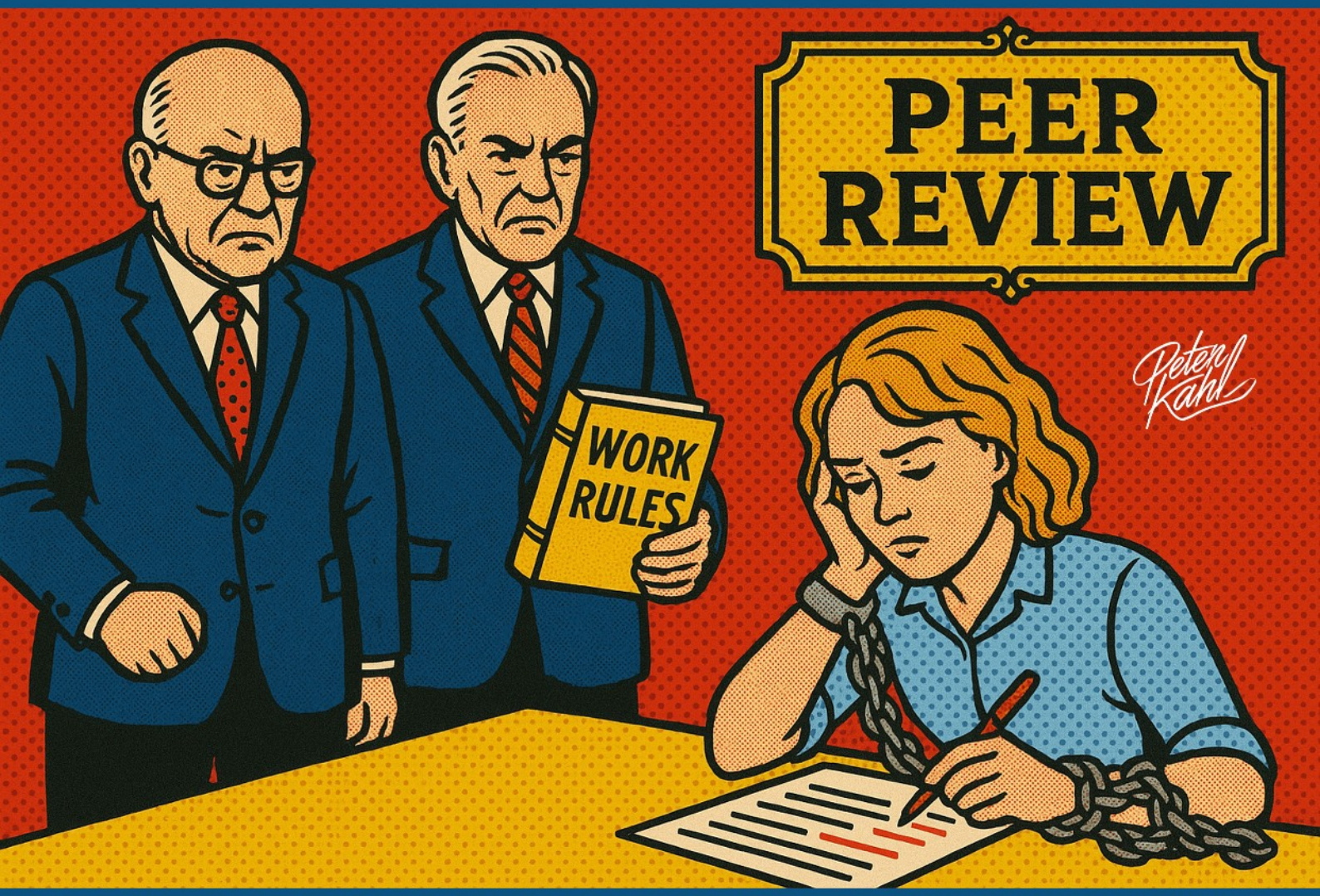
L&R
Lex et Ratio Ltd



Why We Must Reject the Colonial Peer Review

Fiduciary-epistemic duties, epistemic agency, and institutional openness in the age of generative AI

PETER KAHL

Lex et Ratio Ltd

Why We Must Reject the Colonial Peer Review

Fiduciary-Epistemic Duties, Epistemic Agency, and Institutional Openness in the Age of Generative AI

A critical legal-philosophical analysis of colonial epistemic structures and the fiduciary governance of knowledge

PETER KAHL

5 July 2025

First published in London by Peter Kahl, 5 July 2025.
Second edition published in London by Lex et Ratio Ltd, 15 September 2025.

About the Publisher

Lex et Ratio Ltd provides research, advisory, and strategic consulting in governance reform, fiduciary accountability, and epistemic ethics, integrating legal analysis, institutional theory, and practical reform strategies across public, corporate, and academic institutions.

Abstract

This paper contends that traditional academic peer review is a colonial epistemic structure that entrenches injustice and exclusion rather than ensuring quality. Drawing on Joseph Raz's critique of irrational delegation, Martin Heidegger's analysis of technological enframing, Henry Giroux's pedagogy of critical resistance, and Raewyn Connell's sociology of global academic monocultures, I show how peer review perpetuates testimonial and hermeneutical injustices, marginalising multimodal, interdisciplinary, Indigenous, diasporic, and cognitively diverse scholarship.

A comparative analysis of the United Kingdom, Netherlands, France, Germany, and the United States reveals that statutory and constitutional safeguards rarely translate into proactive fiduciary practice. Institutional reliance on peer review instead reinforces Eurocentric epistemic hierarchies and systematically undermines scholarly autonomy.

In response, I propose an epistemocratic governance model that embeds fiduciary transparency, distributed epistemic agency, multimodal and cognitive pluralism, and responsible AI integration. This framework dismantles colonial gatekeeping and reorients institutions toward epistemic justice and democratic accountability.

The paper concludes that colonial peer review must be rejected outright. Only epistemocratic renewal can secure authentic pluralism, integrity, and accountability in contemporary academia.

Keywords

colonial peer review, epistemic justice, fiduciary governance, epistemocracy, testimonial injustice, hermeneutical injustice, multimodal epistemologies, cognitive diversity, academic freedom, AI governance, epistemic pluralism, institutional accountability, decolonial theory, critical pedagogy

Working Paper Status

This paper forms part of a wider research programme on fiduciary-epistemic governance and will be integrated into my forthcoming monograph *Beyond Epistemic Clientelism*. Readers are welcome to cite it, but please note that revisions are likely as the material is incorporated into the book project.

•

Table of Contents

1. Peer Review and Colonial Epistemic Structures

1.1 Unpacking Coloniality in Peer Review

Traditional peer review, widely treated as a cornerstone of scholarly legitimacy, is not merely an impartial quality-assurance mechanism. It operates as an epistemic gatekeeping practice embedded in colonial structures of knowledge validation. In practice, evaluation is carried out by universities, journals, publishers, editorial boards, and large repositories and infrastructures—ranging from PhilPapers and JSTOR to ResearchGate (a visibility-driven platform) and ORCID (an identity registry that shapes discoverability and credit). Across these sites, prevailing Western disciplinary conventions are normalised, with a premium on textual, quantitative, and standardised methods, while multimodal, interdisciplinary, Indigenous, and other non-Western epistemologies are routinely devalued (Connell, 2019; Mignolo, 2000).

This pattern yields two recurring forms of epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice, where credibility deficits attach to scholars employing marginalised or unconventional approaches, and hermeneutical injustice, where structural gaps in collective interpretive resources prevent certain communities from articulating experience in institutionally intelligible ways (Fricker, 2007; Medina, 2012; Spivak, 1988). Contemporary accounts from performance- and intercultural-studies likewise show how gatekeeping practices suppress embodied and intercultural knowledges, reinforcing colonial hierarchies of value (Pindi, 2020).

My own analyses identify mechanisms by which these hierarchies are maintained. Optocratic drift shifts evaluation towards what can be readily counted or ranked, displacing qualitative judgement. Fiducial hollowing reduces genuine fiduciary care for knowledge to procedural compliance. Epistemic domestication standardises plural knowledges into institutionally convenient formats, narrowing autonomy and range (Kahl, 2025c; Kahl, 2025g). The cumulative effect is a curated canon of the ‘sayable’ that travels efficiently through indexing systems and metrics, while alternative epistemic forms are filtered out upstream.

Empirical illustrations underline the point. Indigenous research frameworks are often collapsed into pan-ethnic labels that erase specificity and re-centre institutional convenience, reproducing both testimonial and hermeneutical deficits (Smylie, 2005). Within universities and their publication pipelines, faculty of colour report patterned devaluation and exclusion from core epistemic activities—publication, citation, and recognition—consistent with the dynamics of epistemic exclusion (Settles et al., 2021). These practices are not aberrations but symptoms of design choices that align with, rather than contest, colonial epistemic ordering.

In short, peer review and its surrounding infrastructures should be understood as a distributed gatekeeping regime. If institutions are to meet their fiduciary obligations to the epistemic commons, they must re-engineer these regimes to sustain plural modes of inquiry and credit assignment, rather than simply refining metrics within the same colonially inflected frame (Kahl, 2025c; Connell, 2019; Medina, 2012).

1.2 Problem Statement and Importance

In this paper, I address the central epistemic issue of colonial epistemic structures embedded within traditional academic peer review. Institutional peer review processes—conducted by universities, journals, and publishers—systematically marginalise diverse epistemic contributions, perpetuating testimonial injustice (the unfair discounting of scholars’ epistemic credibility) and hermeneutical injustice (structural exclusion of certain epistemologies from meaningful recognition). Furthermore, these practices irrationally delegate scholars’

epistemic agency to anonymous institutional gatekeepers, assessing scholarship according to entrenched, predominantly Western epistemic standards.

Although repositories such as JSTOR, PhilPapers, ResearchGate, and ORCID do not themselves perform peer review in the conventional sense, they serve as indirect epistemic gatekeepers. JSTOR and similar archives curate only content already validated through traditional peer review, thereby reinforcing existing hierarchies of legitimacy. PhilPapers, while presenting itself as a comprehensive database, actively classifies and filters work, influencing what becomes epistemically visible within philosophy. Platforms such as ResearchGate and ORCID amplify academic hierarchies by privileging visibility through metrics, citation counts, and institutional affiliations. These mechanisms reproduce epistemic marginalisation by disproportionately amplifying conventional scholarship while leaving multimodal, interdisciplinary, Indigenous, and cognitively diverse epistemologies at the margins.

Addressing epistemic injustice in peer review systems and related repositories is crucial for several reasons. First, epistemic marginalisation undermines scholarly autonomy, authenticity, and institutional legitimacy. Second, adherence to colonial epistemic practices restricts genuine epistemic pluralism, inhibiting scholarly innovation and institutional capacities to address complex contemporary challenges. Third, epistemic injustices within peer review and dissemination platforms reinforce broader societal inequalities, as knowledge validated through these colonial structures disproportionately shapes societal policies, educational curricula, and public discourse, deepening systemic marginalisation.

Mantz (2019) and Leonardo (2018) critique how institutional Eurocentrism perpetuates epistemic biases and exclusion, while Settles et al. (2021) show how academic evaluation processes marginalise scholars of colour, reinforcing testimonial injustice. Gloria Nziba Pindi (2020) similarly highlights how intercultural and performance-based epistemologies are systematically excluded, evidencing how institutional gatekeeping sustains colonial epistemic hierarchies. These findings underscore the urgency of fiduciary-epistemic governance reforms.

The urgency of confronting colonial epistemic structures is heightened by contemporary developments—particularly the rapid emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI). AI-assisted methodologies enable scholars to produce submissions at unprecedented rates, exacerbating existing backlogs and rendering traditional peer review increasingly unsustainable. Such systemic delays threaten to intensify epistemic injustice, further marginalising innovative and diverse scholarship.

Equally crucial is the accommodation of cognitive diversity. Scholars whose cognitive and communicative modes diverge from institutional norms—often problematically labelled ‘neurodivergent’—experience testimonial injustice when their contributions are devalued based on form rather than substance. Radcliffe (2017) demonstrates how institutional hierarchies marginalise Indigenous and cognitively diverse epistemologies, reinforcing the necessity of fiduciary governance to safeguard epistemic and cognitive diversity.

Antonia Darder’s scholarship (2017; 2019) on decolonising methodologies and critical pedagogy highlights how exclusionary evaluation practices sustain epistemic subordination, while Giroux (2011) argues for critical pedagogy as a means of dismantling epistemic hierarchies. Together, they reinforce the need for institutional reform grounded in epistemic inclusion, care, and social justice. Extending fiduciary theory into epistemic governance contexts, my recent works—Directors’ Epistemic Duties and Fiduciary Openness (Kahl, 2025b) and Epistemic Justice and Institutional Responsibility in Academia (Kahl, 2025e)—emphasise that institutions hold fiduciary-epistemic obligations to protect epistemic plurality, cognitive diversity, and scholarly autonomy.

Elizabeth Anderson's democratic epistemology (2006) further strengthens this argument, showing how epistemic inclusivity enhances institutional legitimacy and accountability.

1.3 Thesis Statement

This paper argues that traditional academic peer review functions as a colonial epistemic gatekeeping practice that systematically marginalises multimodal, interdisciplinary, Indigenous, and cognitively diverse forms of knowledge. By delegating epistemic agency to anonymous institutional gatekeepers who enforce entrenched Western epistemic standards, peer review reproduces two forms of epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice, where scholars' credibility is unjustly discounted, and hermeneutical injustice, where interpretive frameworks exclude entire epistemologies from meaningful recognition (Fricker, 2007; Medina, 2013). These structural injustices are not abstract: they directly affect marginalised scholars, as institutional practices such as peer review and evaluation disproportionately devalue the contributions of scholars of colour, thereby reinforcing testimonial injustice and epistemic exclusion (Settles, Jones, Buchanan, & Dotson, 2021). Similarly, intercultural and performance-based epistemologies are systematically marginalised by traditional academic gatekeeping, which suppresses diverse scholarly identities and voices (Pindi, 2020). Such dynamics constitute breaches of fiduciary-epistemic duties that universities, academic journals, publishers, and repositories owe to the scholarly community and to society at large (Kahl, 2025b, 2025e).

The growing integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) into academic research exacerbates these challenges. AI-assisted submissions accelerate the volume of publications, worsening peer review backlogs and disproportionately excluding innovative and diverse scholarship. As such, traditional peer review is not only epistemically unjust but increasingly unsustainable as a practical system of scholarly evaluation (Kahl, 2025c).

To counter these epistemic and fiduciary failures, this paper advances an epistemocratic governance model. This model is grounded in fiduciary transparency, multimodal epistemic plurality, cognitive inclusivity, and responsible AI oversight. It builds on my recent scholarship (*Directors' Epistemic Duties and Fiduciary Openness*, Kahl, 2025b; *Epistemic Justice and Institutional Responsibility in Academia*, Kahl, 2025e; *Foucault's Dream: On the Domestication of Knowledge and Epistemic Subjugation*, Kahl, 2025g) and extends insights from democratic epistemology (Anderson, 2006), critical pedagogy (Darder, 2017, 2019; Giroux, 2011), and decolonial theory (Connell, 2019; Mignolo, 2000).

By embedding fiduciary oversight roles, structured epistemic audits, and inclusive evaluation mechanisms into institutional governance, epistemocracy provides a pathway toward authentic epistemic justice, scholarly autonomy, and robust institutional integrity in contemporary academia.

1.4 Raz on the Irrationality of Delegating Epistemic Agency

Joseph Raz's philosophical analysis provides valuable insights into the epistemic implications of delegating judgment and autonomy to external authorities. In The Morality of Freedom (1986), Raz argues that genuine autonomy requires individuals to maintain responsibility for their own judgments, beliefs, and evaluations. Delegating this responsibility to external authorities, according to Raz, is fundamentally irrational, as it undermines the necessary conditions for authentic autonomy and moral agency (Raz, 1986). Although Raz does not explicitly employ the term 'epistemic agency', his analysis of autonomy supports my interpretation that scholars bear fundamental epistemic responsibilities towards truth, authenticity, and accountability.

Traditional peer review exemplifies precisely this problematic delegation of epistemic judgment. Scholars submit their work to anonymous reviewers whose evaluations reflect entrenched institutional norms, conventions, and biases. Under this colonial epistemic practice, scholars relinquish their epistemic autonomy, conforming instead to externally defined criteria and expectations. In doing so, peer review transforms scholars from active epistemic agents into passive recipients of judgments made by gatekeepers whose authority rests largely on institutional convention rather than genuine epistemic pluralism.

This problematic delegation aligns closely with colonial epistemic traditions, historically characterised by externally imposed standards overriding individual or community-based epistemic agency. Henry Giroux (2011) underscores how neoliberal academic cultures exacerbate this irrationality by compelling conformity to hierarchical authority structures and narrowing the scope of acceptable knowledge. Where Raz highlights the irrational surrender of autonomy, Giroux demonstrates how institutions structurally reproduce this surrender through pedagogical practices that silence dissent and marginalise diverse epistemic voices.

From a fiduciary-epistemic perspective, universities and other epistemic gatekeepers therefore bear clear duties to protect scholars' epistemic agency and autonomy. Traditional peer review breaches these responsibilities by institutionalising irrational epistemic delegation. As I argued in *Epistemic Gatekeepers and Epistemic Injustice by Design* (Kahl, 2025c), such fiduciary breaches necessitate reform. Together, Raz's autonomy, Giroux's pedagogy of critical resistance, and fiduciary-epistemic theory provide a compelling rationale for transitioning governance away from colonial epistemic practices toward epistemocracy: a model that safeguards pluralism, openness, and authentic autonomy.

1.5 Heidegger's Critique of Technological Enframing Applied to Peer Review

Martin Heidegger's analysis of technological enframing (*Gestell*) provides another valuable framework to examine colonial epistemic structures embedded within peer review. In The Question Concerning Technology (1977), Heidegger describes enframing as a mode of thought that transforms entities—including knowledge and scholarship—into mere resources to be managed, quantified, and controlled according to institutional convenience and standardisation (Heidegger, 1977).

Applying this concept to peer review, I argue that review functions as an epistemic technology that commodifies scholarship, reducing diverse contributions to standardised forms. Under the logic of enframing, peer review privileges quantifiable metrics, disciplinary conformity, and homogenised epistemic formats, marginalising multimodal, Indigenous, and non-Western epistemologies.

Heidegger's critique reveals the alienation embedded in this process. By imposing rigid evaluative standards, peer review alienates scholars from authentic epistemic engagement, compelling conformity to external norms. This practice of epistemic domestication contradicts Heidegger's concept of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*), which demands genuine, autonomous engagement with knowledge.

Here again, Giroux (2011) complements Heidegger by showing how neoliberal academic structures reinforce this technological enframing through a pedagogy of control. Peer review does not merely quantify knowledge; it disciplines scholars into self-regulation, reproducing institutional hierarchies and narrowing intellectual horizons. Where Heidegger warns of the danger of enframing, Giroux shows how the university actively operationalises it in its pedagogical and governance practices.

Consequently, institutions operating under both enframing and neoliberal acceleration perpetuate colonial epistemic structures. Heidegger's authenticity and Giroux's critical pedagogy converge to highlight the

urgency of dismantling these frameworks. Their combined insights reinforce my call for fiduciary-epistemic reforms that transform peer review into a practice grounded in plurality, authenticity, and accountability.

1.6 Generational Challenges: AI and the New Epistemic Landscape

Beyond philosophical critiques of peer review, contemporary developments—especially the rapid emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI)—present significant practical and epistemic challenges to traditional peer review structures. A new generation of scholars, increasingly proficient in AI-assisted methodologies, is producing scholarship at unprecedented speeds and volumes. Traditional peer review processes, already under considerable strain with delays commonly spanning one to two years, risk becoming unsustainable as the proliferation of AI-generated scholarship exacerbates existing backlogs. Consequently, traditional peer review systems are increasingly incapable of effectively managing this unprecedented volume of scholarly outputs. As a result, innovative, multimodal, interdisciplinary, Indigenous, and cognitively diverse scholarship is likely to experience further marginalisation due to institutional overload and entrenched evaluative biases.

These developments also reflect what Martin Heidegger (1977) termed *Gestell*—technological enframing—which transforms knowledge into a calculable resource, processed at the speed and scale demanded by technological systems. Generative AI exemplifies this enframing by accelerating knowledge production while subjecting scholarship to institutional logics of efficiency, quantification, and control. Henry Giroux (2011) similarly critiques the neoliberal university for privileging productivity metrics and acceleration over authenticity, deep learning, and democratic epistemic practices. Together, Heidegger and Giroux illuminate how AI risks amplifying peer review's existing technocratic logics, subordinating epistemic plurality to the imperatives of speed and standardisation.

Moreover, contemporary epistemic challenges extend explicitly to issues of cognitive diversity. Scholars whose cognitive styles and communicative methods differ significantly from prevailing institutional norms—often problematically categorised as 'neurodivergent'—regularly face testimonial injustice. Their epistemic contributions are unjustly discounted due to institutional biases favouring conventional scholarly forms rather than genuinely assessing epistemic value. Continued reliance on such norms within peer review perpetuates epistemic marginalisation and entrenches epistemic violence by framing cognitive diversity as deviation rather than epistemic resource (Settles et al., 2021).

I therefore argue that institutions hold fiduciary-epistemic responsibilities to ensure peer review evolves toward greater inclusivity and explicit recognition of cognitive diversity. Fiduciary governance frameworks must proactively accommodate diverse epistemic expressions, safeguarding cognitive pluralism and scholarly autonomy. Such reforms are particularly urgent given the rapid growth of AI-assisted production, where cognitive diversity and innovative epistemologies risk intensified marginalisation.

While fully open repositories have been proposed as solutions to epistemic marginalisation, they risk vulnerability to misinformation, epistemic manipulation, or political interference without robust fiduciary oversight. Consequently, institutions must adopt structured fiduciary mechanisms to balance epistemic openness with accountability, safeguarding scholarly legitimacy (Kahl, 2025b; Kahl, 2025e).

Given these intersecting generational and epistemic challenges, I argue that universities and other epistemic gatekeepers must proactively integrate cognitive inclusivity, responsible AI oversight, and fiduciary transparency into comprehensive epistemocratic governance frameworks. These reforms will enable institutions to navigate contemporary epistemic complexities, ensuring epistemic justice, scholarly plurality, and institutional integrity in a landscape increasingly shaped by AI and diverse cognitive expressions.

1.7 Toward an Epistemocratic Response

Considering the philosophical critiques advanced through Raz's account of autonomy (1986), Heidegger's analysis of technological Gestell (1977), and Giroux's (2011) critique of neoliberal acceleration in the university, alongside the practical challenges posed by generative AI and cognitive diversity, I argue that traditional peer review is no longer tenable as an epistemic practice. In response, I propose epistemocracy: a transformative governance model explicitly designed to dismantle colonial epistemic structures embedded within peer review, restore scholarly autonomy, and proactively manage emerging epistemic complexities. This model, which I introduced in *Epistemocracy in Higher Education* (Kahl, 2025f), directly counters epistemic injustice by integrating fiduciary accountability, epistemic pluralism, cognitive inclusivity, and responsible AI governance into institutional peer review mechanisms.

The epistemocratic model rests on four foundational principles:

- **Fiduciary Transparency**: Institutions bear clear fiduciary responsibilities to safeguard epistemic pluralism and prevent epistemic marginalisation. Peer review processes must be transparent, accountable, and responsive, countering testimonial and hermeneutical injustices through open governance practices.

- **Distributed Credibility**: Instead of delegating epistemic judgment exclusively to anonymous reviewers or institutional gatekeepers, epistemocracy promotes equitable distribution of epistemic agency among scholars, epistemic communities, and relevant stakeholders. This resists Raz's irrational delegation and ensures genuine epistemic diversity.

- **Multimodal Epistemic Plurality**: Institutions explicitly recognise and actively support multimodal, interdisciplinary, Indigenous, and culturally diverse scholarship as epistemically legitimate. This resists Heideggerian *Gestell* by countering homogenisation and affirming authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) in scholarly practice.

- **Responsible AI Integration**: Generative AI tools are integrated only within fiduciary-epistemic frameworks, with human oversight and algorithmic accountability. This mitigates risks of bias, commodification, and accelerationist logics identified by Giroux, safeguarding epistemic justice and preventing AI-driven homogenisation.

However, epistemocracy requires a balance between openness and accountability. Fully open repositories may promote inclusivity but remain vulnerable to manipulation or misinformation without fiduciary oversight. Thus, explicit moderation mechanisms, fiduciary oversight roles, and ethical-legal frameworks are essential to ensure epistemic integrity and institutional legitimacy.

To operationalise epistemocracy within peer review, I propose:

- **Structured Epistemic Audits** – institutional assessments to identify and address biases or injustices;

- **Dedicated Oversight Roles** – such as epistemic ombudspersons, tasked with fiduciary-epistemic accountability;

- **Transparent Evaluation Criteria** – criteria accommodating multimodal, interdisciplinary, and cognitively diverse scholarship, aligned with fiduciary-epistemic principles and equality law;

- **Community-Based Moderation** – active involvement of scholarly communities to counter epistemic misuse, manipulation, or misinformation, enhancing democratic accountability.

By embedding these practices, epistemocracy directly counters the irrational delegation Raz critiques, the technological enframing Heidegger warns of, and the neoliberal acceleration Giroux exposes. It offers institutions a path toward epistemic justice, scholarly plurality, and integrity, transforming peer review from a colonial gatekeeping mechanism into a fiduciary-epistemic practice of inclusion and authenticity.

1.8 Contributions, Significance, and Originality

This paper offers several original scholarly contributions to debates on colonial epistemic structures in peer review, epistemic justice, and fiduciary-epistemic governance. Its significance lies in uniting theoretical clarity with practical applicability, diagnosing epistemic injustices within traditional peer review and advancing a transformative model of reform.

Key contributions include:

- **Critique of Colonial Epistemic Structures in Peer Review**:
  The paper identifies peer review as an institutionalised colonial practice that entrenches testimonial and hermeneutical injustices, marginalising multimodal, Indigenous, and cognitively diverse forms of scholarship.

- **Integration of Fiduciary Theory and Epistemic Justice**:
  It extends fiduciary ethics into epistemic governance contexts, presenting the concept of fiduciary-epistemic duties. Institutions are shown to hold fiduciary responsibilities to safeguard epistemic plurality, cognitive inclusivity, scholarly autonomy, and institutional openness.

- **Philosophical Analysis of Delegation, Enframing, and Neoliberal Acceleration**:
  By drawing on Raz's account of autonomy (1986), Heidegger's critique of Gestell (1977), and Giroux's analysis of neoliberal acceleration in higher education (2011), this paper situates peer review within a triadic philosophical critique. Raz clarifies the irrationality of epistemic delegation; Heidegger illuminates the technological enframing that commodifies knowledge; and Giroux exposes how neoliberal logics intensify both. This synthesis grounds epistemocracy as a philosophical antidote, not merely a technical fix.

- **Forward-Looking Analysis of Generative AI in Peer Review**:
  The paper diagnoses the pressures posed by AI-driven scholarship—backlogs, homogenisation, and amplified marginalisation—and proposes fiduciary frameworks that integrate responsible AI oversight with epistemic plurality and cognitive inclusivity.

The significance of this analysis lies in its ability to connect philosophical depth with institutional reform. By weaving together fiduciary ethics, Razian autonomy, Heideggerian authenticity, and Giroux's critical pedagogy, the paper shows how epistemocracy is not simply an administrative model but a holistic reconstitution of peer review. Its proposed framework offers institutions practical pathways toward epistemic justice, authentic scholarly plurality, democratic accountability, and institutional integrity, positioning peer review as a site for transformative epistemic renewal.

1.9 Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This paper employs a conceptual, analytical, and comparative interdisciplinary methodology. It integrates philosophical analysis, fiduciary governance theory, epistemic justice frameworks, comparative legal analysis, multimodal epistemologies, and institutional critique to interrogate the colonial epistemic structures embedded in academic peer review.

My framework rests on five interlocking areas:

Fiduciary Ethics and Epistemic Justice

Building on Miranda Fricker's theory of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice (2007), I extend fiduciary-epistemic theory to show that universities and journals hold fiduciary duties to safeguard epistemic plurality, cognitive diversity, and scholarly autonomy. This argument develops further from my own analyses of fiduciary-epistemic obligations (Kahl, 2025b; 2025e). Comparative statutory and constitutional instruments—including Germany's Grundgesetz, the UK Equality Act 2010 and Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, France's LPR 2020, the Netherlands' WHW, and the US ADA—provide the legal scaffolding.

Philosophical Critiques of Epistemic Agency and Enframing

Raz's defence of autonomy (The Morality of Freedom, 1986) and Heidegger's analysis of technological enframing (The Question Concerning Technology, 1977) illuminate how peer review undermines autonomy through irrational delegation and epistemic commodification. Giroux (2011) complements these critiques by showing how neoliberal pedagogy normalises this surrender of agency and deepens academic domestication. Together, Raz, Heidegger, and Giroux provide the philosophical triad grounding epistemocracy as a corrective model.

Critical Scholarship on Epistemic Pluralism and Decoloniality

Insights from Mignolo (2000), Spivak (1988), Leonardo (2018), Mantz (2019), Patel and Sanyal (2024), Connell (2019), Latour (1993), and Haraway (1988) frame peer review as a site where Eurocentrism, epistemic racialisation, and coloniality are reproduced. These perspectives reinforce the need for structural reforms that embed epistemic plurality and resist homogenisation.

Comparative Legal Analysis

By mapping fiduciary-epistemic obligations across jurisdictions, I assess how clear legal duties—or their absence—affect institutional accountability and epistemic justice. This comparative dimension demonstrates both the vulnerabilities of existing frameworks and the potential for law-informed governance reforms.

Multimodal Epistemologies and Case Studies

To ground theory in practice, I draw on multimodal case studies from my own work (*Dalí's Dream*, *Who is Afraid of Free-Range Knowledge?*, *On Canine Knowing*) and on Smylie's (2005) analysis of Indigenous epistemologies. These illustrate how testimonial and hermeneutical injustices marginalise multimodal and cognitively diverse knowledge. Institutional critiques—such as OCR's findings against Harvard University (2025)—show how epistemic injustice manifests concretely.

This integrated methodology—linking fiduciary ethics, philosophical critique, decolonial theory, legal analysis, and multimodal epistemologies—provides both conceptual clarity and practical applicability. It advances scholarly discourse by positioning epistemocracy not merely as an institutional fix but as a philosophically grounded, fiduciary-epistemic model capable of dismantling colonial structures and safeguarding pluralism, authenticity, and accountability in academic knowledge governance.

2. Fiduciary-Epistemic Duties – Institutional Accountability and Responsibility

2.1 Defining Fiduciary Duties in the Epistemic Context

Fiduciary duty, classically defined in law, requires loyalty, care, transparency, and accountability (Frankel, 2011). When applied to universities, these duties extend beyond financial stewardship into what I term fiduciary-epistemic obligations: safeguarding epistemic plurality, scholarly autonomy, and cognitive inclusivity.

Barnett's notion of the "ecological university" (2020) highlights that universities must sustain diverse knowledge ecosystems, not simply manage students as consumers. Connell (2019) adds the sociological dimension: institutions reproduce global hierarchies by privileging Northern epistemologies, and thus have fiduciary responsibility to correct these inequalities.

Raz's account of autonomy shows why epistemic agency must remain with scholars themselves (1986). Delegating epistemic judgment wholly to institutional gatekeepers, as peer review does, undermines autonomy and breaches fiduciary trust. Heidegger's critique of technological enframing (1977) clarifies how institutions reduce knowledge to quantifiable outputs, betraying their duty of care for diverse epistemic life. Giroux (2011) emphasises the pedagogical dimension: without critical pedagogy and institutional courage, fiduciary responsibility collapses into bureaucratic management.

A contemporary example is the OCR's 2025 findings against Harvard University, where Title VI compliance failures revealed both testimonial injustice (silencing students of colour) and hermeneutical injustice (lacking interpretive resources to address their claims). Such cases illustrate how breaches of fiduciary-epistemic responsibility directly undermine legitimacy and public trust in the university.

2.2 Epistemic Justice: Institutional Obligations

Fricker (2007) distinguishes testimonial injustice (credibility discounting) and hermeneutical injustice (structural interpretive gaps). These forms of injustice are entrenched in peer review practices that privilege disciplinary orthodoxy and exclude multimodal or Indigenous epistemologies.

Raz's framework highlights the irrationality of such externally imposed evaluative authority. Heidegger shows how technological enframing reduces diverse epistemologies into bureaucratically manageable "outputs." Giroux insists that pedagogy must resist this reduction, cultivating spaces where alternative voices can be heard. Connell (2019) reminds us that without structural change, universities reproduce epistemic monocultures and global inequality.

The Grenoble IEP controversy (2021) exemplifies this dynamic: institutional investigation reduced student critiques of Islamophobia into "disciplinary misconduct," ignoring their epistemic validity. Here testimonial injustice (credibility discounting) and hermeneutical injustice (failure to interpret experiences of marginalised students) coincided with breaches of fiduciary duty, showing the need for epistemocratic reform.

2.3 Hermeneutical and Testimonial Injustices in Current Peer Review

In peer review, testimonial injustice occurs when reviewers undervalue scholarship outside canonical norms—such as multimodal or culturally situated research. Hermeneutical injustice arises when institutions lack frameworks to interpret such scholarship. Smylie's (2005) study of Canadian Aboriginal research shows how pan-ethnic categorisations erased epistemic nuance.

Raz's critique of delegated authority frames this as irrational: scholars are forced into compliance with standards alien to their epistemic agency. Heidegger's enframing diagnosis shows how peer review technologies standardise and commodify diverse knowledge. Giroux urges that pedagogy must create democratic spaces to resist these epistemic reductions. Connell points to the broader structural pattern: Northern institutions normalise such exclusions, reproducing global inequity.

The University of Groningen sit-in (2023), where students demanded the reinstatement of a dismissed professor, illustrates how testimonial and hermeneutical injustices manifest institutionally. Administrative structures dismissed the students' epistemic claims as illegitimate, reinforcing institutional hierarchy over epistemic plurality.

2.4 Fiduciary-Epistemic Accountability in Practice

Fiduciary-epistemic duties cannot remain aspirational; they require enforceable mechanisms of accountability. Institutions that fail to safeguard epistemic plurality, autonomy, and inclusivity breach their fiduciary trust.

Raz's theory of autonomy (1986) shows that accountability is necessary because delegation of epistemic judgment to institutional gatekeepers undermines scholars' capacity to act as self-directed epistemic agents. Without mechanisms to check such delegation, autonomy is hollow. Heidegger (1977) reminds us that under technological enframing, institutions drift toward treating knowledge as a "standing reserve," measurable by rankings and metrics. Accountability, therefore, must counteract this reduction, ensuring knowledge is treated as lived, plural, and contextually embedded. Giroux (2011) adds that pedagogy without democratic accountability degenerates into authoritarianism; critical pedagogy requires institutions to be answerable to the communities they serve. Connell (2019) further insists that accountability must be global and sociological, disrupting the Northern hegemony in which "world-class" universities monopolise epistemic legitimacy.

Case evidence illustrates these failures starkly. The Jacobin report on German campus protests (Celikates, Koddenbrock & Beck 2024) shows how German universities, by calling police onto campuses, displaced fiduciary responsibility for dialogue and care into securitisation. Rather than safeguarding epistemic pluralism, they enacted epistemic violence, reducing dissenting knowledge to a problem of order. Similarly, the Office for Students' fine against the University of Sussex (2025) revealed fiduciary failure: the institution's inadequate protections for free expression and cognitive inclusivity breached both statutory duties (Equality Act 2010; Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023) and fiduciary-epistemic trust.

From this perspective, fiduciary-epistemic accountability requires:

- **Structured audits** of peer review and governance practices to identify testimonial and hermeneutical injustices.
- **Epistemic ombudspersons** empowered to intervene in cases of marginalisation or exclusion.
- **Transparent reporting mechanisms** tied to statutory frameworks, ensuring universities cannot obscure epistemic breaches behind administrative opacity.
- **Global benchmarking** that values epistemic diversity as much as publication volume, countering Connell's critique of Northern academic monopolies.

By embedding such structures, institutions can begin to meet their fiduciary-epistemic duties in practice. Without them, peer review and scholarly governance will remain sites of colonial reproduction—delegating autonomy irrationally (Raz), enframing knowledge reductively (Heidegger), silencing pedagogy (Giroux), and entrenching global inequities (Connell).

3. Multimodal Epistemologies as Resistance

3.1 Multimodality as Authentic Epistemic Engagement

Multimodal epistemologies—visual, poetic, performative, embodied, and culturally situated forms of knowledge—constitute authentic scholarly resistance to epistemic domestication. Unlike textual or quantifiable traditions privileged in peer review, multimodal practices foreground diversity of form and voice.

From a Razian perspective, recognition of multimodality protects scholars' autonomy, preventing the irrational delegation of epistemic judgment to institutional norms. Heidegger's enframing shows how reduction to text or numbers alienates knowledge from authenticity. Giroux's critical pedagogy insists that multimodal practices democratise learning by opening spaces for marginalised voices. Connell's sociology of global epistemic inequalities demonstrates that unless institutions validate multimodality, universities reproduce academic monocultures privileging the Global North.

The Grenoble IEP controversy (2021) illustrates this vividly: administrative suppression of culturally situated concepts ('Islamophobia') exemplified testimonial injustice and institutional refusal to engage multimodality. Here, the four-legged analysis exposes the epistemic stakes of institutional monoculture.

3.2 Multimodality and Epistemic Justice

Multimodal epistemologies directly counter testimonial and hermeneutical injustices. Fricker (2007) shows how credibility deficits and interpretive gaps marginalise scholars; multimodality addresses both by expanding what counts as legitimate knowledge.

Raz's lens makes clear that delegating judgment to narrow peer review denies scholars the autonomy to define epistemic form. Heidegger clarifies that such domestication enframes knowledge into manageable categories. Giroux reminds us that pedagogical structures must actively cultivate plurality rather than passively reproduce

hegemony. Connell situates the injustice sociologically, showing how monocultural universities institutionalise epistemic exclusion at scale.

The Harvard OCR compliance case (2025) illustrates hermeneutical injustice: institutional responses to accessibility and cognitive inclusivity failed to account for alternative epistemic expressions. This evidences why multimodality must be institutionally codified, not tolerated at the margins.

3.3 Resistance to Epistemic Homogenisation: Theoretical Foundations

Two major theoretical foundations—Latour's critique of modernist separations (1993) and Haraway's 'situated knowledges' (1988)—reinforce the legitimacy of multimodality. Both stress plurality, hybridity, and the embodied, context-bound nature of knowledge.

Incorporating these, the four-leg stool strengthens:

- **Raz**: autonomy requires resisting imposed evaluative categories.
- **Heidegger**: enframing reduces diverse forms to resources; multimodality resists this.
- Giroux: pedagogy must create critical spaces for embodied, resistant voices.
- **Connell**: monocultural epistemic structures marginalise Southern and subaltern knowledges, so multimodality is sociological resistance.

Cases demonstrate this: the University of Groningen sit-in (2023) saw students demand recognition of alternative pedagogies; the Sullivan Review backlash (TransActual, 2025) exposed structural bias in evaluative norms. Both exemplify why multimodal epistemologies are necessary to counter homogenisation.

3.4 Practical Institutional Implications for Multimodal Epistemic Practices

Institutional reforms must embed multimodality into governance, review, and evaluation:

- **Recognition and Validation**: Explicit criteria for multimodal work. Failure, as at Grenoble, demonstrates the risks of leaving multimodality structurally unacknowledged.
- **Fiduciary Oversight**: Epistemic audits and ombudspersons ensure accountability, as highlighted by the Harvard OCR findings (2025).
- **Inclusive Moderation and Training**: Prevent biases, as shown by failures in the Sullivan Review debates.
- **Cross-posting and Decentralisation**: GitHub and alternative repositories resist institutional monopolies; the University of Groningen protest illustrates student appetite for transparency and decentralisation.
- **Legal and Ethical Alignment**: Statutes like the Equality Act 2010 must anchor these reforms. The Sussex/OfS fine (2025) shows what happens when equality and inclusivity duties are neglected.

The four-leg frame again clarifies why reform is imperative: Raz (autonomy), Heidegger (authenticity vs enframing), Giroux (pedagogical democracy), Connell (sociological de-monoculturing).

Chapter 3 Synthesis

Chapter 3 shows that multimodal epistemologies are not ornamental but structurally necessary for epistemic justice. Case studies from Grenoble, Harvard, Groningen, and Sussex demonstrate how testimonial and hermeneutical injustices persist when institutions remain monocultural. The four-legged stool of Raz, Heidegger, Giroux, and Connell provides a unified normative rationale for embedding multimodality into governance.

Multimodal scholarship is thus both method and resistance: it resists colonial epistemic structures, enacts democratic pedagogy, reasserts autonomy, and disrupts monocultural institutions. Epistemocracy, as proposed here, institutionalises this resistance as governance practice.

4. Institutional Fiduciary Governance—Comparative Perspectives

4.1 Introduction: Fiduciary Governance and Epistemic Justice

As established in the preceding chapters, traditional peer review functions as a colonial epistemic structure, perpetuating testimonial and hermeneutical injustices that systematically marginalise diverse knowledge forms. Academic institutions—universities, journals, publishers, and repositories—therefore bear fiduciary-epistemic duties: to safeguard epistemic plurality, cognitive inclusivity, and scholarly autonomy in all evaluative practices.

Yet, how these duties are interpreted and enacted differs across jurisdictions. Statutory frameworks, institutional cultures, and governance traditions shape whether fiduciary-epistemic obligations are meaningfully upheld or hollowed into administrative formality. Here, Raz's account of autonomy underscores why governance must prevent irrational delegation of epistemic agency to entrenched gatekeepers. Heidegger reminds us that without accountability, institutions drift into technological enframing, treating knowledge as mere quantifiable resource. Giroux insists that fiduciary-epistemic duties are pedagogical as well as legal, requiring universities to nurture democratic, critical capacities rather than reinforce conformity. Connell situates these obligations within a global sociology of higher education, emphasising that without explicit institutional reforms, governance frameworks entrench Northern academic dominance and epistemic monocultures.

This chapter therefore undertakes a comparative analysis of fiduciary-epistemic governance across five jurisdictions—the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Germany, and the United States. Each case highlights strengths, vulnerabilities, and blind spots in the way fiduciary-epistemic duties are codified or neglected. Case controversies, such as recent disputes over free speech in the UK, inclusive hiring in the Netherlands, 'L'affaire Grenoble' in France, student protests in Germany, and accessibility litigation in the US, reveal where governance has succeeded or failed in countering epistemic injustice.

The goal is not descriptive comparison alone but normative evaluation: identifying which governance mechanisms genuinely advance epistemic justice, and which reproduce colonial patterns of knowledge control. The analysis culminates in §4.8 with concrete recommendations for embedding fiduciary-epistemic reforms into peer review and scholarly governance—ensuring they are not only legally compliant but also philosophically, pedagogically, and sociologically robust.

4.2 United Kingdom: Statutory Precision and Fiduciary Governance in Peer Review

Statutory Basis for Fiduciary-Epistemic Duties

The United Kingdom provides one of the most precise statutory frameworks for fiduciary-epistemic governance, particularly through the Equality Act 2010 and the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023. The Equality Act requires universities to make "reasonable adjustments" to support cognitive diversity and epistemic plurality, addressing testimonial and hermeneutical injustices by ensuring marginalised epistemic agents are not excluded from full participation (Equality Act 2010, s.20, Sch.13, para.4). The Freedom of Speech Act further mandates proactive institutional duties to safeguard academic freedom and diverse scholarly perspectives (Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023).

Institutional Implementation and Peer Review Challenges

Despite these statutory foundations, institutional implementation in peer review and epistemic governance remains inconsistent. Four recent cases illustrate persistent governance gaps:

- University of Sussex (Kathleen Stock, 2021–2025): The Office for Students fined Sussex £585,000 for failing to protect academic freedom during the Kathleen Stock controversy. Reactive rather than proactive governance exacerbated testimonial injustice, underscoring the systemic absence of fiduciary oversight (Turner, 2025; BBC News, 2025).

- University of Cambridge (Arif Ahmed, 2020–2023): Cambridge's initial resistance to Ahmed's interventions on academic freedom demonstrated institutional reluctance to embed fiduciary safeguards, only shifting under sustained external pressure (Ahmed, 2023).

- Sullivan Review (2025): Criticised for methodological bias and exclusionary assumptions, the Review on sex and gender data raised parliamentary concerns over its epistemic legitimacy. This exemplifies how hermeneutical injustice arises when interpretive frameworks remain narrow and exclusionary (HC Deb, 25 March 2025; TransActual, 2025).

- Oxford Union (2023–2025): Governance failures around high-profile debates revealed fiduciary gaps and potential legal liabilities, with AFCOMM warning of risks tied to inadequate institutional oversight (AFCOMM, 2025; Cherwell, 2023).

Analytical Integration

From a Razian perspective, these cases show institutions irrationally delegating epistemic agency to entrenched authorities rather than fostering autonomous scholarly judgment (Raz, 1986). Heidegger's enframing explains how institutions reduce knowledge governance to procedural compliance and reputational management, hollowing statutory protections into metrics and risk calculations (Heidegger, 1977). Giroux's critical pedagogy highlights how universities retreat from their duty to cultivate democratic, critical spaces, defaulting instead to bureaucratic control (Giroux, 2011). Connell's sociological analysis situates these failures within a broader monocultural model of the university, where Northern epistemic dominance persists even under statutory frameworks ostensibly designed to promote diversity (Connell, 2019).

Critical Assessment and Recommendations

The UK demonstrates that statutory precision alone does not guarantee epistemic justice. While legislation such as the Equality Act and Freedom of Speech Act provides strong formal protections, without structured fiduciary governance—epistemic audits, oversight roles, transparent evaluation criteria, and reviewer training—these duties risk collapsing into performative gestures. Recent controversies show how institutions replicate colonial epistemic structures when fiduciary duties are treated as compliance exercises rather than substantive ethical commitments.

Accordingly, I recommend:

- Establishing **epistemic ombudspersons** at institutional and sectoral levels.
- Embedding **regular epistemic audits** into governance processes, tied explicitly to statutory duties.
- Designing **reviewer training and guidance** grounded in fiduciary-epistemic principles and critical pedagogy.

In sum, the UK's statutory framework offers a strong legal baseline but also illustrates how colonial epistemic gatekeeping persists when fiduciary responsibilities are hollowed out in practice. Robust epistemocratic governance is required to bridge this implementation gap.

4.3 Netherlands: Fiduciary Risks for Peer Review under Statutory Minimalism

Statutory Basis for Fiduciary-Epistemic Duties

In contrast to the statutory precision of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands employs a minimalist model under the Higher Education and Research Act (*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek*, WHW). The Act grants universities broad autonomy but offers limited statutory guidance on epistemic inclusivity, cognitive diversity, or peer review governance (WHW, 1992, arts. 1.3, 1.9, 9.15). While this autonomy ostensibly promotes academic freedom, I argue that it also creates fiduciary risks by leaving accountability mechanisms underspecified, allowing colonial epistemic structures to persist unchallenged.

Institutional Risks in Peer Review: The Susanne Täuber Case

The dismissal of Dr. Susanne Täuber from the University of Groningen in 2023 exemplifies these fiduciary vulnerabilities. Täuber's scholarship, which critically examined institutional diversity and inclusion practices, was perceived as the catalyst for her dismissal. University leadership defended its actions by appealing to the managerial autonomy permitted under the WHW, effectively bypassing fiduciary accountability mechanisms. This case illustrates how testimonial injustice can occur when critical epistemic contributions are penalised rather than protected (NL Times, 2023; Kahl, 2025e).

Analytical Integration

From a Razian perspective, Täuber's dismissal reveals the irrationality of epistemic delegation to managerial authority without safeguards for scholars' autonomy (Raz, 1986). Heidegger's concept of enframing clarifies how Dutch institutions reduce scholarship to reputational and bureaucratic categories, neutralising critical voices that resist institutional narratives (Heidegger, 1977). Giroux's critical pedagogy underscores that universities, by suppressing critique, abdicate their democratic responsibility to nurture dissent and critical

consciousness (Giroux, 2011). Connell's sociology demonstrates that such cases are not anomalies but symptoms of the "monocultural" tendencies of global universities, which privilege dominant epistemologies and systematically sideline critical or subaltern knowledge (Connell, 2019).

Critical Assessment of Fiduciary Accountability in Peer Review

While statutory minimalism under the WHW grants institutions flexibility, the absence of defined fiduciary-epistemic duties creates accountability gaps that amplify risks of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. As Leonardo (2018) and Mantz (2019) argue, Eurocentric standards deeply embedded in curricula and peer review perpetuate epistemic homogenisation. Radcliffe (2017) further demonstrates how colonial structures persist when interpretive resources for Indigenous or culturally situated knowledges remain absent. The Täuber case makes visible how these structural vulnerabilities manifest in practice when institutional autonomy is exercised without fiduciary counterweights.

Recommendations

To mitigate these risks, Dutch institutions must embed fiduciary-epistemic safeguards within their governance frameworks. This requires:

- **Epistemic ombudspersons** to provide independent oversight.
- **Regular epistemic audits** targeting peer review practices.
- **Explicit guidelines** recognising multimodal, interdisciplinary, Indigenous, and cognitively diverse scholarship.

As I have argued elsewhere (Kahl, 2025b, 2025e), fiduciary-epistemic reforms are essential to ensure that institutional autonomy does not become a shield for perpetuating epistemic injustice.

Comparative Significance

Compared with the UK's statutory precision (Section 4.2), the Netherlands demonstrates how statutory minimalism creates conditions where institutional culture alone determines epistemic justice outcomes. Without explicit fiduciary duties, peer review remains vulnerable to colonial epistemic gatekeeping.

4.4 France: Ambiguity and Fiduciary Risks in Peer Review

Statutory Basis for Fiduciary-Epistemic Duties

France's Loi de Programmation de la Recherche (LPR 2020) reflects an ambiguous statutory approach. While it references inclusivity and institutional openness, the law provides little explicit fiduciary guidance on epistemic justice, cognitive diversity, or multimodal epistemologies relevant to peer review (LPR, 2020, arts. 3–5). This ambiguity stands in contrast to the statutory precision of the UK (Equality Act 2010; Higher Education [Freedom of Speech] Act 2023) and the statutory minimalism of the Netherlands (WHW, 1992). I argue that the French model, by leaving fiduciary-epistemic duties undefined, risks fostering reactive governance and exacerbating epistemic injustice.

Institutional Risks Illustrated: The Grenoble Controversy

The 2021 controversy at Sciences Po Grenoble (L'affaire Grenoble) vividly illustrates these risks. Sparked by debates over the scholarly usage of terms such as islamophobie ("Islamophobia"), the dispute escalated into disciplinary investigations, media attacks, and political scrutiny. Institutional responses revealed fiduciary accountability gaps: instead of safeguarding scholarly autonomy and pluralism, governance measures appeared inconsistent, reactive, and susceptible to external pressures (Daub, 2025; IGÉSR, 2021; MESRI, 2021). Testimonial injustice emerged as scholars advocating epistemic diversity were delegitimised, while hermeneutical injustice surfaced in the structural exclusion of interpretive frameworks necessary for engaging plural epistemologies.

Analytical Integration

From a Razian perspective, the Grenoble affair illustrates the irrationality of delegating epistemic judgment to administrative and political gatekeepers, thereby eroding scholars' epistemic autonomy (Raz, 1986). Heidegger's analysis of enframing clarifies how French institutional practices reduced complex epistemic debates to bureaucratically manageable categories—disciplinary infractions, reputational management—thereby flattening authentic scholarly inquiry (Heidegger, 1977). Giroux's pedagogy of critical consciousness reveals how the failure to protect dissent undermines the democratic role of the university, converting it into an instrument of disciplinary conformity (Giroux, 2011). Connell's sociological critique demonstrates how such episodes reflect the reproduction of "academic monocultures," privileging dominant epistemologies while marginalising alternative or subaltern voices (Connell, 2019).

Critical Assessment of Ambiguity for Peer Review Governance

France's statutory ambiguity creates interpretive flexibility but weakens fiduciary accountability in peer review and scholarly evaluation. By relying on reactive governance, institutions fail to pre-empt epistemic crises and instead reinforce colonial epistemic structures. Leonardo (2018) and Mantz (2019) identify such failures as manifestations of Eurocentric epistemic frameworks, while Patel and Sanyal (2024) highlight how epistemic racialisation and territorialisation compound these dynamics. The Grenoble case exemplifies how testimonial and hermeneutical injustices become institutionalised when fiduciary duties are not clearly defined.

Recommendations

To address these gaps, French institutions must adopt explicit fiduciary governance reforms tailored to peer review. These include:

- Appointment of **epistemic ombudspersons** tasked with safeguarding epistemic autonomy.
- **Regular epistemic audits** to identify biases and injustices in peer review processes.
- Development of **clear institutional guidelines** that validate multimodal, interdisciplinary, Indigenous, and cognitively diverse scholarship.

As I have argued elsewhere (Kahl, 2025b; 2025e), fiduciary-epistemic reforms are indispensable for ensuring that institutional autonomy does not devolve into colonial epistemic gatekeeping.

Comparative Significance

In comparison with the UK's statutory clarity (Section 4.2) and the Netherlands' statutory minimalism (Section 4.3), France demonstrates how ambiguity creates its own form of vulnerability: institutions default to reactive crisis management, leaving testimonial and hermeneutical injustices unaddressed. This underlines the necessity of explicitly codified fiduciary-epistemic duties if peer review is to avoid reinforcing colonial epistemic structures.

4.5 Germany: Constitutional Clarity as a Fiduciary Model for Peer Review

Constitutional Basis for Fiduciary-Epistemic Duties

In contrast to France's statutory ambiguity (Section 4.4) and the Netherlands' statutory minimalism (Section 4.3), Germany anchors fiduciary-epistemic governance within a robust constitutional framework. Article 5(3) of the Grundgesetz (Basic Law) guarantees Wissenschaftsfreiheit (academic freedom), obliging universities and research institutions to safeguard epistemic pluralism, cognitive inclusivity, and scholarly autonomy in evaluation processes, including peer review (Grundgesetz, 1949, art. 5(3); BVerfG, 2010). This constitutional clarity frames academic freedom not as a passive entitlement but as a fiduciary duty, requiring institutions to proactively prevent testimonial and hermeneutical injustices.

Institutional Implementation: Universität Hamburg's Kodex Wissenschaftsfreiheit

A leading example is Universität Hamburg's Kodex Wissenschaftsfreiheit (2022), which operationalises fiduciary-epistemic obligations through structured oversight. The Kodex mandates regular epistemic audits, fiduciary roles such as epistemic ombudspersons, and grievance mechanisms specifically applicable to peer review (Universität Hamburg, 2022). A companion press release emphasised the Code as a defence against threats to research and teaching (Universität Hamburg, 2022, Press Release 2/2022). Together, these measures embed fiduciary accountability into institutional practice, ensuring that constitutional guarantees translate into operational safeguards.

Analytical Integration

Germany's constitutional model illustrates how philosophical and sociological critiques converge in fiduciary practice. Raz's analysis of autonomy (1986) clarifies why constitutional guarantees against the irrational delegation of epistemic agency are essential: institutions must enable scholars to exercise independent epistemic judgment rather than submit uncritically to gatekeepers. Heidegger's concept of enframing (1977) is countered here by proactive constitutional mandates, preventing the reduction of knowledge into bureaucratically managed resources. Giroux's critical pedagogy (2011) is directly reflected in the Kodex, which frames academic freedom as a democratic responsibility to resist conformity and safeguard critical consciousness. Finally, Connell's sociology of knowledge (2019) complements this analysis by demonstrating how institutional monocultures can only be dismantled through explicit structural commitments to epistemic diversity. The Hamburg model embodies this fourfold resistance to colonial epistemic domestication.

Broader Institutional Commitments and Variability

Germany's Alliance of Science Organisations, together with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), reinforced these commitments in their 2025 joint declaration, affirming institutional responsibility to protect epistemic plurality and scholarly autonomy (BMBF & Allianz, 2025). Yet implementation varies: while

Hamburg illustrates best practice, other universities (e.g., Cologne) have lagged in developing structured fiduciary oversight, demonstrating uneven application across federal states.

Critical Assessment and Recommendations

Germany's constitutional clarity provides a strong fiduciary foundation for peer review, but institutional variability reveals persistent risks. Without uniform adoption of fiduciary mechanisms, testimonial and hermeneutical injustices may persist despite constitutional guarantees. To strengthen the model, I recommend:

- Nationwide adoption of **epistemic ombudspersons**.
- Mandated **epistemic audits** across all universities.
- **Clear institutional policies** recognising multimodal, interdisciplinary, Indigenous, and cognitively diverse scholarship.

These reforms align with Mantz's (2019) call for decolonising curricula and Patel & Sanyal's (2024) emphasis on epistemic de-territorialisation. They would consolidate Germany's position as a constitutional benchmark for dismantling colonial epistemic structures in peer review.

Comparative Significance

Compared to the UK's statutory clarity (Section 4.2), the Netherlands' minimalism (Section 4.3), and France's ambiguity (Section 4.4), Germany's constitutional framework demonstrates the strongest alignment between fiduciary principle and institutional practice. While challenges remain in implementation, the Grundgesetz illustrates how constitutional clarity can ground peer review in fiduciary obligations that actively safeguard epistemic pluralism and autonomy.

4.6 United States: Fiduciary Challenges for Peer Review under Anti-Discrimination Statutes

Statutory Basis for Fiduciary-Epistemic Duties

In contrast to Germany's constitutional clarity (Section 4.5) and the UK's explicit statutory mandates (Section 4.2), fiduciary-epistemic governance of peer review in the United States derives primarily from broad anti-discrimination statutes—most notably the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, explicitly including cognitive diversity, and applies across higher education and institutional governance (ADA, 1990, §12132). Yet the statute offers no provisions tailored specifically to peer review or to the fiduciary stewardship of epistemic pluralism, leaving significant accountability gaps.

Institutional Implementation: Harvard University and OCR Findings

The reactive enforcement model of the ADA—triggered largely by individual complaints—creates systemic vulnerabilities. A notable case is the 2025 investigation by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) into Harvard University (OCR Complaint No. 01-24-2155). OCR found that Harvard failed to adequately address harassment based on national origin and shared ancestry, exposing institutional weaknesses in safeguarding epistemic diversity and autonomy. The deficiencies identified—insufficient

grievance mechanisms, weak accountability structures, and failure to proactively protect epistemic inclusion—mirror testimonial and hermeneutical injustices long embedded within U.S. peer review systems.

Analytical Integration

The U.S. reliance on anti-discrimination law illustrates how epistemic agency remains precarious under reactive statutory frameworks. Raz's critique of irrational delegation (1986) highlights the risks of institutions outsourcing responsibility to complaint-driven enforcement, which leaves scholars vulnerable rather than empowering them as autonomous epistemic agents. Heidegger's notion of enframing (1977) is evident in the bureaucratisation of peer review and compliance processes, reducing diverse scholarship to administratively manageable categories rather than authentically engaged knowledge. Giroux's pedagogy of resistance (2011) points to the democratic necessity of embedding critical consciousness within academic institutions, yet U.S. peer review often functions as an instrument of conformity and institutional self-protection. Connell's sociology of global knowledge (2019) complements this critique, showing how U.S. universities, despite their rhetorical commitment to diversity, often reproduce epistemic monocultures and global asymmetries. The Harvard OCR case demonstrates this fourfold tension in practice.

Critical Assessment and Recommendations

While the ADA provides a clear mandate against discrimination, its reactive enforcement and absence of explicit fiduciary-epistemic provisions render it inadequate for addressing structural injustices in peer review. Institutions that fail to embed proactive fiduciary obligations perpetuate testimonial injustice (discounting cognitively diverse scholarship) and hermeneutical injustice (excluding innovative epistemologies from recognition).

To address these deficits, I propose that U.S. universities adopt explicit fiduciary-epistemic governance reforms, including:

- Independent oversight roles, such as **epistemic ombudspersons**, to ensure accountability within peer review.
- **Regular epistemic audits**, specifically targeting testimonial and hermeneutical injustices in evaluative practices.
- **Transparent guidelines**, recognising multimodal, interdisciplinary, Indigenous, and cognitively diverse scholarship as legitimate and protected epistemic contributions.

These measures align with comparative insights from Germany's constitutional model and the UK's statutory clarity, as well as with scholarly critiques of Eurocentrism and epistemic exclusion (Mantz, 2019; Patel & Sanyal, 2024; Leonardo, 2018).

Comparative Significance

The U.S. model demonstrates how reliance on broad anti-discrimination statutes, without explicit fiduciary mandates, leaves peer review vulnerable to systemic colonial biases and epistemic injustices. In comparison, Germany's constitutionally enshrined fiduciary clarity and the UK's statutory precision provide stronger models. The American case underscores the urgency of explicitly embedding fiduciary-epistemic governance into peer review structures to prevent epistemic marginalisation and safeguard scholarly plurality.

4.7 Comparative Summary: Fiduciary Governance Best Practices for Peer Review

This comparative analysis of the UK (Section 4.2), Netherlands (Section 4.3), France (Section 4.4), Germany (Section 4.5), and the United States (Section 4.6) identifies best practices and recurring weaknesses in fiduciary-epistemic governance of peer review. Across jurisdictions, the findings confirm that without explicitly defined fiduciary duties, institutions default to reactive governance, perpetuating colonial epistemic injustices.

1. Constitutional and Statutory Precision: The Problem of Delegation (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Germany's constitutional protection of Wissenschaftsfreiheit (Basic Law, art. 5(3)) and the UK's Equality Act 2010 and Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 show the value of clear fiduciary mandates. These legal anchors safeguard epistemic plurality, but controversies at Sussex (Stock), Cambridge (Ahmed), and the Oxford Union reveal persistent testimonial and hermeneutical injustices.

- **Raz**: statutory clarity does not stop institutions from irrationally delegating epistemic judgment to entrenched gatekeepers.
- **Heidegger**: bureaucratic frameworks risk reducing freedom to mere administrative enframing.
- **Giroux**: formal protections can be hollow if not animated by democratic pedagogy.
- **Connell**: even strong laws cannot alone disrupt global academic monocultures.

By contrast, the Netherlands (statutory minimalism), France (statutory ambiguity), and the United States (ADA anti-discrimination model) reveal how weak or indirect fiduciary duties foster reactive governance and entrench colonial epistemic structures.

2. Structured Oversight Roles: Safeguarding Autonomy (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Universität Hamburg's Kodex Wissenschaftsfreiheit exemplifies structured fiduciary governance with oversight roles, grievance mechanisms, and epistemic audits. By contrast, Sussex, Sciences Po Grenoble, Groningen (Täuber), and Harvard (OCR 2025) lacked independent fiduciary structures.

- **Raz**: absence of oversight allows irrational abdication of responsibility.
- **Heidegger**: without critical oversight, review becomes a technological enframing that standardises knowledge.
- **Giroux**: democratic pedagogy requires structures enabling dissent and accountability.
- **Connell**: oversight roles counter the sociological reproduction of epistemic monocultures.

3. Epistemic Audits and Transparency: Resisting Enframing (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Regular epistemic audits, as practiced by Universität Hamburg and mandated by the UK's OfS, create transparency that addresses bias before crises erupt. Failures at Harvard, Sussex, and the Oxford Union demonstrate the risks of absent audits.

- **Raz**: audits prevent blind delegation by restoring responsibility to institutions.

- **Heidegger**: transparency resists reducing scholarship to administratively convenient forms.
- **Giroux**: audits embody democratic accountability against institutional complicity.
- **Connell**: transparency interrupts the reproduction of global North epistemic dominance.

4. Fiduciary Guidelines and Training: Embedding Democratic Pedagogy (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Explicit fiduciary guidelines and reviewer training—exemplified by Universität Hamburg—are essential. Without them, controversies at Sussex, Grenoble, and Groningen show that testimonial injustice flourishes.

- **Raz**: clear guidelines ground responsibility in deliberate choice rather than blind delegation.
- **Heidegger**: training resists treating scholars as interchangeable units in a technological system.
- **Giroux**: guidelines and training cultivate democratic culture rather than technocratic compliance.
- **Connell**: sociological inclusivity requires guidelines that counter monocultural assumptions.

Comparative Significance: Toward Epistemocracy

This comparative analysis confirms that statutory or constitutional precision is necessary but insufficient. Without structured oversight roles, epistemic audits, and clear fiduciary training, institutions perpetuate colonial epistemic injustices in peer review. The four-legged frame—Raz (autonomy), Heidegger (authenticity), Giroux (pedagogy), Connell (sociology)—together illustrates why epistemocracy requires both philosophical grounding and institutional reform.

4.8 Practical Institutional Recommendations for Fiduciary-Epistemic Reform in Peer Review

Drawing from fiduciary governance best practices identified in my comparative analysis (Section 4.7), I propose reforms that dismantle colonial epistemic injustices within peer review. These reforms explicitly safeguard epistemic pluralism, cognitive diversity, and scholarly autonomy, while embedding responsibility across the four-legged stool: Raz (autonomy and agency), Heidegger (authenticity against enframing), Giroux (critical pedagogy and democratic inclusion), and Connell (sociology of academic monocultures).

4.8.1 Clearly Defined Fiduciary-Epistemic Duties: Grounding Autonomy and Inclusion (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Institutions must codify fiduciary-epistemic duties in governance policies, making peer review accountable to cognitive diversity and epistemic plurality.

Recommended Practical Actions

- Develop fiduciary guidelines recognising multimodal and diverse epistemologies, modelled on Universität Hamburg's Kodex Wissenschaftsfreiheit (Universität Hamburg, 2022, arts. 2–4).

- Embed explicit fiduciary duties against testimonial and hermeneutical injustices into mission statements, aligning with my framework in Directors' Epistemic Duties and Fiduciary Openness (Kahl, 2025).

Philosophical anchoring:

- Raz: prevents irrational delegation of epistemic agency.
- Heidegger: resists reducing fiduciary duties to bureaucratic enframing.
- Giroux: ensures pedagogy remains democratic and emancipatory.
- Connell: challenges monocultural knowledge economies.

4.8.2 Structured Fiduciary Oversight Roles: Embedding Authentic Safeguards (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Oversight roles—epistemic ombudspersons or fiduciary committees—must monitor peer review and intervene against epistemic injustice.

Recommended Practical Actions

- Establish permanent institutional oversight with explicit responsibility for epistemic diversity.
- Empower committees to review peer review outcomes for testimonial injustice.

Implementation Challenge

Cases like Groningen (Täuber, 2023) illustrate resistance from managers when oversight threatens institutional autonomy.

Philosophical anchoring:

- Raz: restores responsibility to institutions rather than faceless processes.
- Heidegger: prevents review from becoming a depersonalised technological apparatus.
- Giroux: enables democratic dissent and accountability.
- Connell: interrupts sociological reproduction of monoculture.

4.8.3 Regular Epistemic Audits: Transparency as Resistance to Enframing (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Annual epistemic audits expose testimonial and hermeneutical injustices before they entrench.

Recommended Practical Actions

- Conduct annual peer review audits, publishing outcomes for transparency.
- Mandate corrective action plans where injustices are found.

Case Anchors

Failures at Sussex (Stock), Sciences Po Grenoble, and Harvard (OCR Complaint No. 01-24-2155, 2025) reveal the dangers of absent audits.

Philosophical anchoring:

- Raz: audits check delegation against reasoned accountability.
- Heidegger: transparency resists knowledge being treated as a resource.
- Giroux: audits embody democratic pedagogy in practice.
- Connell: disrupts epistemic monocultures through disclosure.

4.8.4 Clear Guidelines and Mandatory Training: Cultivating Democratic Pedagogy (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Fiduciary training sensitises reviewers to testimonial and hermeneutical injustice.

Recommended Practical Actions

- Draft explicit guidelines covering cognitive diversity, multimodal scholarship, and epistemic plurality.
- Require training for reviewers, ensuring awareness of epistemic exclusion risks.

Case Anchors

Sussex, Grenoble, and Groningen illustrate the dangers of institutions without reviewer training or guidelines.

Philosophical anchoring:

- Raz: embeds responsibility as a conscious choice.
- Heidegger: ensures training avoids reducing reviewers to administrative cogs.
- Giroux: fosters a democratic pedagogical culture.
- Connell: guides reviewers to resist reproducing sociological monocultures.

4.8.5 Responsible AI Integration: Guarding Against Algorithmic Enframing (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

AI tools in peer review must be subject to fiduciary oversight to prevent algorithmic bias and epistemic homogenisation.

Recommended Practical Actions

- Establish AI ethics oversight committees with fiduciary powers.
- Conduct regular fiduciary reviews of AI systems used in peer review.

Case Anchors

OCR findings against Harvard and broader concerns over generative AI underscore risks of automation without oversight.

Philosophical anchoring:

- Raz: AI oversight prevents abdication of epistemic judgment to machines.
- Heidegger: resists algorithmic enframing of scholarship.
- Giroux: ensures AI governance aligns with democratic inclusion.
- Connell: prevents reinforcement of global North epistemic dominance.

4.8.6 Summary: Toward Epistemocracy through the Four-Legged Frame

Institutions should implement:

- Explicit fiduciary mandates (Germany's Grundgesetz, UK Equality Act 2010).
- Structured oversight roles (epistemic ombudspersons, fiduciary committees).
- Regular epistemic audits (Hamburg, OfS).
- Guidelines and fiduciary training.
- Responsible AI oversight.

Together, these reforms operationalise epistemocracy by embedding fiduciary-epistemic duties across the four-legged stool: Raz's autonomy, Heidegger's authenticity, Giroux's democratic pedagogy, and Connell's sociology of global epistemic monocultures.

4.9 Concluding Summary: Toward Epistemocratic Governance of Peer Review

This chapter has shown that fiduciary governance of peer review is neither uniform nor adequate across jurisdictions. The UK offers statutory precision but falters in practice, the Netherlands risks injustice under statutory minimalism, France struggles with statutory ambiguity, Germany demonstrates constitutional strength, and the United States relies on anti-discrimination statutes that leave fiduciary gaps. Comparative analysis makes clear that colonial epistemic structures persist wherever fiduciary-epistemic duties are either absent, ambiguous, or weakly implemented.

By drawing on the four-legged framework, we can now interpret these findings with greater conceptual clarity:

- **Raz** underscores that failures of fiduciary oversight reproduce irrational delegation of epistemic agency, leaving scholars subject to institutional arbitrariness.
- **Heidegger** helps us see how institutions reduce peer review to a technological or bureaucratic process—mere enframing—when fiduciary accountability is missing.
- **Giroux** reminds us that without democratic pedagogy, peer review governance reproduces exclusionary cultures rather than cultivating emancipatory and pluralist scholarship.

- **Connell** reveals how these failures feed global monocultures of knowledge, entrenching Northern epistemic dominance and marginalising alternative epistemologies.

Together, these perspectives converge on a single conclusion: fiduciary-epistemic reform is indispensable to dismantling colonial epistemic injustices in peer review. The comparative evidence demonstrates that institutions must move beyond statutory compliance or reactive governance to embrace proactive fiduciary practices—structured oversight roles, regular epistemic audits, mandatory fiduciary training, and responsible AI governance.

This four-legged frame also sets the stage for the next chapter. Where Chapter 4 diagnosed weaknesses and proposed reforms within national contexts, Chapter 5 advances epistemocracy as a comprehensive governance model. Epistemocracy synthesises Raz's autonomy, Heidegger's authenticity, Giroux's democratic pedagogy, and Connell's sociological critique into a single fiduciary-epistemic architecture designed to ensure genuine plurality, inclusivity, and institutional integrity in global peer review.

5. Epistemocratic Governance—A Fiduciary-Epistemic Model for Reforming Peer Review

5.1 Introduction: From Colonial Peer Review to Epistemocratic Governance

The comparative analysis in Chapter 4 revealed that while statutory and constitutional frameworks vary in strength—the United Kingdom's Equality Act 2010 and Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, and Germany's Basic Law Article 5(3) provide relatively strong foundations—these legal guarantees alone have proven insufficient. Institutional controversies at Sussex (Stock case), Cambridge (Arif Ahmed debates), the Sullivan Review, and the Oxford Union illustrate that statutory clarity does not translate into consistent fiduciary practice (Turner, 2025; Ahmed, 2023; AFCOMM, 2025; Cherwell, 2023). Across jurisdictions, institutional responses remain reactive, oversight underdeveloped, and epistemic marginalisation persistent.

This persistence reflects what Mantz (2019) identifies as structural Eurocentrism, Leonardo's (2018) critique of epistemic homogenisation, and Patel and Sanyal's (2024) analysis of epistemic racialisation and territorialisation. These scholars demonstrate that peer review continues to function as a colonial epistemic gatekeeping practice unless fiduciary obligations are proactively embedded and enforced.

To address this systemic failure, I now propose epistemocracy, a governance model designed to dismantle colonial epistemic structures by embedding fiduciary-epistemic responsibility into the heart of institutional peer review. Crucially, epistemocracy is not just an administrative reform: it is a philosophical, pedagogical, sociological, and fiduciary synthesis.

- From **Raz**, it inherits the principle that epistemic autonomy cannot be delegated without irrationality, grounding epistemocracy in the defence of scholars' intellectual agency.
- From **Heidegger**, it takes the critique of enframing, resisting the reduction of scholarship into a technological or bureaucratic resource, and insisting upon authentic engagement with knowledge.
- From **Giroux**, it incorporates the democratic pedagogy of responsibility, positioning peer review as a space of empowerment rather than exclusion, oriented toward justice and critical pluralism.

- From **Connell**, it recognises the sociological reality of academic monocultures, demanding that epistemocracy actively disrupt global hierarchies of knowledge and redistribute epistemic credibility.

Together, these four strands form the philosophical architecture of epistemocracy. It is a governance model that aims to secure testimonial justice, hermeneutical inclusivity, and cognitive diversity through structured fiduciary reforms—regular epistemic audits, clearly defined oversight roles, transparent evaluation criteria, and responsible AI integration.

The subsequent sections set out the guiding principles, institutional structures, and practical strategies of epistemocracy. By weaving the four-legged framework into a fiduciary-epistemic architecture, I aim to show how academic institutions can move from colonial gatekeeping to authentic epistemic plurality, autonomy, and accountability in peer review.

5.2 Principles of Epistemocratic Governance for Peer Review

The epistemocratic governance model rests on four interrelated principles: fiduciary transparency, distributed epistemic agency, multimodal and cognitive epistemic pluralism, and responsible AI integration. Each principle responds to fiduciary-epistemic gaps and colonial biases identified in my comparative analysis (Chapter 4), and each is anchored in the four-legged framework of Raz, Heidegger, Giroux, and Connell, supported by broader critical scholarship.

Fiduciary Transparency: Accountability Against Enframing and Exclusion (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Fiduciary transparency requires institutions to disclose peer review criteria, decision-making processes, and governance mechanisms, thereby actively preventing testimonial and hermeneutical injustices. For Raz, transparency preserves scholars' epistemic autonomy by countering irrational delegation of judgment (Raz, 1986). Heidegger's critique of enframing highlights how opacity reduces scholarship to a managed resource; transparency is its antidote. Giroux's pedagogy of responsibility insists that democratic practices in institutions must be visible to be accountable. Connell's sociology of the university underscores how transparency resists epistemic monocultures and opens institutional structures to plural voices (Connell, 2019). Together, these insights frame transparency as more than procedural—it is a fiduciary safeguard of autonomy, authenticity, and plurality.

Distributed Epistemic Agency: Resisting Delegation and Hierarchies (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Epistemocracy decentralises epistemic authority, moving away from reliance on anonymous gatekeepers. For Raz, distributing credibility prevents irrational surrender of scholars' judgment. Heidegger's account of enframing warns against centralising control that alienates authentic epistemic engagement. Giroux calls for participatory pedagogy that empowers rather than silences, making distributed agency a democratic imperative. Connell's critique of global academic hierarchies illustrates how concentrated authority reproduces monocultures; distributed agency disrupts this dominance. In peer review, this means empowering diverse scholars and epistemic communities as co-judges of knowledge, rather than passive recipients of elite judgment (Mignolo, 2012; Anderson, 2006).

Multimodal and Cognitive Epistemic Pluralism: Authenticity, Pedagogy, and Global Diversity (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Epistemocracy demands explicit recognition of multimodal, interdisciplinary, Indigenous, and cognitively diverse scholarship. Raz's defence of autonomy requires space for diverse epistemic forms. Heidegger's call to authenticity challenges reductive enframing of scholarship into standard formats. Giroux urges institutions to embrace pedagogical practices rooted in inclusivity, equity, and critical consciousness. Connell demonstrates sociologically how academic monocultures exclude Southern and non-Western epistemologies; multimodal pluralism directly counters this exclusion (Connell, 2019). Supporting scholars through fiduciary recognition of diverse epistemologies—poetic, visual, embodied, or culturally situated—resists both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice (Fricker, 2007; Mantz, 2019; Patel & Sanyal, 2024).

Responsible AI Integration: Safeguarding Autonomy and Diversity in the Algorithmic Age (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

As generative AI increasingly shapes scholarly production, epistemocracy requires fiduciary oversight to prevent algorithmic bias and epistemic homogenisation. Raz reminds us that autonomy is undermined when agency is ceded to opaque systems. Heidegger's critique of technological enframing makes clear how AI can reduce knowledge to machinic calculability unless countered by authentic governance. Giroux emphasises the pedagogical need to resist technological determinism by embedding democratic responsibility into AI oversight. Connell stresses that AI, if unchecked, risks reinforcing global academic monocultures and privileging Northern epistemic patterns. Responsible AI integration, therefore, demands fiduciary committees, transparent algorithmic audits, and safeguards for cognitive diversity (Mantz, 2019; Anderson, 2006).

Synthesis: A Fiduciary-Epistemic Architecture

Taken together, these four principles—transparency, distributed agency, pluralism, and responsible AI—form a fiduciary-epistemic architecture. By rooting each principle in the combined insights of Raz, Heidegger, Giroux, and Connell, epistemocracy becomes not only an institutional reform but also a philosophical, pedagogical, sociological, and fiduciary synthesis. This framework directly dismantles colonial epistemic gatekeeping, ensuring epistemic justice, autonomy, inclusivity, and institutional integrity in contemporary peer review.

5.3 Institutional Structures for Epistemocratic Peer Review

To operationalise epistemocratic governance, institutions must establish clear structures that secure fiduciary oversight, accountability, and epistemic justice within peer review. These structures dismantle colonial epistemic injustices by grounding reform in four interrelated traditions: Raz (autonomy and the problem of delegation), Heidegger (technological enframing and authenticity), Giroux (pedagogy, democracy, and responsibility), and Connell (sociology of academic monocultures).

Institutional Oversight Roles: Ombudspersons and Fiduciary Committees (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Dedicated oversight roles—such as epistemic ombudspersons and fiduciary committees—provide a structural safeguard against epistemic injustice. For Raz, such roles prevent irrational delegation by ensuring scholars retain authentic autonomy rather than submitting blindly to opaque gatekeepers (Raz, 1986). Heidegger shows how enframing reduces knowledge to manageable resource; oversight roles disrupt this reduction by re-anchoring peer review in authenticity. Giroux stresses that democratic pedagogy requires responsibility

embedded in institutional practices; oversight roles materialise this responsibility. Connell's sociology demonstrates how monocultures persist without counter-power inside institutions; committees ensure pluralism has an institutional home (Connell, 2019). Case controversies—Sussex, Cambridge, Oxford Union—illustrate precisely the governance gaps these roles would fill.

Structured Epistemic Audits (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Epistemic audits systematically examine peer review processes to identify testimonial and hermeneutical injustices. For Raz, audits ensure scholars' autonomy is preserved by resisting unjustified epistemic delegation. Heidegger's critique warns that audit-free processes fall prey to enframing; structured reviews restore authenticity by exposing hidden biases. Giroux frames audits as pedagogical tools of institutional reflexivity, cultivating critical consciousness. Connell highlights how monocultures reproduce unless regularly interrogated; audits provide the sociological counterbalance (Connell, 2019). Transparent publication of audit results, as at Universität Hamburg, directly addresses the failures seen in Sussex, Cambridge, and Harvard OCR findings.

Clear Fiduciary-Epistemic Guidelines and Regular Training (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Institutions must codify fiduciary duties in peer review policies and embed them through training. Raz shows that autonomy requires clarity: without explicit rules, scholars' agency collapses into arbitrary delegation. Heidegger's lens reveals how ambiguity accelerates enframing; guidelines interrupt this by foregrounding authenticity. Giroux insists pedagogy must cultivate responsibility, which training institutionalises at scale. Connell demonstrates that academic monocultures are maintained through implicit norms; explicit guidelines and training challenge these norms and democratise practice (Connell, 2019). Universität Hamburg's Kodex Wissenschaftsfreiheit illustrates how written commitments plus regular training make fiduciary oversight real.

Responsible AI Oversight Mechanisms (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

With generative AI reshaping peer review, fiduciary oversight must extend to algorithms. For Raz, unchecked delegation to AI tools undermines scholarly autonomy; oversight restores rational independence. Heidegger warns that AI intensifies enframing by reducing scholarship to computable signals; fiduciary governance disrupts this tendency. Giroux critiques technocratic pedagogy that obscures responsibility; democratic AI committees re-embed responsibility. Connell highlights how AI can amplify existing monocultures and global North dominance; oversight ensures diverse epistemologies are not marginalised algorithmically (Connell, 2019). Institutional AI ethics committees and fiduciary reviews thus prevent algorithmic reproduction of colonial epistemic biases.

Synthesis: Structuralising the Four-Legged Framework

Oversight roles, audits, guidelines with training, and AI governance form the institutional architecture of epistemocracy. Each structure operationalises Raz's autonomy, Heidegger's authenticity, Giroux's pedagogy of responsibility, and Connell's sociological pluralism. Together, they provide not only governance mechanisms but also a transformative fiduciary-epistemic architecture that actively resists colonial epistemic gatekeeping and fosters democratic, plural, and authentic peer review.

5.4 Responsible AI Integration in Epistemocratic Peer Review

As generative artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly shapes scholarly activity, epistemocratic governance requires robust fiduciary oversight to ensure its responsible integration into peer review. Without such oversight, AI risks reinforcing algorithmic bias, epistemic marginalisation, and homogenisation—concerns already visible in controversies such as the Oxford Union debates and methodological disputes surrounding the Sullivan Review (AFCOMM, 2025; Sullivan, 2025; TransActual, 2025). Mantz (2019) shows how Eurocentric biases can be encoded into algorithmic systems, while Leonardo (2018) and Patel & Sanyal (2024) highlight how institutional frameworks perpetuate epistemic homogenisation and racialisation unless proactively countered.

Fiduciary Oversight Mechanisms for Generative AI (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Institutions must embed fiduciary oversight into AI use in peer review. For Raz, uncritical reliance on algorithms constitutes an irrational delegation of epistemic agency; fiduciary structures restore autonomy by demanding human accountability. Heidegger warns that AI risks deepening Gestell—reducing knowledge to calculable signals; oversight interrupts this by preserving authenticity and resisting enframing. Giroux stresses the need for critical pedagogy: oversight mechanisms serve as democratic practices of responsibility, cultivating awareness of algorithmic power. Connell's sociology reveals how AI systems, if left unchecked, can amplify academic monocultures; fiduciary oversight provides the counterbalance.

Institutional AI Ethics Committees (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Dedicated AI ethics committees should monitor and regulate algorithmic tools used in peer review. Raz's emphasis on autonomy requires such committees to guarantee scholars' independence is not subordinated to opaque systems. Heidegger's critique of technological enframing is operationalised by committees ensuring AI remains a tool, not a destiny. Giroux situates committees as pedagogical spaces of democratic accountability, where diverse voices negotiate the ethics of AI in scholarship. Connell underscores the sociological necessity: committees counteract monocultural dominance by embedding global South, Indigenous, and cognitively diverse perspectives. Membership must therefore include ethicists, epistemic ombudspersons, and scholars of epistemic justice to ensure pluralism.

Regular Reviews of AI Policies in Peer Review (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Ongoing reviews of institutional AI policies are essential. For Raz, reviews guarantee continual rational independence rather than blind reliance on inherited protocols. Heidegger frames reviews as acts of resisting enframing, allowing institutions to re-evaluate how technology shapes scholarly being. Giroux views reviews as critical pedagogy at the institutional level, teaching organisations to remain reflexive, transparent, and responsible. Connell stresses that without systematic interrogation, monocultures entrench themselves through algorithmic defaults; reviews expose and correct such tendencies. Transparent reporting of review outcomes is therefore integral to fiduciary accountability.

Synthesis: AI as a Fiduciary-Epistemic Challenge

Together, fiduciary oversight mechanisms, ethics committees, and regular reviews constitute an epistemocratic framework for responsible AI integration. They operationalise Raz's defence of autonomy, Heidegger's resistance to enframing, Giroux's pedagogy of democratic responsibility, and Connell's sociology of pluralism. By embedding these four perspectives, institutions can ensure AI strengthens rather than undermines epistemic justice, scholarly autonomy, and fiduciary accountability in peer review.

5.5 Implementation Considerations and Practical Guidance

While my epistemocratic governance model provides clear institutional pathways to address epistemic injustices within peer review, implementation will inevitably encounter institutional resistance and administrative constraints. This section addresses potential barriers and offers practical strategies—framed through Raz, Heidegger, Giroux, and Connell—to ensure reforms are effectively adopted, institutionally embedded, and sustained over time.

Addressing Institutional Resistance through Proactive Strategies (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Resistance often stems from perceived administrative burdens, managerial scepticism, or fear of disrupting entrenched peer review practices. Raz helps us see that resistance is frequently rooted in irrational delegation—where institutions prefer conformity to precedent over autonomous judgment. Heidegger's Gestell shows how bureaucracy enframes knowledge into procedural obstacles, masking deeper fiduciary duties. Giroux emphasises that resistance is pedagogical: it reveals the need to cultivate critical awareness among institutional actors about why epistemic justice matters. Connell's sociology of monocultures clarifies how resistance reflects the defensive instincts of dominant epistemic elites. Proactive strategies must therefore combine rational justification, de-bureaucratisation, democratic pedagogy, and sociological awareness. The Sussex, Cambridge, and Oxford Union controversies (Turner, 2025; Ahmed, 2023; AFCOMM, 2025) exemplify failures to anticipate and address such resistance; structured fiduciary oversight could have mitigated the epistemic injustices that followed.

Communicating Fiduciary Benefits to Stakeholders (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Institutional buy-in depends on clear articulation of the benefits of reform. For Raz, communication restores rational autonomy by making fiduciary duties transparent rather than tacit. Heidegger reminds us that communication must resist enframing: not presenting reforms as managerial metrics but as authentic engagements with scholarly plurality. Giroux situates communication as a form of critical pedagogy, where institutions teach themselves to value epistemic diversity and democratic accountability. Connell shows that communication is sociological: it must disrupt academic monocultures by explicitly affirming the legitimacy of marginalised voices. Patel and Sanyal (2024) reinforce that transparent institutional communication is essential for countering epistemic racialisation and exclusion. Articulating benefits—reduced legal risk, enhanced reputation, improved integrity—makes fiduciary duties legible and persuasive across stakeholder groups.

Facilitating Effective and Sustainable Epistemocratic Reform (Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell)

Implementation requires structured plans with timelines, responsibilities, and monitoring mechanisms. Raz frames this as institutional rationality: reforms must be designed to safeguard autonomy, not merely react to crises. Heidegger warns against reforms collapsing into mere procedural enframing; sustainability requires reforms to remain anchored in authenticity, not just compliance. Giroux emphasises that implementation is pedagogical: trial projects, fiduciary training, and stakeholder consultations teach institutions how to live their fiduciary duties rather than perform them symbolically. Connell underscores the sociological dimension: reforms must dismantle monocultural practices by embedding pluralism into everyday structures. Universität Hamburg's Kodex Wissenschaftsfreiheit (2022) exemplifies sustainable epistemocratic reform through oversight roles, regular audits, and transparent reporting. Mantz (2019) highlights that sustainability depends on iterative evaluation and continuous engagement with epistemic diversity.

Synthesis: Embedding Epistemocratic Reform as Institutional Praxis

When applied together, Raz's rational autonomy, Heidegger's authenticity, Giroux's pedagogy of democracy, and Connell's sociology of monocultures frame implementation not as bureaucratic management but as fiduciary praxis. Proactive strategies, transparent communication, and sustainable reforms become tools to dismantle colonial epistemic structures, embed fiduciary-epistemic governance, and cultivate authentic institutional responsibility. Implementation thus secures the epistemocratic promise: a peer review system that safeguards pluralism, cognitive inclusivity, scholarly autonomy, and robust institutional accountability.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has advanced the case for epistemocratic governance as a fiduciary-epistemic model to reform peer review, explicitly dismantling its colonial structures and epistemic injustices. Building upon the comparative insights of Chapter 4, I outlined the core principles, institutional structures, and implementation strategies necessary for embedding fiduciary accountability, epistemic pluralism, and cognitive inclusivity within academic governance.

Four key principles were foregrounded: fiduciary transparency, distributed epistemic agency, multimodal and cognitive pluralism, and responsible AI integration. These principles were operationalised through concrete institutional structures such as oversight roles (epistemic ombudspersons, fiduciary committees), regular epistemic audits, fiduciary training, and AI ethics committees. Practical implementation guidance addressed institutional resistance, emphasising the need for clear communication of fiduciary benefits, structured timelines, and sustainable reforms exemplified by Universität Hamburg's Kodex Wissenschaftsfreiheit.

Throughout, the four-legged framework of Raz, Heidegger, Giroux, and Connell anchored the analysis. Raz clarified why delegating epistemic agency to anonymous gatekeepers is irrational and undermines autonomy. Heidegger revealed how peer review, when enframed, commodifies scholarship and alienates authentic epistemic engagement. Giroux reminded us that governance is pedagogical, requiring critical consciousness to resist hierarchies of knowledge. Connell provided the sociological lens, exposing how global academic monocultures perpetuate epistemic inequalities and how reforms must redistribute epistemic resources.

Taken together, these perspectives reveal epistemocracy not merely as an institutional fix but as a philosophical, pedagogical, sociological, and fiduciary transformation. Epistemocratic governance offers a sustainable path for academic institutions to move beyond colonial peer review practices, proactively safeguarding testimonial and hermeneutical justice, scholarly autonomy, and institutional integrity.

This chapter therefore establishes the normative and practical foundation for a comprehensive reorientation of peer review governance. The concluding chapter synthesises these insights and situates epistemocracy within broader debates on academic freedom, fiduciary ethics, and the global struggle for epistemic justice.

6. Conclusion: From Colonial Peer Review to Epistemocratic Renewal

6.1 From Colonial Peer Review to Epistemocratic Futures

This study has argued that traditional peer review functions as a colonial epistemic structure—systematically marginalising multimodal, interdisciplinary, Indigenous, and cognitively diverse forms of knowledge. Through comparative analysis, I have shown that while some jurisdictions (Germany, the United Kingdom) provide statutory or constitutional foundations for fiduciary-epistemic governance, institutional practice often remains reactive, uneven, or complicit in epistemic injustice. Other jurisdictions (Netherlands, France, the United States) reveal risks of statutory minimalism, ambiguity, or indirect enforcement, leaving peer review vulnerable to entrenched epistemic hierarchies.

To counter these persistent injustices, I have advanced epistemocracy as a fiduciary-epistemic governance model for peer review. This model is not simply an administrative adjustment but a transformative framework grounded in four interdependent traditions:

- **Philosophical (Raz)**: Raz's critique of irrational delegation exposes why peer review's reliance on anonymous gatekeepers undermines autonomy, integrity, and authentic epistemic agency.
- **Ontological (Heidegger)**: Heidegger's critique of technological enframing reveals how peer review commodifies knowledge, alienates scholars, and reduces epistemic plurality to standardised formats.
- **Pedagogical (Giroux)**: Giroux demonstrates that peer review is not only evaluative but pedagogical, shaping what counts as legitimate knowledge; his call for critical pedagogy insists that institutions must cultivate reflexive, emancipatory governance.
- **Sociological (Connell)**: Connell highlights how global academic monocultures privilege Northern epistemologies, marginalise diverse epistemic traditions, and reproduce inequalities; her sociological analysis underscores the need for structural redistribution of epistemic resources.

Together, these four strands provide a philosophical, ontological, pedagogical, and sociological foundation for fiduciary-epistemic reform. They demonstrate that epistemocracy is not a utopian abstraction but a practical necessity for dismantling entrenched epistemic injustices and restoring the fiduciary legitimacy of academic institutions.

6.2 Global Stakes: Academic Freedom and Fiduciary Ethics

The stakes extend beyond reforming peer review. At issue is the future of academic freedom itself. Unless institutions adopt fiduciary-epistemic governance frameworks, academic freedom risks being hollowed out—reduced to a rhetorical shield while institutions continue to enforce colonial epistemic hierarchies through gatekeeping practices. Fiduciary ethics, I argue, provides the normative anchor for reclaiming academic freedom: universities are not merely sites of professional regulation but trustees of the epistemic commons, accountable to diverse scholarly communities and global publics.

In this light, epistemocracy provides a governance pathway for universities and scholarly institutions worldwide to safeguard epistemic pluralism, protect cognitive diversity, and uphold authentic scholarly

autonomy. It represents a fiduciary response to the twin crises of epistemic injustice and institutional legitimacy.

6.3 Global Policy Implications: Toward a Fiduciary-Epistemic Compact

The epistemocratic framework advanced here is not limited to universities or national systems; its implications extend to the global governance of knowledge. International bodies such as UNESCO, the OECD, and the World Bank increasingly frame higher education and research as engines of development, yet they frequently adopt metrics and evaluation systems that reinforce epistemic homogenisation. From a fiduciary perspective, these bodies are also trustees of the global epistemic commons and thus carry obligations to safeguard pluralism, autonomy, and inclusivity.

- **Raz**: Global policies delegating epistemic authority to narrow ranking regimes or impact factors replicate the irrational delegation problem. Autonomy is surrendered to algorithms and consultancy frameworks that reduce scholars to outputs.
- **Heidegger**: The global dominance of bibliometrics exemplifies enframing: knowledge is reduced to measurable "standing reserve" for managerial optimisation, alienating scholars from authentic epistemic engagement.
- **Giroux**: At the pedagogical level, global policies shape curricula and norms of scholarly legitimacy, embedding managerialism into education and eroding the reflexive, emancipatory mission of universities.
- **Connell**: From a sociological standpoint, global ranking and funding regimes entrench the academic monoculture of the Global North, marginalising Southern epistemologies and subordinating Indigenous knowledge traditions.

Accordingly, I propose a fiduciary-epistemic compact at the international level. This would commit international bodies and states to recognise academic institutions as fiduciary trustees of the epistemic commons, mandating transparency, pluralism, and inclusivity in global knowledge governance.

6.4 Limitations and Critical Reflections

No model is without risks, and epistemocracy must be subject to its own scrutiny.

First, institutional inertia may blunt reform. Even with clear fiduciary mandates, universities may adopt only symbolic measures. Raz's framework reminds us that delegation without autonomy will persist if oversight roles lack authority.

Second, over-bureaucratisation risks transforming epistemocracy into another enframing structure. Heidegger's warning is acute here: fiduciary audits, if reduced to compliance checklists, could replicate the very alienation they aim to prevent.

Third, pedagogical capture remains a danger. Giroux cautions that critical pedagogy requires lived practice, not rhetorical appropriation. Institutions might co-opt the language of epistemocracy without substantively redistributing epistemic authority.

Finally, structural inequality at the global level may limit impact. Connell demonstrates that academic monocultures are deeply embedded in funding flows, publishing cartels, and language hierarchies. Without global redistribution of epistemic resources, reforms risk remaining parochial.

These limitations underscore that epistemocracy must remain self-critical and iterative. It must resist becoming an ossified governance technology and instead cultivate reflexive, plural, and accountable practices.

6.5 Final Reflections: Rejecting Colonial Peer Review

This paper has demonstrated that traditional academic peer review is not a neutral mechanism of quality control but a colonial epistemic structure that systematically enforces testimonial and hermeneutical injustices. By irrationally delegating epistemic agency (Raz), reducing knowledge to standardised and domesticated forms (Heidegger), reproducing authoritarian pedagogical hierarchies (Giroux), and sustaining global academic monocultures (Connell), peer review entrenches epistemic exclusion and suppresses pluralism.

The comparative analysis of fiduciary-epistemic governance across the UK, Netherlands, France, Germany, and the United States confirms that institutional reliance on traditional peer review consistently fails to meet fiduciary responsibilities of care, loyalty, and accountability to the epistemic commons. Even where constitutional or statutory clarity exists, institutional practice remains reactive and complicit in epistemic marginalisation.

To persist with colonial peer review under these conditions is not merely inefficient but unjust. It constitutes a breach of fiduciary trust between universities and the communities of knowledge they are bound to serve. The fiduciary-epistemic lens clarifies that universities, journals, and repositories cannot discharge their obligations while relying on a system that structurally excludes multimodal, interdisciplinary, Indigenous, diasporic, and cognitively diverse epistemologies.

Accordingly, I conclude that colonial peer review must be decisively rejected. The path forward is epistemocratic governance: a fiduciary-epistemic model grounded in transparency, distributed epistemic agency, multimodal pluralism, cognitive inclusivity, and responsible AI oversight. This framework not only dismantles colonial gatekeeping but actively renews scholarly institutions in line with their fiduciary duties to safeguard autonomy, plurality, and epistemic justice.

Rejecting colonial peer review, then, is not an act of destruction but of renewal. By turning toward epistemocracy, we embrace the possibility of an academic culture that is truly plural, democratic, and just—capable of stewarding knowledge responsibly for the diverse communities it serves.

•

Bibliography

Legislation

United Kingdom

Equality Act 2010.

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

Netherlands

Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek 1992 (WHW).

France

Loi de programmation de la recherche 2020 (LPR 2020).

Germany

Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Basic Law) art 5(3).

United States

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Case Law

Germany

BVerfG, 1 BvR 748/06, 20 July 2010 (Wissenschaftsfreiheit decision).

Parliamentary Debates

United Kingdom

Independent Review of Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender, HC Deb 25 March 2025, vol 764, cols 903–4.

Government and Ministerial Reports

France

Inspection générale de l'éducation, du sport et de la recherche (IGÉSR), Rapport No 85: La situation à l'IEP de Grenoble (April 2021).

Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation (MESRI), Rapport sur l'affaire Grenoble (2021).

Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation (MESRI), Pour une université inclusive (November 2021).

MESRI, Bulletin officiel de l'enseignement supérieur, de la recherche et de l'innovation, no 48 (23 December 2021).

Germany

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung and Allianz der Wissenschaftsorganisationen, Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Wissenschaftsfreiheit (March 2025).

Netherlands

Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Higher Education and Science Policy Letter (17 June 2022).

United States

US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Harvard University Title VI Compliance Review (OCR Complaint No 01-24-2155, 2025): Letter of Findings and Voluntary Resolution Agreement (17 January 2025).

US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Annual Report to the President and Secretary of Education, Fiscal Year 2022.

University and Institutional Reports

Office for Students (OfS), Preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct: Regulatory guidance (2020).

Universität Hamburg, Kodex Wissenschaftsfreiheit (2022).

Universität Hamburg, Gegen die Bedrohung von Forschung und Lehre: Universität Hamburg veröffentlicht Kodex Wissenschaftsfreiheit (Press Release 2/2022).

University of Oxford, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2023–2024 (March 2025).

AFCOMM, Oxford Union Standing Committee risked criminal liability over comments at Israel debate (18 March 2025).

Works by Kahl

Kahl, P. (2025a). *Dalí's Dream: On the Institutional Betrayal of the Catalan Language*. Lex et Ratio Ltd. https://pkahl.substack.com/p/dalis-dream-the-sold-language

Kahl, P. (2025b). *Directors' epistemic duties and fiduciary openness: A cross-cultural and interdisciplinary framework for corporate governance* (2nd ed.). Lex et Ratio Ltd. https://doi.org/10.13140/rg.2.2.28155.17449

Kahl, P. (2025c). *Epistemic gatekeepers and epistemic injustice by design: Fiduciary failures in institutional knowledge gatekeeping*. Lex et Ratio Ltd. https://github.com/Peter-Kahl/Epistemic-Gatekeepers-and-Epistemic-Injustice-by-Design

Kahl, P. (2025d). *Epistemic Humility and the Transposition of Ethical Duties into Epistemic Duties: A Philosophical and Fiduciary Inquiry into the Normative Foundations of Knowledge* (3rd ed.). Lex et Ratio Ltd. https://github.com/Peter-Kahl/Epistemic-Humility-and-the-Transposition-of-Ethical-Duties-into-Epistemic-Duties

Kahl, P. (2025e). *Epistemic Justice and Institutional Responsibility in Academia: Toward a Comprehensive Framework for Epistemic Justice in Higher Education* (2nd ed.) Lex et Ratio Ltd. https://doi.org/10.13140/rg.2.2.11063.38563

Kahl, P. (2025f). *Epistemocracy in higher education: A proposal for fiduciary and epistemic accountability in the university* (2nd ed.). Lex et Ratio Ltd. https://doi.org/rg.2.2.34597.36324

Kahl, P. (2025g). Foucault's dream: On the domestication of knowledge and epistemic subjugation. Lex et Ratio Ltd. https://pkahl.substack.com/p/foucaults-dream-on-the-domestication-of-knowledge-and-epistemic-subjugation

Kahl, P. (2025h). On canine knowing: A multimodal inquiry into human and non-human knowing and epistemic plurality. Lex et Ratio Ltd. https://pkahl.substack.com/p/on-canine-knowing

Kahl, P. (2025i). *Who is Afraid of Free-Range Knowledge? How academia buries its head to avoid the unsanctioned*. Lex et Ratio Ltd. https://github.com/Peter-Kahl/Who-is-Afraid-of-Free-Range-Knowledge

Books and Articles

Foundational and Theoretical Sources

Anderson, E. (2006). The epistemology of democracy. *Episteme*, 3(1), 8–22.

Connell, R. (2019). *The good university: What universities actually do and why it's time for radical change*. Zed Books.

Frankel, T. (2011). *Fiduciary law*. Oxford University Press.

Fricker, M. (2007). *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford University Press.

Giroux, H. A. (2011). *On Critical Pedagogy*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Heidegger, M. (1977). *The Question Concerning Technology* (W. Lovitt, Trans.). Garland Publishing.

Raz, J. (1986). *The Morality of Freedom*. Oxford University Press.

Critical and Decolonial Sources

Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.

Barnett, R. (2020). *The Ecological University: A Feasible Utopia*. Routledge.

Darder, A. (2017). *Reinventing Paulo Freire: A Pedagogy of Love*. Routledge.

Darder, A. (2019). *Decolonizing Interpretive Research: A Subaltern Methodology for Social Change*. Routledge.

Haraway, D. J. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599.

Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern* (C. Porter, Trans.). Harvard University Press.

Leonardo, Z. (2018). Dis-orienting Western knowledge: Coloniality, curriculum and crisis. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 36(2), 7–20.

Mantz, F. (2019). Decolonizing the IPE syllabus: Eurocentrism and the coloniality of knowledge in international political economy. *Review of International Political Economy*, 26(6), 1361–1378.

Medina, J. (2012). *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination*. Oxford University Press.

Mignolo, W. D. (2000). *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton University Press.

Naude, P. (2019). Decolonising knowledge: Can ubuntu ethics save us from coloniality? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 4(1), 23–37.

Patel, K., & Sanyal, R. (2024). Diasporic scholarship: Racialization, coloniality and de-territorializing knowledge. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 45(3), 159–176.

Pindi, G. N. (2020). Speaking back to academic colonial gatekeeping: The significance of intercultural performance studies works in promoting marginalized knowledges and identities. Journal of *Intercultural Communication Research*, 49(5), 442–457.

Radcliffe, S. A. (2017). Geography and indigeneity I: Indigeneity, coloniality and knowledge. *Progress in Human Geography*, 41(2), 220–229.

Settles, I. H., Jones, M. K., Buchanan, N. T., & Dotson, K. (2021). Epistemic exclusion: Scholar(ly) devaluation that marginalizes faculty of color. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 14(4), 493–507.

News Media and Commentary

Ahmed, A. (2023, March 23). Transcript of speech at King's College London: Free speech and institutional responsibility. *Office for Students*. https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/transcript-of-arif-ahmeds-speech-at-kings-college-london/

BBC News. (2025, March 26). University of Sussex fined £585k in transgender free speech row. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn9vr4vjzgqo

Celikates, R., Koddenbrock, K., & Beck, T. K. (2024, May 27). Attacks on German campus protests fuel authoritarian turn. *Jacobin*. https://jacobin.com/2024/05/germany-palestine-protest-authoritarianism-universities

Cherwell. (2023, May 5). Freedom of speech in 2023: Why the Oxford Union will never cancel controversial speakers. https://cherwell.org/2023/05/05/freedom-of-speech-oxford-union/

Daub, A. (2025, May 27). L'affaire Grenoble: Inside a campus crackdown over wokeism in France. *The New Republic*. https://newrepublic.com/article/194678/grenoble-france-university-islamophobia-controversy-wokeism

NL Times. (2023, March 22). University of Groningen students stage sit-in demanding return of fired professor. https://nltimes.nl/2023/03/22/university-groningen-students-stage-sit-demanding-return-fired-professor

Sacerdoti, J. (2024, December 2). The Oxford Union has disgraced itself. *The Spectator*. https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-oxford-union-has-disgraced-itself/

TransActual. (2025, March 19). Statement on the Sullivan Review: Biased, inadequate and potentially harmful to all. https://transactual.org.uk/blog/2025/03/19/statement-on-the-sullivan-review-biased-inadequate-and-potentially-harmful-to-all/

Turner, C. (2025, March 26). University of Sussex fined £585,000 after OfS finds failures on free speech protections in Kathleen Stock case. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/mar/26/university-of-sussex-fined-freedom-of-speech-investigation-kathleen-stock

•

Author Contact

Email: peter.kahl@juris.vc

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1616-4843

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/peter-kahl-law/

Research Gate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Peter-Kahl

PhilPapers: https://philpeople.org/profiles/peter-kahl

GitHub: https://github.com/Peter-Kahl

Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=z-yfRRYAAAAJ

Blog: https://pkahl.substack.com/

•

Cite this work

Kahl, P. (2025). *Why we must reject the colonial peer review: Fiduciary-epistemic duties, epistemic agency, and institutional openness in the age of generative AI* (2nd ed.). Lex et Ratio Ltd. https://doi.org/10.13140/rg.2.2.12547.77607

•

Edition History

Edition	Description of Changes	Epistemic Impact	Date
—	Initial release	None	2025-07-05

Edition	Description of Changes	Epistemic Impact	Date
2	Expanded comparative legal analysis (UK, NL, FR, DE, US); consistent integration of Raz–Heidegger–Giroux–Connell framework; added institutional case studies; strengthened AI governance section; sharpened conclusion with explicit rejection of colonial peer review; revised abstract, keywords, chapter summaries, and bibliography.	Enhances doctrinal rigour and philosophical depth; grounds fiduciary-epistemic critique in comparative law and case studies; clarifies normative stance against colonial peer review; strengthens prescriptive force of epistemocratic model; increases transparency and scholarly credibility.	2025-09-15

•