

# Recap

- Epistemology: the study of knowledge
- Formal models of knowledge aren't airtight
- In philosophy, sometimes we draw lines where we stop asking questions so we don't ask "why" forever. We call these *axioms* or *tautologies*.
- While these lines are drawn, they are not self-evident or unable to be critiqued, and they **are not** the only way lines can be drawn.
- Last week was a primer on epistemology, not a total u-turn on what this course is about.

# Discussion: Making Sense and Epistemology

- Simon Penny discusses a lot of topics that touch on knowledge and power.
- How are analytic ideas of knowledge interpreted in AI?
- Idealised Knowledge in computer systems
- Information as “Objective Knowledge” within computer systems

# Epistemic Injustices

How is knowledge shaped between people and within communities?

# How does knowledge work within communities?

Last week:

- How do you think about what you know?

This week:

- How do you think about what your friends & colleagues know?
- How do you think about what your communities know?
- Whose thoughts do you respect enough to internalise?
- Why do you respect them?

# Power and Influence

- We all internalise prejudicial ideas of marginalised groups
- Even if we are part of those groups we are internalising ideas about
- Why do we internalise these ideas?
- (It's the effects of capitalism and colonialism)
- How does this affect *knowledge* in those groups?
- How does this affect how people outside those groups consider knowledge from members of those groups?

# Stories and Knowledge

Kazuo Ishiguro: “Stories are about one person saying to another: This is the way it feels to me. Can you understand what I’m saying? Does it also feel this way to you?”

- Building a story is building knowledge.
- Who is building a story *massively* informs what the story is.
- Stories can shape how we approach ideas, situations, *people*.

# Histories and Stories and Knowledge

- Histories are stories
- State & Institution backed histories (explicitly taught in institutions of education or not) are often built for distinct purposes.
- “The british empire brought infrastructure to their colonies, greatly helping their development”
- “AI is a perfect model of thought processes”
- “History progresses forward in a constant march towards justice.”
- “We know better now than we did then”

# Knowledge Between People

*Why wouldn't you believe someone*

*Why wouldn't someone else believe you*



# Epistemic Injustices

- The resistance (usually) marginalised groups find when dealing with knowledge in a situation with a power imbalance.
- Miranda Fricker defines “Testimonial Injustice” and “Hermeneutical Injustice”
- Kristie Dotson points out there’s more than these alone, and that more need to be defined.
- People have been writing about how their ideas have been suppressed due to marginalisation for longer than this, this is just the framing under academic philosophy.

# Testimonial Injustice

- When listening to someone, what affects how you perceive what they say?
- When you don't believe them, *why*?
- Testimonial injustice is when someone is not believed based on their marginalisation.
- Accents, dialects, race, gender, performance or “failed” performance of gender, speech patterns, and ability are *some* vectors of this.

# Testimonial Injustice in To Kill a Mockingbird

CW: Rape (mentioned), Anti-black racism, White Supremacy

# Discussion: To Kill a Mockingbird

- Tom Robinson is a black man accused of the rape of the white girl Mayella Ewell.
- The novel itself follows how this is impossible to have been the case, but how regardless of this he not believed.
- Tom is believed by the white audiences in TKaM *because* he is a black man and how this means he could say the same thing as a white man but have those words be taken differently.
- His testimony means less to a white audience than that of a white man's due to testimonial injustice (as part of the larger structure of white supremacy) towards people of colour and specifically black people.

# Stories and Knowledge, Again

- To Kill a Mockingbird illustrates both testimonial injustice *and* how art can communicate knowledge.
- Harper Lee, the author, was a white woman. Her family had defended black people in court in the past, which were events that partly inspired the novel.
- The novel communicates anti-black racism and the testimonial injustice against black people but does so *through a white saviour lens*.
- There is solidarity in the work, but it also reproduces paternalistic ideas of “progressive” solidarity towards black people by white people.
- Who is writing a story greatly influences what knowledge the story produces and reproduces.

# Testimony and AI

- How is artificial intelligence's "testimony" considered by various institutions?
- Perceived infallibility of computer systems gives them testimonial privilege.
- Structural oppression reproduced in data sets => infallible results that happen to reproduce them
- General reproduction of "formal = infallible"

# Hermeneutical Injustice

- Inability to understand or articulate your own experiences given the language presented to you
- Language structurally missing ways of saying things
- Sometimes missing on a community scale, sometimes unable to be understood within an institution.

# How Hermeneutical Injustice Happens

- “Knowledge pools” as a communal resource
- Structural oppression shapes these pools
- Reproduction of these pools might include or exclude ideas
- Destruction of these pools by primitive accumulation and afterwards, colonialism lead to massive swathes of knowledge and tools of thinking being *gone*
- Institutions of power can actively try and destroy local knowledge pools
- Consider recently: Colonial powers destroying university archives in the middle east, attempts at shaping the internet by institutions such as google, and the removal of sex workers from online spaces.



# Undoing Hermeneutical Injustice

- “Sexual Harassment” is a recent term, though what it describes is not
- Queer identities are growingly more explored over time
- Working class people building ideas of what contemporary capitalism does to us vs old working class struggle narratives
- Black liberation and general decolonial politics build community tools for understanding white supremacy and colonialism’s effects.