrity and credibility, evidencing a concerning institutional epistemic arrogance—precisely what epistemic humility seeks to counteract.

2.4 Epistemic Transposition: From Ethical Duties to Epistemic Duties

Building upon my earlier work, 'Epistemic Humility and the Transposition of Ethical Duties into Epistemic Duties' (2025), I emphasise here the reconceptualisation of fiduciary responsibility as epistemic responsibility. Epistemic transposition reframes fiduciary obligations—traditionally considered ethical duties owed toward individuals—as epistemic duties owed directly toward knowledge itself. Knowledge, thus understood, becomes not merely an outcome or commodity of scholarly processes but an entity deserving institutional stewardship and respect.

This approach broadens fiduciary theory, clearly articulating how institutions must operationalise fiduciary-epistemic duties. Under epistemic transposition, ethical obligations such as honesty, openness, and loyalty translate into epistemic virtues—epistemic openness, intellectual honesty, and epistemic humility. Epistemic humility here denotes an institutional virtue encompassing recognition of epistemic limitations, responsiveness to epistemic critique, and active openness to diverse epistemic perspectives.

Institutions informed by epistemic transposition become fiduciaries directly accountable to knowledge itself, obligated to maintain robust epistemic ecosystems. Operationally, institutions might thus implement epistemic accountability mechanisms—such as committees specifically dedicated to addressing epistemic marginalisation, evaluating institutional epistemic openness, and ensuring inclusive representation of diverse epistemic voices. Such institutional commitments reflect epistemic humility, countering epistemic arrogance and actively nurturing richer epistemic environments.

2.5 My Methodological Approach to Fiduciary-Epistemic Analysis

The methodological framework underpinning my analysis integrates rigorous conceptual scholarship, critical engagement with fiduciary theory and epistemic justice literature, and reflective experiential insights derived from direct engagement with scholarly platforms, notably PhilPapers. By incorporating epistemic transposition as a foundational analytic concept, my methodological approach synthesises conceptual rigour with reflective critique, clearly demonstrating how traditional ethical fiduciary concepts transpose effectively into epistemic duties toward knowledge itself.

My integrative methodological approach identifies structural weaknesses and potential areas of fiduciary reform within scholarly institutions. By applying epistemic transposition, my analysis highlights practical pathways toward reform, thereby clearly linking theoretical innovation with concrete institutional practices. This

methodological integration enhances the clarity, applicability, and persuasive strength of my argument, providing guidance for institutions seeking genuine epistemic justice and fiduciary accountability.

Ultimately, my approach extends beyond mere critique; inspired by epistemic transposition and epistemic humility, I advocate for institutional reforms aimed at fulfilling fiduciary responsibilities toward knowledge itself. Such fiduciary commitments are essential for maintaining authentic epistemic integrity, robust epistemic diversity, and genuine epistemic justice within scholarly communities.

3. Institutional Gatekeeping through Registration Requirements

3.1 Institutional Affiliation Requirements as Epistemic Injustice

Institutional gatekeeping, as implemented through restrictive registration policies such as those employed by PhilPapers, constitutes a clear form of epistemic injustice. By requiring that contributors hold institutional email addresses, PhilPapers systematically excludes independent scholars, thereby reinforcing epistemic hierarchies that privilege institutional affiliation and marginalise scholars who lack formal academic ties.

Miranda Fricker's (2007) influential distinction between testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice illuminates precisely how such policies harm independent scholars. Testimonial injustice occurs when scholars' credibility as epistemic contributors is unjustly diminished due to prejudice—in this case, institutional prejudice that equates credibility primarily with formal affiliation. Hermeneutical injustice emerges clearly when independent scholars, systematically excluded from significant philosophical platforms, are thereby deprived of opportunities to shape and contribute to the collective philosophical discourse. In other words, by excluding independent voices, PhilPapers prevents these scholars from actively participating in the epistemic community, thus restricting the diversity of philosophical perspectives.

José Medina's (2013) work further clarifies how institutional policies contribute to systemic ignorance and marginalisation, creating epistemic conditions that structurally disadvantage certain groups. Applying Medina's insights directly to PhilPapers highlights how their restrictive registration requirement indirectly silences and disadvantages epistemic perspectives outside traditional institutional frameworks, thus reinforcing systemic epistemic injustice. Consequently, PhilPapers' policy not only marginalises individual independent scholars but also significantly impoverishes philosophical scholarship itself, systematically excluding epistemically rich, critical, and innovative contributions.

3.2 Marginalisation and Exclusion of Independent Scholars

The epistemic marginalisation enacted by PhilPapers' institutional affiliation requirement has far-reaching consequences, significantly disadvantaging independent scholars whose contributions often represent innovative, interdisciplinary, and critically reflective epistemic perspectives. My earlier work, 'Who is Afraid of Free-Range Knowledge?' {Kahl 2025}, specifically addresses this marginalisation, emphasising how institutional gatekeeping systematically excludes independent, or what I term 'free-range knowledge'—knowledge produced outside institutional orthodoxies and traditional epistemic constraints.

Independent scholars frequently challenge conventional epistemic assumptions and disciplinary boundaries. Their scholarship often explores novel, experimental methodologies, multimodal formats (including artistic,

poetic, and visual epistemologies), and innovative cross-disciplinary perspectives resistant to epistemic domestication. For instance, independent philosophical inquiries into cognitive science, philosophy of mind, ethics, and epistemic justice frequently present critiques of dominant institutional assumptions that conventional academia might find uncomfortable or difficult to categorise neatly within existing disciplinary frameworks.

PhilPapers' institutional affiliation requirement effectively silences these independent voices, preventing their valuable epistemic contributions from influencing broader philosophical discourse. This marginalisation results in a significant epistemic loss—not only to independent scholars themselves but to the philosophical community at large, which is thereby deprived of genuinely diverse and critically reflective contributions essential to a vibrant epistemic environment. Thus, by systematically excluding independent scholars, PhilPapers diminishes the epistemic richness and plurality crucial for robust philosophical inquiry, representing a clear institutional failure to uphold genuine epistemic justice.

3.3 Institutional Gatekeeping as Fiduciary Breach

PhilPapers' restrictive registration policies constitute significant breaches of fiduciary responsibility. Traditional fiduciary theory holds that institutions must uphold duties of openness, fairness, and accountability toward communities who rely upon their epistemic stewardship {Frankel 2011; Smith 2014}. Building upon these foundational fiduciary principles, my concept of epistemic transposition {Kahl 2025} expands fiduciary obligations to include direct duties toward knowledge itself. This reconceptualisation positions knowledge not merely as an academic commodity, but as an epistemic entity deserving careful and ethical stewardship— requiring institutions to actively safeguard epistemic diversity, integrity, and openness.

Under epistemic transposition, fiduciary duties toward knowledge specifically involve maintaining institutional epistemic humility: actively recognising epistemic limitations, responding transparently to criticism, and ensuring robust epistemic plurality. PhilPapers' institutional gatekeeping, by requiring scholars to possess institutional affiliations for contribution, directly breaches these fiduciary duties. The platform's policy demonstrates institutional epistemic arrogance, prioritising perceived legitimacy or administrative convenience over genuine epistemic diversity, thereby failing to meet fiduciary standards.

In my earlier paper, "Towards Academia's Own Hippocratic Oath" (2025), I argued for an institutional fiduciary standard analogous to medical ethics, requiring academic institutions proactively prevent epistemic harm and actively foster epistemic justice. PhilPapers' gatekeeping practices cause epistemic harm, systematically excluding independent scholars and reducing the richness and diversity essential to philosophical inquiry. Consequently, PhilPapers' restrictive policies represent a fiduciary breach toward both scholars and knowledge, calling for meaningful institutional reform.

3.4 Toward Fiduciary Reform and Epistemic Inclusion

Addressing these fiduciary breaches effectively requires specific institutional reforms designed to improve epistemic fairness, transparency, and accountability. The following actionable proposals operationalise PhilPapers' fiduciary-epistemic responsibilities, ensuring genuine epistemic justice and inclusion.

First, PhilPapers must implement alternative validation mechanisms for independent scholars, removing reliance on institutional affiliation as the sole criterion. Independent scholars could demonstrate their scholarly

legitimacy clearly through verified peer-reviewed publications, scholarly awards, documented intellectual contributions, or professional recommendations from recognised peers.

Second, PhilPapers should enhance transparency by clearly publishing comprehensive guidelines for reviewing scholarly contributions. Such guidelines would detail evaluation criteria, openly state expectations, and provide mechanisms for open feedback, allowing applicants to understand clearly how their contributions are assessed and how decisions are reached.

Third, PhilPapers should establish an Epistemic Accountability Committee, responsible for overseeing registration policies and their epistemic impacts. This committee would include scholars representing diverse epistemic perspectives, both affiliated and independent. It would monitor the effects of existing policies, ensure continuous epistemic openness, and actively advocate institutional accountability. Successful examples of similar committees can be found within scholarly associations and academic institutions dedicated to maintaining standards of epistemic fairness and inclusivity.

Ultimately, implementing these fiduciary reforms will operationalise PhilPapers' responsibilities toward knowledge itself. By aligning institutional practice with principles of epistemic humility, transparency, and accountability, PhilPapers can foster an epistemically rich, diverse, and genuinely inclusive philosophical community.

4. Transparency, Bias, and Peer Review: Fiduciary and Epistemic Failures

4.1 Opacity in PhilPapers' Peer Review Process

PhilPapers' peer-review practices are marked by substantial opacity, especially concerning reviewer identities, selection processes, and evaluation standards. Fiduciary theory demands institutional transparency, fairness, and accountability—principles undermined by such opaque practices. Institutional opacity facilitates implicit biases, disadvantaging innovative, critical, or unconventional scholarship and thereby restricting genuine epistemic plurality.

Additionally, traditional peer-review processes may be practically inadequate in an era of rapid scholarly output. For example, an independent scholar producing two to three scholarly papers weekly reveals inherent limitations of traditional peer-review mechanisms, originally designed for slower, institutionally regulated outputs. Institutional gatekeepers constrained by conventional practices implicitly prioritise established voices and familiar epistemic frameworks, inherently disadvantaging prolific independent scholars and innovative contributions. This dynamic perpetuates epistemic domestication, limiting epistemic diversity and reinforcing conformity.

Moreover, reliance on traditional peer review implicitly relegates scholars' epistemic agency to institutional authorities. Peer review, though intended to maintain scholarly rigour, implicitly restricts epistemic autonomy by positioning gatekeepers as ultimate arbiters of epistemic legitimacy. Joseph Raz's influential argument in *The Morality of Freedom* addresses the dangers inherent in surrendering personal autonomy and epistemic judgement to authoritative institutions, highlighting the risk to individual agency {Raz 1986}. In my earlier scholarship, particularly "Directors' Epistemic Duties and Fiduciary Openness" {Kahl 2025}, I argue that institutional

dependence on conventional peer-review processes constitutes a fiduciary breach, undermining epistemic autonomy and authentic intellectual innovation.

Thus, PhilPapers' opaque and traditional peer-review practices represent fiduciary breaches, limiting epistemic openness, autonomy, and plurality. Recognising and addressing these institutional shortcomings requires fiduciary reforms aimed at promoting transparency, innovation, and genuine epistemic diversity.

4.2 Concerns Regarding Gender and Minority Representation

Closely linked to transparency issues is the problem of insufficient representational diversity among PhilPapers' reviewers. Diverse reviewer representation is fundamentally an epistemic concern rather than merely demographic; epistemic plurality within reviewer panels significantly enhances the richness, inclusivity, and rigour of philosophical inquiry. Diverse reviewers bring varied perspectives and intellectual backgrounds, critically enriching the peer review process and preventing epistemic bias.

Reflecting upon my own submission experiences with PhilPapers, I observed neither acknowledgment nor institutional measures to ensure balanced gender or minority representation among reviewers. The lack of clear commitment to representational diversity may reinforce dominant epistemic biases, implicitly marginalising scholarship addressing epistemic injustice, race, gender, intersectionality, or other critical perspectives typically underrepresented in traditional philosophical discourse.

This representational imbalance clearly constitutes a fiduciary breach. Fiduciary responsibility toward scholars and knowledge itself requires institutions to foster genuine epistemic inclusivity, diversity, and fairness. PhilPapers thus bears fiduciary duties to institute clear representational policies in peer review. Doing so will ensure epistemic accountability, actively promoting a richer philosophical discourse reflective of diverse epistemic contributions and fulfilling fiduciary obligations to epistemic pluralism and justice.

4.3 Implicit Bias, Epistemic Marginalisation, and Injustice

PhilPapers' opaque peer-review practices and lack of reviewer diversity foster implicit epistemic biases and contribute to epistemic marginalisation. José Medina's analysis of epistemic injustice {Medina 2013} demonstrates how institutional opacity sustains marginalisation by reinforcing dominant epistemic standpoints and excluding critical or underrepresented voices. Similarly, bell hooks {hooks 1994} and Henry Giroux {Giroux 2011} highlight institutional biases as mechanisms that uphold oppressive epistemic structures, implicitly silencing diverse intellectual contributions.

Building on my previous scholarship, notably 'Epistemic Violence or Simply Good Marketing?' {Kahl 2025}, I argue that institutional opacity and implicit bias constitute forms of epistemic violence, systematically marginalising critical and diverse perspectives. This epistemic violence directly harms the integrity and plurality of philosophical inquiry, breaching PhilPapers' fiduciary responsibilities. PhilPapers' current review practices clearly undermine fiduciary obligations toward both individual scholars and knowledge itself, necessitating immediate institutional reform.

4.4 Fiduciary-Epistemic Reforms: Toward Transparency, Representation, and Justice

To address these fiduciary-epistemic concerns effectively, PhilPapers must implement concrete reforms designed to enhance transparency, scalability, and equitable handling of scholarly output.

First, PhilPapers should adopt transparent reviewer-selection guidelines, clearly detailing reviewer criteria, procedures, and expectations. Transparent criteria counter implicit biases, enhancing fairness and accountability.

Second, to adequately manage increasing volumes of scholarly output and to counter the limitations of traditional peer-review processes, PhilPapers must explore supplementary peer-review mechanisms designed for scalability and inclusivity. Practical alternatives could include decentralised, community-driven peer-review methods, open-review platforms, or structured post-publication peer-review processes. These models enhance scalability and epistemic openness, allowing for quicker dissemination and equitable assessment of scholarship, regardless of the author's institutional affiliation or the volume of their scholarly contributions.

For example, decentralised peer-review platforms, community-driven evaluation processes, or transparent open-review forums can efficiently accommodate prolific or independent scholars producing scholarship at accelerated rates. Such alternative mechanisms broaden epistemic participation, reduce institutional gatekeeping, and foster greater epistemic plurality and diversity.

Finally, establishing an Institutional Epistemic Accountability Committee composed of diverse epistemic representatives—including independent and prolific scholars—would continuously oversee peer-review practices, assess scalability, and ensure transparency and fairness. The committee's responsibilities would include ongoing evaluation of peer-review methods, recommendations for improvements, and active advocacy for epistemic openness, accountability, and diversity.

These fiduciary-epistemic reforms operationalise PhilPapers' responsibilities toward knowledge, scholars, and epistemic communities, actively ensuring scalable, fair, and epistemically inclusive peer-review processes capable of handling rapidly expanding scholarly contributions.

5. Linguistic and Multimodal Exclusion: Institutional Limits on Epistemic Diversity

5.1 Linguistic Classification and Epistemic Injustice

PhilPapers' predominantly English-language policies create epistemic cages—systematic barriers restricting epistemic diversity and marginalising multilingual scholarship. Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of linguistic borderlands {Anzaldúa 1987} highlights how knowledge produced at linguistic intersections offers unique epistemic richness that resists confinement within monolingual institutional frameworks. By imposing single-language publication requirements, PhilPapers marginalises hybrid or multilingual scholarship, such as bilingual comparative philosophy, intercultural ethics, or epistemologies developed within multilingual contexts.

José Medina {Medina 2013} further illustrates how linguistic monolingualism perpetuates epistemic marginalisation, reinforcing oppressive epistemic hierarchies and systemic ignorance. Antonia Darder {Darder 2017} similarly emphasises that institutional linguistic exclusion reinforces oppressive power dynamics, limiting critical engagement and marginalising multilingual epistemic contributions. In practical terms, scholarship

drawing upon diverse linguistic traditions—such as comparative East-West philosophies or studies of epistemic injustice from multilingual contexts—is disadvantaged or excluded entirely from meaningful participation in platforms like PhilPapers.

PhilPapers' linguistic exclusivity constitutes a fiduciary breach toward knowledge itself, neglecting its responsibility to safeguard epistemic diversity, openness, and inclusivity as required by epistemic justice. By failing to embrace multilingual epistemologies, PhilPapers implicitly confines philosophical inquiry within narrow institutional limits, harming the richness, depth, and critical potential of scholarly discourse.

5.2 Marginalisation of Multilingual Epistemologies

Multilingual epistemologies substantially enrich philosophical inquiry by fostering critical dialogue and epistemic exchange across linguistic and cultural boundaries. My earlier scholarship, notably on epistemic humility and the transposition of ethical duties {Kahl 2025}, argues that institutions have fiduciary obligations toward knowledge itself, demanding active openness to epistemic diversity and critical recognition of institutional biases—including linguistic ones.

PhilPapers' current monolingual publication policies marginalise multilingual scholars whose research engages multiple linguistic traditions or incorporates cross-cultural perspectives. For example, scholarship integrating philosophical insights from both Chinese and Western epistemic traditions, or studies of epistemic injustice in multilingual and postcolonial contexts, face systematic disadvantage or exclusion from PhilPapers' categorisation frameworks. Such exclusion impoverishes philosophical discourse by restricting distinctive epistemic perspectives and innovative multilingual scholarship that challenges entrenched epistemic assumptions.

Thus, PhilPapers' monolingual constraints represent fiduciary failures, directly undermining epistemic diversity, integrity, and justice. Fiduciary responsibility toward knowledge requires institutional openness to multilingual epistemic contributions, clearly fostering epistemic humility, diversity, and genuine philosophical inclusivity.

5.3 Multimodal Scholarship, Epistemic Richness, and Institutional Flattening

Multimodal epistemologies—including visual, embodied, performative, poetic, and interdisciplinary forms— offer distinctive epistemic contributions by challenging traditional, text-based approaches. As argued in my previous scholarship, 'The Intelligence of Silence' {Kahl 2025}, multimodal inquiry captures dimensions of knowledge often neglected by conventional textual methods, such as embodied, affective, and sensory forms of understanding. Ronald de Sousa's work on embodied cognition {de Sousa 2007} further demonstrates how embodied and sensory modes of inquiry significantly enhance philosophical depth and relevance.

PhilPapers' current text-centric categorisation and publishing standards systematically exclude multimodal contributions, such as philosophical video papers, poetic-philosophical explorations, or philosophical performances, resulting in epistemic flattening. For example, scholars working in visual philosophy, performative philosophical analyses, or poetic modes of epistemic expression often find their contributions categorically excluded or inadequately recognised within PhilPapers' institutional framework. This exclusion impoverishes philosophical discourse, limits epistemic richness, and restricts epistemic pluralism.

By marginalising multimodal epistemologies, PhilPapers breaches fiduciary responsibilities toward knowledge itself, failing to uphold openness, diversity, and epistemic humility. Such institutional limitations constrain the critical and creative potential essential to vibrant and genuinely inclusive philosophical inquiry.

5.4 Fiduciary-Epistemic Reform: Toward Linguistic and Multimodal Inclusion

To meaningfully address these fiduciary-epistemic breaches, PhilPapers must adopt concrete institutional reforms that enhance linguistic and multimodal inclusivity.

First, PhilPapers should develop multilingual publication and categorisation frameworks, supporting bilingual and multilingual scholarship. Practical measures could include bilingual abstracts, multilingual indexing, or dedicated bilingual/multilingual special journal issues. For instance, scholars submitting bilingual comparative philosophy or intercultural studies could benefit from a clear categorisation framework that recognises multilingual epistemic contributions equally alongside monolingual ones.

Second, PhilPapers must formally incorporate multimodal epistemologies within its categorisation and publication systems. Clearly defined publication categories for visual philosophy, poetic-philosophical inquiry, philosophical performances, and interdisciplinary multimodal scholarship should be established. Practically, this could involve creating publication guidelines for multimodal submissions, specialised peer-review procedures tailored to non-textual contributions, and multimedia indexing systems that accommodate diverse epistemic forms.

Third, establishing an Institutional Epistemic Diversity and Inclusion Committee is essential. This committee, composed of multilingual and multimodal scholars, should regularly evaluate PhilPapers' categorisation, publication practices, and reviewer policies. It would recommend procedural improvements, advocate ongoing epistemic openness, and ensure fiduciary accountability. Examples of successful committees within scholarly associations could serve as models, ensuring PhilPapers effectively promotes and sustains epistemic diversity.

These fiduciary-epistemic reforms operationalise institutional responsibilities toward knowledge and the broader epistemic community, actively promoting epistemic diversity, openness, and genuine philosophical inclusivity.

6. Epistemic Domestication and Gatekeeping Motives: Fiduciary-Epistemic Critique of Institutional Control

6.1 Institutional Domestication of Knowledge

Epistemic domestication describes institutional practices that systematically reshape diverse, innovative, and critical forms of knowledge into institutionally convenient forms, constraining epistemic inquiry and neutralising its transformative potential. In my earlier work, "Foucault's Dream: On the Domestication of Knowledge and Epistemic Subjugation" {Kahl 2025}, I argued that institutions domesticate critical epistemic contributions by converting emancipatory knowledge into symbolic capital or superficial markers of institutional legitimacy.

Academic gatekeepers—such as PhilPapers, JSTOR, major publishers, and curated academic repositories—bear fiduciary responsibilities toward scholars, society, and knowledge itself. These obligations encompass maintaining epistemic integrity, promoting genuine epistemic plurality, and fostering innovation {Kahl 2025, 'Epistemic Humility and the Transposition of Ethical Duties into Epistemic Duties'}. However, prevailing institutional policies—such as rigid monolingual frameworks, inflexible publication standards, and opaque peer-review processes—domesticate knowledge by marginalising multilingual epistemologies, multimodal scholarship (including visual philosophy and poetic-philosophical analyses), and interdisciplinary research. Scholars engaging in hybrid or multimodal research are systematically disadvantaged because their work resists categorisation into traditional institutional frameworks.

Moreover, institutional domestication reinforces both social and academic stratification. Established disciplinary norms and institutional affiliations implicitly privilege economically well-resourced scholars, disadvantaging independent researchers and interdisciplinary innovators. Such stratification widens socioeconomic divides, reduces epistemic equity, and undermines social cohesion by restricting collaborative, integrative scholarship across diverse epistemic boundaries.

Kuyumcu and Méndez-Grueso (2025) characterise these restrictive and bureaucratic institutional practices as 'microfascist encounters', highlighting subtle yet pervasive forms of suppression exercised through minor acts of institutional control. Microfascism manifests through bureaucratic regulations, arbitrary enforcement of policy, and appeals to procedural rules, ostensibly in the name of maintaining order or security. Such seemingly minor institutional actions, in practice, stifle innovative scholarship, silence dissent, and diminish democratic epistemic participation. These micro-level institutional suppressions constitute forms of epistemic domestication that implicitly uphold existing hierarchies, marginalise epistemically diverse voices, and erode the democratic character of scholarly communities.

Fiduciary obligations toward epistemic diversity require institutions to actively dismantle these epistemic silos and microfascist practices, countering academic stratification by fostering genuinely inclusive epistemic frameworks and practices. Institutional gatekeepers, by restricting epistemic discourse within narrow, controlled categories, undermine epistemic diversity and critical intellectual engagement, impoverishing scholarly discourse. Such practices constitute fiduciary breaches, violating clear responsibilities toward epistemic openness, plurality, social cohesion, and integrity.

6.2 Epistemic Domestication as Fiduciary Breach

Epistemic domestication constitutes a significant breach of fiduciary responsibilities toward knowledge itself. Fiduciary obligations require institutions to actively cultivate epistemic diversity, transparency, and openness, resisting practices of epistemic conformity and domestication {Kahl 2025, 'Directors' Epistemic Duties and Fiduciary Openness'}. Institutions have fiduciary duties to safeguard epistemic plurality, authenticity, and innovation, ensuring knowledge is not reduced merely to institutional assets or commodities.

Institutional epistemic domestication—manifested through linguistic conformity, the exclusion of multimodal scholarship, and marginalisation of critical epistemic contributions—constitutes clear breaches of fiduciary obligations. Such domestication prioritises institutional convenience, ideological conformity, and colonial epistemic hierarchies, systematically marginalising intercultural and interdisciplinary scholarship {Pindi 2020}. This practice perpetuates epistemic injustice, particularly for researchers working across cultural boundaries or from historically marginalised perspectives, thus impoverishing scholarly inquiry and weakening academic integrity.

To fulfil their fiduciary responsibilities, institutions must actively counter epistemic domestication by embracing epistemic openness, innovation, and plurality. Institutional reforms must include intercultural and interdisciplinary scholarship, providing recognition and platforms for diverse epistemic voices. Challenging colonial epistemic hierarchies and fostering genuine plurality requires deliberate efforts, such as clearly articulated institutional guidelines, inclusive peer-review practices, and structured oversight mechanisms, to ensure accountability and uphold robust epistemic integrity and humility.

6.3 Representation, Legitimacy, and Gatekeeper Motives

Institutional motivations behind epistemic domestication and gatekeeping include the pursuit of academic status, institutional legitimacy, and ideological conformity. Elizabeth Anderson's examination of epistemic democracy {Anderson 2012} reveals how institutions, driven by a desire for legitimacy, can unintentionally foster epistemic conformity and thus limit genuine epistemic plurality. Similarly, Henry Giroux's critique of institutional power dynamics {Giroux 2011} helps illustrate how institutions seek ideological conformity as a means of maintaining epistemic authority and institutional control. While Giroux does not specifically employ the term 'epistemic domestication', his work provides crucial context for understanding institutional tendencies toward epistemic conformity.

My concept of epistemic domestication, first elaborated in my work, "Foucault's Dream: On the Domestication of Knowledge and Epistemic Subjugation" (2025), and 'The Cult of Personality in Academia' (2025), precisely describes how institutions reshape innovative and critical epistemic contributions into institutionally convenient forms. Epistemic domestication implicitly marginalises disruptive or diverse epistemic perspectives, restricting the potential for critical philosophical engagement. Thus, institutional gatekeeping, driven by motives for legitimacy, conformity, and epistemic control, facilitates epistemic domestication, creating institutional environments hostile to epistemic plurality, creativity, and diversity.

6.4 Fiduciary-Epistemic Reform: Toward Genuine Epistemic Plurality and Openness

Addressing epistemic domestication and gatekeeping requires practical institutional reforms designed to enhance epistemic plurality, transparency, and accountability.

First, PhilPapers should conduct regular epistemic diversity audits. These audits would systematically review current categorisation, publication, and peer-review policies to identify biases and exclusion patterns. Practical measures could include openly publishing audit findings, setting clear targets for increased multilingual and multimodal representation, and providing periodic accountability reports to scholars and the broader epistemic community.

Second, PhilPapers must establish transparent reviewer-selection guidelines and publish clear criteria for epistemic categorisation and evaluation. Transparent procedures, such as openly documented reviewer selection criteria and justification of policy decisions, would significantly enhance institutional accountability, reduce implicit biases, and foster genuine epistemic openness.

Third, dedicated spaces or publication categories should be established for innovative multimodal, multilingual, or interdisciplinary scholarship, encouraging epistemic diversity. Practically, PhilPapers might implement dedicated multimodal or multilingual special issues or defined publication frameworks tailored to support innovative epistemic contributions, countering epistemic domestication.

Finally, creating an Institutional Epistemic Plurality and Accountability Committee, composed of diverse epistemic representatives, would oversee the implementation of these fiduciary reforms. This committee would regularly assess the effectiveness of measures promoting epistemic plurality, transparency, and accountability. Its responsibilities would include ongoing recommendations for procedural improvements, active advocacy for epistemic openness, and institutional self-examination regarding epistemic biases.

These fiduciary-epistemic reforms operationalise PhilPapers' responsibilities toward knowledge and scholars, resisting epistemic domestication, fostering genuine epistemic diversity, and ensuring institutional epistemic openness and humility.

7. Knowledge is Multimodal and Embodied: Reclaiming Epistemic Authenticity

7.1 Multimodal Knowledge as Epistemic Authenticity

Multimodal knowledge encompasses diverse forms of knowing—including visual, embodied, performative, poetic, and interdisciplinary modes—that extend beyond traditional textual methodologies. Institutions often prioritise linear textual approaches, implicitly overlooking embodied, affective, and sensory dimensions of knowledge. These traditional practices neglect essential epistemic contributions offered by multimodal epistemologies.

Antonia Darder's critical pedagogy emphasises the significance of epistemic plurality and diverse ways of knowing, challenging dominant institutional structures that marginalise epistemologies which deviate from established academic norms {Darder 2017}. According to Darder, recognising diverse forms of epistemic expression is essential for fostering democratic, inclusive, and genuinely critical educational environments. Similarly, Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of epistemic borderlands {Anzaldúa 1987} highlights how multimodal scholarship transcends conventional epistemic boundaries, enabling scholars to engage hybrid, transcultural, and interdisciplinary forms of knowledge production.

In my previous scholarship, 'The Intelligence of Silence' (2025), I demonstrate how multimodal epistemologies—such as silence, sensory perception, and embodied cognition—reveal epistemic dimensions typically inaccessible to purely textual approaches. Further, my multimodal poetic thesis, 'Who is Afraid of Free-Range Knowledge?' (2025), exemplifies the intellectual rigour and epistemic value inherent in innovative multimodal scholarship. Its positive scholarly reception validates the viability, necessity, and fiduciary relevance of multimodal knowledge forms.

Epistemic gatekeepers—such as PhilPapers, JSTOR, major publishers, and academic repositories—hold fiduciary duties toward scholars, society, and knowledge itself {Kahl 2025, 'Epistemic Humility and the Transposition of Ethical Duties into Epistemic Duties'}. However, by enforcing rigid monomodal and monolingual standards, these gatekeepers domesticate knowledge, implicitly undermining epistemic plurality and innovation {Kahl 2025, "Foucault's Dream: On the Domestication of Knowledge and Epistemic Subjugation"}. Genuine knowledge is inherently diverse, dynamic, and multidimensional; it resists confinement within institutionally convenient forms.

Institutions thus have fiduciary responsibilities toward actively embracing multimodal epistemologies, as these approaches foster genuine epistemic plurality, accessibility, and completeness. By incorporating multimodal

forms of knowledge, epistemic gatekeepers can fulfil their fiduciary obligations, cultivating epistemic authenticity and creating a more inclusive, diverse, and critically engaged scholarly environment.

7.2 Multimodal Scholarship in Practice

Multimodal scholarship, integrating artistic, scientific, and philosophical methodologies, enriches philosophical inquiry by capturing epistemic dimensions inaccessible through traditional textual forms. Practical intersections between art, philosophy, and science clearly illustrate the distinct benefits of multimodal epistemologies. For instance, visual philosophy employs diagrams and visual metaphors to succinctly communicate philosophical arguments, complementing textual explanations and enhancing clarity. Performative epistemology uses embodied enactments and gestures to articulate complex philosophical concepts—such as ethical dilemmas, epistemic injustice, or phenomenological experiences—more effectively than purely textual representations. Poetic-philosophical approaches integrate metaphor and rhythm to articulate nuanced affective and sensory insights typically overlooked by analytical methods.

An example of successful multimodal scholarship is my recent multimodal poetic thesis, 'Who is Afraid of Free-Range Knowledge?' (2025). This work integrates poetry, visual imagery, and rigorous philosophical analysis, demonstrating how multimodal approaches deepen epistemic engagement by capturing affective, sensory, and embodied dimensions of knowledge. The thesis challenges conventional epistemic frameworks and institutional boundaries, fostering epistemic plurality, innovation, and authenticity. Its positive scholarly reception validates multimodal scholarship's intellectual rigour and epistemic value, underscoring the necessity for epistemic gatekeepers to support diverse epistemic methods.

The implications of multimodal scholarship extend beyond academia. Educational methodologies benefit from multimodal approaches by accommodating diverse learning styles, facilitating deeper embodied understanding of complex concepts. In public policy, visual epistemologies such as infographics and visual storytelling enhance communication of complex policy impacts transparently and effectively to wider audiences. Legal contexts similarly benefit from multimodal epistemologies: visually reconstructed crime scenes, performative reenactments, or embodied courtroom testimonies provide epistemic clarity and transparency beyond traditional textual methods, fostering clearer comprehension and justice.

By embracing multimodal epistemologies, institutions fulfill fiduciary responsibilities toward epistemic plurality, openness, and innovation, cultivating a richer, more inclusive, and authentically diverse epistemic environment.

7.3 Challenges and Limitations of Multimodal Epistemologies

While multimodal epistemologies offer significant epistemic benefits, clearly recognising their methodological limitations and institutional challenges is essential. Certain disciplines rely on rigorous textual analysis, quantification, or standardised methods; contexts where multimodal approaches might prove epistemically insufficient or impractical.

Methodological challenges such as establishing clear evaluation criteria, ensuring rigour, and standardising multimodal contributions present notable difficulties for effective institutional integration. Traditional academic evaluation frameworks privilege textual scholarship, complicating the rigorous assessment of visual, embodied, poetic, or performative scholarship. Evaluating multimodal epistemologies requires clearly articulated, context-

sensitive criteria designed specifically to capture unique epistemic dimensions such as sensory or embodied knowledge.

Integrating multimodal scholarship within conventional institutional frameworks also presents practical challenges. Institutions often lack suitable procedures for multimodal peer-review, evaluation standards, and academic recognition. For example, tenure and promotion processes rarely accommodate multimodal works, placing scholars working in these innovative areas at a structural disadvantage.

Furthermore, institutional resistance to multimodal epistemologies can reflect deeper processes of epistemic domestication, in which knowledge is constrained to fit familiar institutional norms and structures. As argued in my earlier work {Kahl 2025, "Foucault's Dream: On the Domestication of Knowledge and Epistemic Subjugation" (2025); Kahl 2025, 'Directors' Epistemic Duties and Fiduciary Openness'}, institutions have fiduciary obligations to resist epistemic domestication by embracing diverse epistemic methods. Acknowledging the methodological boundaries of multimodal scholarship thus constitutes a fiduciary responsibility, reflecting epistemic humility and transparency.

Distinguishing contexts favourable to multimodal epistemologies—such as interdisciplinary research, innovative pedagogy, and critical epistemic engagements—is crucial. Conversely, recognising contexts where traditional textual methods remain preferable or essential maintains methodological clarity and balance. Institutions, through this fiduciary awareness, actively foster genuine epistemic plurality and innovation, ensuring a balanced, inclusive, and epistemically authentic scholarly environment.

8. Recommendations for Fiduciary and Epistemic Improvement: Toward Institutional Reform and Epistemic Authenticity

8.1 Fiduciary Reform in Academic Platforms

Epistemic gatekeepers such as PhilPapers, JSTOR, major academic publishers, and curated academic repositories, hold fiduciary responsibilities toward scholars, society, and knowledge itself. These fiduciary obligations require institutions to uphold epistemic integrity, promote genuine epistemic plurality, and ensure openness, transparency, and innovation. However, as argued in my earlier scholarship {Kahl 2025, 'Epistemic Justice and Institutional Responsibility in Academia'}, current institutional practices frequently breach these duties through processes of epistemic domestication, marginalisation, and exclusion.

To practically address these fiduciary breaches, institutions should implement regular epistemic diversity audits. Such audits would systematically assess institutional policies, categorisation frameworks, and peer-review practices to identify implicit biases, systemic marginalisation, and barriers to epistemic diversity. Audit outcomes should be transparently published, guiding targeted institutional improvements toward genuine epistemic inclusion.

Clearly articulated fiduciary guidelines—grounded in epistemic humility and the transposition of ethical duties into epistemic duties {Kahl 2025, 'Epistemic Humility and the Transposition of Ethical Duties into Epistemic Duties'}—should guide institutional policies, review procedures, and knowledge categorisation systems. Institutions must actively resist epistemic domestication, academic siloisation, and stratification, encouraging interdisciplinary integration, multimodal epistemologies, and epistemic innovation.

Institutions should also establish clearly structured fiduciary oversight committees tasked with ongoing monitoring and evaluation of compliance with fiduciary-epistemic responsibilities. These committees should comprise diverse epistemic representatives—including independent scholars and researchers working across disciplines and epistemic modalities. Committee responsibilities include transparent periodic evaluations, clearly communicated recommendations, and ongoing advocacy for epistemic openness, methodological inclusivity, and institutional accountability.

These fiduciary reforms concretely operationalise institutional responsibilities toward knowledge itself and epistemic communities, significantly enhancing epistemic justice, authenticity, diversity, and innovation.

8.2 Inclusion of Independent and Multimodal Scholarship

Fiduciary responsibilities toward knowledge require institutions to actively support diverse forms of scholarship, including work by independent scholars and multimodal epistemic practices. Current institutional gatekeeping—particularly restrictive registration and publication requirements—marginalises scholars lacking formal institutional affiliations, reinforcing socioeconomic and academic stratification and perpetuating epistemic injustice. These practices systematically privilege institutionally affiliated researchers, disadvantaging independent, interdisciplinary, multimodal, and culturally diverse scholars, and compounding the effects of epistemic exclusion experienced by faculty of colour {Settles et al. 2021}.

Settles et al. (2021) demonstrate how epistemic exclusion operates as a systematic marginalisation of scholars from historically underrepresented groups, notably scholars of colour, by delegitimising their research contributions, limiting opportunities for advancement, and reducing their scholarly visibility. Institutions' restrictive policies, rigid peer-review criteria, and narrow evaluative frameworks significantly contribute to epistemic marginalisation. To counter these injustices, institutional reforms must address underlying structural inequities.

First, academic platforms must remove restrictive registration requirements that privilege scholars with formal affiliations and economic resources, implementing alternative validation processes to ensure equitable inclusion. Practical mechanisms may include clear pathways for independent scholars to demonstrate scholarly legitimacy through peer endorsement, recognised publications, professional recommendations, or established community contributions.

Second, institutions must establish transparent peer-review procedures that openly disclose reviewer identities, selection criteria, and evaluation standards. Transparent and inclusive selection processes should ensure diverse representation, including scholars of colour, independent researchers, interdisciplinary practitioners, and advocates of multimodal scholarship. Clear, transparent criteria in peer-review processes can significantly reduce implicit bias and epistemic exclusion, thus enhancing epistemic justice and fairness.

Third, academic institutions must formally accommodate multimodal scholarship through clearly defined publication categories supporting visual philosophy, poetic-philosophical inquiry, embodied epistemologies, and interdisciplinary methodologies. Examples could include dedicated journal sections, multimedia repositories, and specialised peer-review mechanisms adapted to assess diverse epistemic forms.

Finally, clearly structured institutional oversight committees should be established, consisting of diverse epistemic representatives including independent scholars, scholars of colour, and multidisciplinary researchers. These committees would continually monitor institutional practices, ensuring accountability, transparency, and inclusivity, and actively promoting epistemic openness, plurality, and fairness.

By implementing these fiduciary reforms, academic institutions fulfil their responsibilities towards scholars, society, and knowledge itself, fostering epistemic plurality, innovation, and justice, and reducing epistemic exclusion, marginalisation, and stratification.

8.3 Developing a Multimodal Scholarly Infrastructure

To foster genuine epistemic plurality and innovation, academic institutions must actively develop structured frameworks that accommodate multimodal scholarship within their scholarly infrastructure. Traditional scholarly systems predominantly favour textual scholarship, often excluding innovative visual, poetic, embodied, performative, and interdisciplinary forms of knowledge. As demonstrated in my earlier works— particularly 'The Intelligence of Silence' (2025) and 'Who is Afraid of Free-Range Knowledge?' (2025)— multimodal scholarship provides epistemic authenticity by capturing dimensions of knowledge inaccessible through textual formats alone.

First, institutions should formally establish clearly defined publication categories within academic journals, repositories, and platforms to accommodate multimodal scholarship. These could include dedicated sections or special issues specifically for visual philosophy, poetic analyses, embodied epistemologies, and performative scholarship, providing appropriate spaces for innovative research.

Second, scholarly platforms must articulate methodological and evaluation guidelines tailored for multimodal epistemologies. Such guidelines should include clearly defined assessment criteria designed to rigorously evaluate non-textual contributions. This evaluation would consider sensory, affective, and embodied aspects distinct from traditional scholarship, thereby ensuring fairness, methodological rigour, and scholarly recognition.

Third, specialised peer-review processes adapted for multimodal submissions are necessary. Institutions should establish peer-review frameworks involving interdisciplinary and multimodal experts capable of evaluating visual, performative, poetic, and embodied scholarship effectively. Structured peer-review processes would enhance epistemic fairness, transparency, and methodological credibility.

Finally, institutions should create dedicated Institutional Epistemic Plurality and Accountability Committees. These committees should comprise diverse representatives—multimodal scholars, independent researchers, and interdisciplinary experts—responsible for regular oversight of multimodal policies and practices. Their responsibilities would include monitoring multimodal inclusion, transparently reporting institutional progress, and issuing recommendations to ensure ongoing fiduciary compliance, epistemic humility, and accountability.

By adopting these institutional reforms, academic platforms would honour their fiduciary responsibilities towards knowledge, scholars, and society, thereby promoting a scholarly environment characterised by authentic epistemic diversity, innovation, and inclusivity.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Summary of Main Arguments and Critiques

In this paper, I critically examined academic gatekeepers—platforms such as PhilPapers, JSTOR, publishers, and repositories—as fiduciaries entrusted with ensuring epistemic justice and accountability. However, current

institutional practices—including restrictive registration, monolingual and monomodal publication standards, opaque peer-review processes, and disciplinary categorisations—result in epistemic domestication. Such domestication systematically marginalises independent researchers, interdisciplinary and multilingual scholars, and proponents of multimodal methodologies.

Institutional epistemic domestication perpetuates socioeconomic and academic stratification, disproportionately affecting economically disadvantaged researchers and scholars from historically marginalised groups. Settles et al. (2021) highlight that epistemic exclusion significantly impacts faculty of colour by marginalising their scholarly contributions, while Pindi (2020) argues that academic colonial gatekeeping reinforces institutional hierarchies and limits intercultural and interdisciplinary scholarship. Furthermore, subtle institutional practices described as microfascism by Kuyumcu and Méndez-Grueso (2025) impose bureaucratic control, suppress innovation, reinforce conformity, and diminish scholarly freedom. These institutional failings constitute breaches of fiduciary duties toward epistemic justice and plurality.

Together, these practices represent fiduciary breaches, violating institutional duties toward epistemic openness, plurality, and justice.

9.2 Importance of Fiduciary and Epistemic Reform

Addressing these breaches is critical for promoting epistemic justice and accountability. Institutions must uphold their fiduciary duties by actively fostering diversity, inclusion, and methodological openness. Transparent peer-review processes, alternative validation methods for independent scholars, and representational diversity in reviewer panels are crucial steps toward addressing epistemic injustice. Clear institutional policies and evaluation guidelines can effectively reduce biases and marginalisation.

Furthermore, institutions must formally accommodate multimodal and multilingual scholarship by establishing dedicated publication categories, specialised peer-review procedures, and multimedia indexing systems. Oversight committees comprising diverse scholars should regularly monitor institutional compliance, ensuring transparency, accountability, and openness toward innovative forms of knowledge production. Implementing these reforms will fulfil institutional fiduciary obligations and foster a genuinely inclusive scholarly environment.

By implementing these reforms, academic platforms can fulfil their fiduciary responsibilities, promoting authentic epistemic plurality and fostering a genuinely inclusive scholarly environment.

9.3 Future Directions and Scholarly Responsibility

Sustaining epistemic justice requires continuous commitment from institutions and scholars. Researchers must regularly reassess institutional practices to ensure genuine epistemic diversity and inclusion. Further research should examine effective governance models, transparent peer-review procedures, and evaluation frameworks supporting diverse methodologies.

Additionally, scholars have a responsibility to remain vigilant against epistemic domestication, exclusion, and marginalisation. Continuous advocacy for transparency, epistemic humility, and methodological inclusivity is essential for addressing structural inequalities and promoting openness. Ultimately, fostering epistemic plurality is essential to democratic engagement, societal cohesion, and academic innovation. Institutions and scholars

share the responsibility to support innovative, interdisciplinary, and multimodal scholarship, thereby honouring their fiduciary duties toward knowledge and society.

Ultimately, fostering epistemic plurality is essential for democratic engagement, societal cohesion, and academic innovation. Institutions and scholars share the responsibility of actively supporting innovative, interdisciplinary, and multimodal scholarship, thereby honouring their fiduciary duties toward knowledge, society, and the broader epistemic community.

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