

Linguistic justice in academic philosophy: The rise of English and the unjust distribution of epistemic goods

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Abstract. English continues to rise as the lingua franca of academic philosophy. Philosophers from all types of linguistic backgrounds use it to communicate with each other across the globe. In this paper, we identify how the rise of English leads to linguistic injustices. We argue that these injustices are similar in an important regard: they are all instances of distributive epistemic injustice. We then present six proposals for addressing unjust linguistic discrimination and evaluate them on how well they can mitigate the specific types of distributive epistemic injustice that we identify. We accept that there is much more to be said. But we hope that what we say will motivate other philosophers to take these types of injustices more seriously and encourage them to make academic philosophy a more inclusive global community.

Keywords. Lingua Franca; Linguistic Justice; Epistemic Injustice; Distributive Justice; Epistemic Goods; Barcelona Principles

Introduction

For better or worse, English is the language of the future. We tend to think that it is for the better. But we are also concerned about the ramifications of English becoming the dominant lingua franca for people across the globe. Some of our concerns are about English in particular, such as its difficulty as a second language or its shameful colonial history. But some of our concerns are more general worries that would apply to any language in a similar position.

However, our immediate concern in this paper is narrower than all of that. Our immediate concern is about academic philosophy. English has become increasingly dominant as the lingua franca for academic philosophers worldwide. There is little reason to believe that this trend will abate, let alone reverse. So it is worthwhile—both practically and intellectually—to examine its ramifications.

Our aim in this paper is to analyze the ways in which English becoming the dominant lingua franca for academic philosophy leads to bias and discrimination in the form of linguistic injustice. To begin, we provide a few vignettes:

Vignette #1 – The Referee

Fulan Al-Fulani is a well-published philosopher who has a PhD from a prestigious Anglophone program and currently works at a research university in their home country. In a recent report for

an academic journal, the referee said that the English used in the submission was not idiomatic and suggested that the next submission should be proofread by a native speaker. Fulan asks a colleague who is a native speaker but does not work on the submission's topic. The colleague identifies some expressions that seem non-native, but cannot identify any expressions that affect the clarity or rigor of the submission.

Vignette #2 – The Translator

Yamada Taro is translating Descartes's *Meditations* into Japanese. When translating the *cogito* argument, he encounters a problem. Japanese pronouns are socially situated: which pronoun someone uses to refer to themselves depends on their gender, their age, their social status in relation to their audience, and so on. Thus, there is no direct translation for Descartes's *ego* or the English 'I'. Any translation into ordinary Japanese would presuppose more than what Descartes wanted to presuppose (Arisaka, 2001, p. 199; Pérez, 2018, p. 6).

Vignette #3 – The Scholar

Zhang San is a philosophy student being supervised by one of the leading scholars of analytic philosophy in their country. But mainstream Anglophone philosophy is asymmetrically insulated (Schwitzgebel et al., 2018). Although scholars in Zhang San's country regularly cite scholars from mainstream Anglophone philosophy, scholars from mainstream Anglophone philosophy do not cite scholars from Zhang San's country. In fact, they barely know that they exist.

Consequently, when Zhang San applies to Anglophone graduate programs, the admissions committees are unaware of Zhang San's prestigious background.

Vignette #4 – The Student

Fulana de Tal is a student studying contemporary analytic philosophy in a non-Anglophone country. Many of her philosophy classes are in English, with English reading material, lectures,

and assessments. But Fulana is also taking *English* classes and spends extra time outside her coursework trying to improve her English. She also performs several philosophy-related tasks that many students from Anglophone countries do not, like finding translations of reading material, discerning differences in dialectical norms, and learning the meaning and history of the English idioms she encounters (most recently: “bootstrapping”).

We assume that these vignettes represent some of the ramifications of English becoming the dominant lingua franca for academic philosophers worldwide. We are comfortable making this assumption on the basis of our first-hand experience, the first-hand experience of other philosophers we know, and a small but growing body of empirical research (Contreras et al., 2022; Hanauer et al., 2019; Hyland, 2016; Joaquin 2022; Politzer-Ahles et al., 2020; Schwitzgebel et al., 2018). While someone may doubt the prevalence of what these vignettes represent, we would rather avoid a protracted fight over what we take to be settled fact. Those who do have such doubts might want to skip to the fourth section of our paper to see if our evaluations line up with their own views about how academic philosophy has managed to avoid these potential ramifications.

The plan for the paper is as follows. In Section I, we’ll clarify some key terminology and introduce some existing literature. In Section II, we’ll work through each of the vignettes to identify the ways in which they involve injustices. In Section III, we’ll propose a unifying framework for understanding some of these injustices as instances of epistemic injustice, specifically as instances of unfair or undeserving distributions of epistemic goods. Finally, in Section IV, we’ll present some proposals for how to address unjust linguistic discrimination and explain why we think some proposals are more promising than others.

I. Background

Before working through the vignettes, we shall discuss some background terminology and literature that will be helpful in identifying different injustices.

1.1: Key terminology

As we use the expression, a language is a “lingua franca” if and only if it is intentionally chosen for the purpose of communicating across linguistic communities. A paradigmatic example is the use of English as the working language of the Association of South East Asian Nations. By contrast, a Chinese immigrant in the United States of America who learns to use English is typically not using English as a lingua franca since assimilation is part of the process of joining a community. Of course, some cases are difficult to categorize: when a white San Franciscan goes to Chinatown for dinner, is their waiter using English as a lingua franca? Despite the presence of difficult cases, though, we think that the notion of a lingua franca can be put to productive use.

Importantly, we do not limit lingua francas to languages that are chosen equitably. In many cases, participants in a conversation will collectively choose the language that produces the most efficient communication.¹ But sometimes a single individual with outsize control over the conversation makes the choice. A COO’s decision to address one of the company’s suppliers in Spanish may signal to her employees that she thinks speaking Spanish will be more efficient than speaking English. In other cases, the choice of language may be a more problematic expression of power that goes beyond efficient communication. Consider what Thomas Babington Macaulay said in support of the English Education Act of 1835, which would establish English as the language of instruction in British-ruled India:

¹ Which language produces the most efficient communication is an empirical question. Philippe Van Parijs (2011, pp. 13–15) suggests that people default to the language that is best known by the member of the audience who knows it the least well—i.e. the “maxi-min” language of maximal minimal competence. Although we are skeptical of his suggestion, this issue is orthogonal to our main concerns, and so we set it aside.

We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate... Whether we look at the intrinsic value of our literature, or at the particular situation of this country, we shall see the strongest reason to think that, of all foreign tongues, the English tongue is that which would be the most useful to our native subjects.

As we use the expression, a language can be the lingua franca of a group even if it is the native language of some of the group's members. Imagine a monolingual American exchange student in Vienna having coffee with a trilingual Korean exchange student and a bilingual German tutor. As we use the expression, when the three of them use English to communicate they are using it as a lingua franca even though English is the native language of the American, and even though English is the only language that the American can speak.

In fact, this last example is emblematic of academic philosophy. For most contemporary philosophical communications, some participants are native speakers of English and some are not. This heterogeneous aspect of academic philosophy results from the fact that academic philosophy strives to be a global community. Oxford University Press, for instance, states that its mission is “to create the highest quality academic and educational resources and services and *to make them available across the world*” (emphasis ours). *The Philosophical Quarterly* says that it is committed to publishing work “from leading international scholars.” *Philosophical Psychology* brands itself as “an international journal,” as do many other journals, including *Philosophical Studies*, *Synthese*, and *Erkenntnis*. Even the *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* claims to offer “a unique opportunity for philosophers around the world to participate in the birth of not simply another philosophy journal, but a preeminent philosophy journal” (emphasis ours). Admittedly, there are pockets of academic philosophy containing native speakers of English talking to native speakers of English; native speakers of Hebrew talking to native speakers of Hebrew; and so on. But the majority of philosophy's academic output is intended for a global audience—if not in practice, then at least in principle. Given current linguistic demographics, then, most

communication within academic philosophy contains both native speakers of English and non-native speakers. The fact that academic philosophy is heterogeneous in this way is what generates some of the most challenging issues of linguistic justice. These issues would not be as challenging if philosophical communication were intended to take place exclusively between native speakers or exclusively between non-native speakers.

That last example is emblematic of philosophy in another way. Although the statistical evidence is incomplete, it seems safe to assume that the majority of native English-speaking philosophers are monolingual.² To be sure, there are circumstances where native English-speaking philosophers are incentivized to learn another language: someone who works on Ibn Sina, for instance, clearly benefits from knowing Arabic. But within academic philosophy, English-speaking institutions are often perceived as more prestigious than their counterparts. This difference in prestige contributes to an incentive structure that privileges knowledge of the English language. (This incentive structure is reflected in the fact that many graduate programs across the world are investing more in English-language instruction, whereas many Anglophone programs have reduced or outright eliminated their language requirements.) Thus, if a philosopher is a native speaker of English, they are unlikely to face significant pressure to learn another language.

² Government surveys rarely ask about monolingualism directly. The US Census Bureau asks respondents which languages are spoken at home. According to their 2021 estimates, 78% of Americans speak only English at home (ACS B16001. U.S. Census Bureau). Similar government statistics hold for England (88%), Canada (60%), and Australia (72%). Of course, someone who speaks only English at home need not be monolingual. But a 2013 YouGov survey found that only 20% of Americans were fluent in more than one language, with that percentage increasing to only 36% for those with postgraduate education. Again, though, these percentages might not extrapolate to philosophers. Incidentally, we think that it could be valuable for future PhilPapers surveys to gather data about language use.

But what does it mean to say that someone is a “native speaker” of a language? This expression is contested (see Davies, 2003, especially pp. 16–24). According to one prominent definition, someone is a native speaker of a language if and only if they acquired that language during the so-called critical period of language learning (sometime before puberty). This definition is what lies behind terms like “first language” and “mother tongue.” But nativeness is also linked to issues of competence, community, identity, normativity, and the ineffable “linguistic intuition,” none of which is analytically connected to acquiring a language early in life.

We cannot hope to engage with all of the issues raised by the attempt to define what a native speaker is.³ But we will note that the standards for English-language use in academic philosophy frequently outstrip most definitions of “native.” African-American Vernacular English is rarely found in philosophy journals, despite the fact that Black Americans have an indisputable claim to being native speakers of English. Clearly, then, the operative meaning of being a native speaker is more closely connected to knowledge of a particular subculture. But this operative meaning is conveniently obscured by the inherent ambiguity of the expression “native speaker of English.”

Lastly, as a language, English is not monolithic. It comes in many varieties—many dialects, registers, styles, and so on.⁴ Furthermore, some varieties of English are more privileged than others. The Cockney accent, for instance, has historically lacked the prestige given to Received Pronunciation. These differences in privilege have less to do with features intrinsic to the varieties themselves and more to do with the social context in which they are situated. Thus, some varieties of English are perceived as

³ We tend to think that, although the concept of a native speaker can be usefully explicated in various ways, the concept as it is currently used in most discourse is so nebulous that its use causes more harm than good. Thus, it would be better if we all agreed to stop using it.

⁴ See Kretzschmar (2021), who suggests that Standard American English (SAE) is an institutional construct that lacks real usage, although it continues to have an influence on perceptions of real varieties of American English.

“standard” and others remain “acceptable” at best despite the fact that each is used by a large linguistic community.

Importantly, a large portion of English usage is exonormative in the following sense: the speaker is not taken to be part of the community that sets the norms of usage that the speaker aims to follow when they speak English. Exonormativity arises in part because some varieties of English are more privileged than others (Kirkpatrick, 2007). But exonormativity is not a fixed feature: the perceived norm-giving community might change from context to context. For instance, people speaking English in China may take their norms of usage to originate from another community, and what community that is may change over time (say, from the UK to the USA). All of that can be true even if Chinese English counts as its own variety of English with its own implicit norms of usage. Perceptions are what matter for exonormativity.

The community of academic philosophy is, in principle, free to set whatever norms of usage it sees fit. In practice, though, academic philosophy has tended to uncritically adopt the norms of usage that are dominant outside philosophy. Furthermore, many of its authors, referees, editors, hiring committees, etc., are located in Anglophone countries.⁵ Consequently, the English used in philosophy tends to follow the norms of those various Anglophone countries rather than the norms of a genuinely global variety of English.⁶ Intentionally or not, this practice encourages philosophers to evaluate the contributions of non-native speaking philosophers exonormatively.

⁵ For some relevant data, see Wolters (2013, pp. 12–14), and Contesi (in press, pp. 3–6).

⁶ There is an extensive debate on whether there can (or should) be a universally shared variety of “international English”, or whether there can (or should) be multiple domain-specific varieties that are nevertheless internationally shared, or whether any variety is bound to fracture into more local varieties. While these questions are interesting, in this paper we try our best to remain neutral on how they should be answered. For a taste of the debate, see Matsuda and Friedrich (2010).

1.2: Existing literature

Many scholars discuss the status of English as a lingua franca. But their object of study is often much larger than ours. The linguist Braj Kachru dedicated most of his career to the study of “World Englishes,” examining how English has spread and developed at a scale of centuries and millions of users (Kachru, 1992, 2005). Similarly, the economist Jacques Melitz has attempted to track English’s dominance through economic measurables such as publishing volume (Melitz, 2007, 2018).

The above-mentioned scholars focus on descriptive facts about English as a lingua franca. Other scholars focus on normative evaluations. One notable example comes from the academic literature on English Language Teaching (ELT). In that literature, many scholars have criticized what they call “native-speakerism” (Aneja, 2016; Holliday, 2006; Medgyes, 2018). Loosely speaking, native-speakerism is an ideology wherein the label “native speaker” carries a host of unjustified implications, effectively marking the native speaker as superior to the non-native speaker. While ELT and philosophy are obviously distinct, we would do well to keep the specter of native-speakerism in mind. As we mentioned above, it is often the case that the contributions of non-native speakers in academic philosophy are evaluated ex normatively, and, as a consequence, these philosophers are denied ownership over the language that they use professionally.

Within philosophy, Philippe Van Parijs’s work has contributed to an explosion of research on what is called “linguistic justice,” and much of that research focuses on English in particular. While linguistic justice is a narrower normative topic, Van Parijs and other scholars who work on the topic tend to address issues of linguistic justice at the scale of nation-states (see e.g. Van Parijs, 2011). We want to address issues of linguistic justice as they relate to the much smaller community of academic philosophy. We limit our scope to academic philosophy because it is the community we know best, and focusing on it

allows us to examine the details more fruitfully. That being said, we acknowledge that the issues we address apply to other communities in and out of academia.⁷

With respect to English's status in academic philosophy, comparatively less research has been published. While Saray Ayala-López has published a few pieces (2015, 2018), most of the published work that exists is located in a single special issue of *Philosophical Papers* (Contesi & Terrone, 2018). More recently, Amandine Catala (2022a, 2022b) has explored the relationship between epistemic injustice and linguistic injustice; we'll discuss her work after we develop our own framework. Beyond that, though, most discussions on this topic are relegated to informal blog posts and departmental meetings.⁸ One notable exception is the Linguistic Justice Society, which has begun hosting online seminars that regularly address the effects of English as a lingua franca on the profession.⁹

In summary, while there is a wealth of research on English and its status as a lingua franca and a good amount of research on how this status relates to issues of justice, there is very little research on how all of that applies to academic philosophy in particular. Nevertheless, we are heartened by recent

⁷ For instance, De Schutter (2022) discusses potential injustices for non-native speakers of English in the so-called Expanding Circle, and advocates for them to establish their own forms of English. Similarly, Foo and Tan (2019) discuss linguistic ownership in the context of Singaporean English. Along different lines, Peled and Bonotti (2019) discuss accent bias (an aspect of language use that we mostly ignore in this paper) in relation to democratic participation. Finally, Wright (2015) discusses the fact that many communities (including, we think, academic philosophy) are now “post-national.” According to Wright, this new reality requires us to adopt a similar “post-national” conception of a language.

⁸ See, for instance, Arvan (2022), Chapman (2021), Leiter (2021), and Weinberg (2021), as well as their comments sections.

⁹ The official website is: <https://hiw.kuleuven.be/ripple/research/linguisticjusticesociety>. See also their YouTube channel, Linguistic Justice Society (n.d.).

contributions and we hope that our paper does its part in galvanizing further discussion of these important topics.

II. Linguistic injustice in the vignettes

In this section, we use our four vignettes to identify some injustices brought about as English becomes the lingua franca of academic philosophy. While we think that these four vignettes are representative of real-life scenarios faced by real philosophers, we admit that there might be further injustices within academic philosophy not captured by our vignettes. Thus, we do not intend for our discussion of these vignettes to indicate exhaustiveness in terms of either real-life scenarios or injustices.

II.1 The referee

In the first vignette, a non-native-speaking philosopher is told that their English is inadequate and that they should seek the assistance of a native speaker for help. This request is unnecessary and undeserved. The non-native speaker's English is perfectly adequate for communicating the philosophical substance of the paper to the intended audience. But, given the professional incentives for publishing, the non-native speaker is heavily incentivized to comply with the request. (Rejection rates are already high enough—why risk a rejection over something avoidable?) When the non-native speaker complies with the unnecessary request, they spend additional resources that a native speaker is unlikely to spend, resources that could have been allocated to working on a different paper or reading a new literature. The unnecessary request also leads to other people spending additional resources, such as the native-speaker colleague who now needs to find ways to make someone else's English more “idiomatic.”¹⁰

¹⁰ We intentionally do not define what “idiomatic” English is because we want to mirror the vagueness inherent in the referee's complaint. That being said, we see idiomaticity as a spectrum, with such things as “correct” choice of preposition toward one end and the use of slang and idioms toward the other. In theory, each variety of English has its own idiomatic standards. In practice, though, when a referee requests more idiomatic English they almost always want something that is more idiomatic relative to

Someone might object by saying that there is nothing unjust with an academic journal requiring good writing. This objection is confused. Everyone should agree that academic journals ought to require good writing. But genuinely good philosophical writing does not have to include the distinctive features that lead someone to label it as idiomatic. Genuinely good philosophical writing is clear, accessible, and maybe even enjoyable. All of that is attainable through non-idiomatic English (cf. Ayala-López, 2015, pp. 5–6).

In fact, non-idiomatic English might actually make the goal of clear, accessible, and enjoyable writing easier to attain. The intended audience for most academic philosophy is heterogeneous, containing philosophers from all over the world. Idiomatic English, while potentially more vivid, is often less accessible to those who lack the relevant cultural knowledge.¹¹ To be sure, idiomatic language has its place. But most venues in academic philosophy are intended for a global audience. In that context, the referee's request is not only unnecessary but also potentially counterproductive.¹²

Suppose that the Referee vignette is not an isolated incident but rather part of a broader pattern where philosophy written by non-native speakers receives greater scrutiny. One plausible long-term effect of that pattern is that publishing in English will, *ceteris paribus*, be more difficult for non-native speakers. That difference might result in lower acceptance rates in the short term and smaller publication records in

some prestigious variety of English, such as that produced by a (white upper-middle-class) philosopher from the United States.

¹¹ See Van Parijs (2011, p. 219, fn. 48). According to Van Parijs, audience members at EU meetings frequently seek out interpreters when British and Irish people take the floor but less frequently seek out interpreters when non-native English speakers take the floor.

¹² Underlying our argument here is a complicated issue regarding the difference between ELF (English as a lingua franca) and Globish (English as global or international language). We have opted not to say more for reasons of space. For relevant discussions, see De Schutter (2019) and Pennycook (2017).

the long term. Thus, a seemingly insignificant linguistic difference might lead to an obviously important material difference.

Now, the extent to which it is more difficult to publish as a non-native speaker is ultimately an empirical question. But there are reasons to think that academic philosophy is especially fertile ground for this difference in difficulty to emerge. As Pronskikh (2018) argues, successfully publishing in philosophy requires a greater mastery of rhetoric than publishing in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. Insofar as rhetorical skills are more difficult for non-native speakers to master, non-native English speakers might have a comparatively harder time publishing in English. Given the current dynamics of academic philosophy, then, native speakers of English gain a kind of linguistic privilege—a privilege that threatens to grow as English becomes increasingly dominant.

Interestingly, Hyland (2016) argues that this publication difference isn't a case of *linguistic* injustice because the privilege has less to do with the language itself (grammar, etc.) and more to do with literary skills that are unique to the publishing environment. We agree with Hyland's claim that the operative standards that create linguistic differences are less about syntax and more about pragmatics (although we still think that they sometimes have to do with syntax). But we disagree with Hyland's claim that these pragmatic standards fail to constitute a linguistic injustice. First, these standards are not created *de novo*: they partly originate from circumstances that some people, for no deserving reason, happen to come from. To put it plainly, the children of philosophers who go on to become philosophers themselves don't encounter the same linguistic hurdles encountered by non-native speakers and native speakers from outside the world of academia. Second, all standards lie on a continuum of similarity. Plausibly, the difficulty someone faces when learning a new standard partially depends on how similar that standard is to ones that they already know. Even if philosophical English is its own variety of English with its own conventions, it is still more similar to some varieties (e.g., the English of college-educated white Americans) than it is to other varieties (e.g., the English of working-class Black Americans). Thus,

this standard leads to a linguistic injustice even if the injustice is not uniquely borne by non-native English speakers.¹³

It thus seems that some of the difficulties for non-native English speakers intersect with difficulties for people who have less access to prestigious varieties of English. Publishing venues enforce basic norms about English grammaticality as well as more specific disciplinary norms. They might also implicitly or explicitly enforce norms that reflect a preference for varieties of English that are associated with prestigious institutions and/or social positions (Soler, 2021, pp. 165–167). Meeting such norms might be difficult for any English speaker who is not familiar with such institutions or does not occupy such social positions. Nevertheless, we suspect that meeting these norms is especially challenging for non-native speakers. (For more on the role of prestige bias in academic philosophy, see De Cruz, 2018.)

II.2 The translator

In the second vignette, the immediate problem is a problem of content: what is said in one language (Latin) cannot be easily said in another (Japanese). At first blush, there is no injustice. Translations are notoriously difficult to produce no matter what languages are involved.

Issues of justice begin to emerge, however, when this one-off instance of translation becomes part of a larger pattern. One such pattern concerns the direction of translation. It might be the case that texts in dominant languages are disproportionately translated in comparison with texts from non-dominant languages. If that is true, then one potential long-term effect will be an unjust misrepresentation of the world's intellectual work. This misrepresentation might itself lead to further injustice insofar as uninformed opinions about texts from non-dominant languages are more likely to emerge when quality

¹³ Cf. Wolters (2015, p. 190), who is responding to a similar argument given by Björkman (2012).

translations of those texts are scarce.¹⁴ While we are sympathetic to this line of reasoning, we want to focus on something else.

As academic philosophy continues to internationalize, an increasing percentage of philosophical output is produced in English. But there isn't (as yet) a proportional increase in the percentage of philosophers whose native language is English. Instead, there is a growing percentage of consumers of English-language philosophy who are non-native speakers of English. These philosophers fall into two importantly different groups. In the first group are those philosophers who become "linguistic foreigners," reading and writing in a non-native language and thus subject to some of the problems that the other vignettes illustrate. More relevant to the current vignette, however, is the second group of philosophers, those who engage the output of English-language academic philosophy through translation.¹⁵ Having to engage through translation is not unjust so long as accurate translations are readily available. As a matter of fact, though, they are not. Furthermore, as our vignette illustrates, in some cases it will be difficult or even impossible to produce an accurate translation. One consequence, then, is that philosophy will become increasingly inaccessible to those who do not speak English.

The use of English might also unfairly marginalize philosophers who speak languages other than English. To show how, we first note that languages are not completely neutral, philosophically speaking. They differ with respect to which philosophical ideas they make more or less salient.¹⁶ That is to say, some

¹⁴ Here we are extending arguments popularized by Bryan Van Norden and Jay Garfield. See especially Garfield and Van Norden (2016), and Van Norden (2018).

¹⁵ Even this bifurcation is over-simplified because some philosophers read in English but write in their native language. In reality, immersion in English-language philosophy comes in degrees. We should also note that most discussions of non-native speakers in philosophy tend to focus on those philosophers whose degree of immersion is quite high.

¹⁶ Edouard Machery, Louis Chartrand, and others have developed a methodology for finding some indirect evidence for this claim (Linguistic Justice Society, 2022). Cf. Wolters (2015), who focuses on a

ideas are more likely to occur when using one language rather than when using another language, and some ideas sound more (intuitively) plausible when expressed in one language than when expressed in another. The Translator vignette represents one such case. The idea that the self is not distinct from its social and cultural setting is a vague and imprecise idea to be sure. But certain languages—such as Latin or English—may fail to make this idea salient. By contrast, other languages—such as Japanese—make the idea practically unavoidable. In a blog entry, Gabriele Contessa (2014) weighed in on a fairly well-known case involving knowledge-how and knowledge-that, claiming that “the suggestion that knowledge-how is a form of knowledge-that sounds particularly implausible to the ears of native speakers of languages that descend from Latin, as these languages use two different families of words to express the concept of knowledge (broadly construed).”¹⁷ A similar case involves the English word “reason,” which seems to refer to a variety of importantly distinct things. The fact that English uses a single word gives a potentially false impression of unity among these things, whereas in other languages the differences are encoded in the use of different words. In Chinese, for instance, “原因” can be naturally used to pick out a causal reason whereas “理由” can be naturally used to pick out a justificatory reason.¹⁸ The rise of English as the lingua franca of academic philosophy might “lock in” which philosophical ideas are

global parochialism that is the product of culture and history. While we are also talking about the agenda-setting effects of the English language’s dominance in academic philosophy, our idea here has more to do with effects that are intrinsic to language itself than the broader geopolitical context of language.

¹⁷ Cf. Rumfitt (2003) and Stanley (2011), who both attempt to wrestle with the type of cross-linguistic issues Contessa is talking about.

¹⁸ In recent years, epistemologists have become more sensitive to these kinds of examples. For additional examples as well as an overview of the topic as a whole, see Fassio and Gao (in press). For other relevant contributions, see Mizumoto, Ganerie, and Goddard (2020).

salient.¹⁹ As a result, other philosophical ideas might be neglected or otherwise seem less plausible than they would were another language used. Thus, some ideas might be marginalized and less likely to be seriously considered, not because of their merits but merely because of the language that academic philosophy uses.

It is of course not unjust to the ideas themselves that they are marginalized because ideas aren't the kind of things that can be treated unjustly. But the marginalization of ideas might be unjust to the philosophers who have them. Thus, the rise of English as the lingua franca of academic philosophy might lead to the marginalization of philosophers who speak languages other than English. The degree to which this marginalization occurs is an open question worth exploring further. Nevertheless, we think that this potential for marginalization is an additional form of injustice. It is unjust for individuals from certain linguistic backgrounds to have their ideas taken less seriously not in virtue of the intrinsic merits of their ideas but because of the language used to consider them.²⁰

II.3 The scholar

The third vignette represents the many scholars who read English material and teach English material but do not publish in English. The reasons they do not publish in English vary. But the primary effect is the

¹⁹ Cf. Egid (2023). The argument we are giving here is much weaker than the “value lock-in” argument given by MacAskill (2022, pp. 76–78). Saliency “lock-in” is consistent with value change (and belief change more generally).

²⁰ Nowak (2020) gives a related argument that starts from the idea that language loss is a form of illocutionary silencing. The world is not yet at the stage where major languages are at risk of extinction. So people will not be illocutionarily silenced across all contexts. Yet the dominance of English does threaten to silence within philosophy: if all philosophy is done in English, then in my capacity as a professional philosopher I am able to express what I can express only in English and in the ways that English allows me to express it.

same: their scholarship is ignored. As Schwitzgebel et al. (2018) argue, English-language philosophy is asymmetrically insulated. Philosophy published in languages other than English regularly engages work from a wide range of languages. For instance, among the 2952 citations made in a sample of Chinese-language philosophy, 51% were to work originally written in Chinese, 31% to work originally written in English, and 17% to work originally written in some other language (including German, French, Japanese, Korean, and Russian). But philosophy published in English rarely engages work from a language other than English. In fact, it is hard to overstate how rarely this happens. Among the 3556 citations made in the 93 articles published in the 12 top-ranked journals during the year 2016, the number of citations to work published in the past 16 years in a language other than English was exactly 1.²¹ Everyone should agree that ignoring a body of work is sometimes justified. Professional philosophers conducting literature reviews do not spend their time reading through the senior theses of undergraduate students, nor should they. Along similar lines, someone may argue that philosophers are justified in ignoring non-English philosophy because the quality of scholarship is low.²² But as a causal explanation this idea falls flat. Clearly, the current asymmetrical insularity of English-language philosophy is not the

²¹ For similar statistical evidence, see Wolters (2015, p. 191). Among the 414 references that Wolters checked in two issues of *Philosophy of Science*, there were 2 references to work written in a language other than English, a whopping 0.5%. Wolters also found a roughly 50:50 split between English-language references and German-language references in the German-language journal *Philosophia Naturalis*.

²² As an aside, we should note that the history of Western philosophy provides a strong reason to be cautious when engaging with these kinds of arguments. Park (2013) documents how racial prejudice played an important role in the crafting of the so-called “Western Canon” in the late eighteenth–early nineteenth century. Prior to that time, European philosophy was taken to be part of a tradition that extended beyond the continent, including Africa and Asia. Given this historical background, we think that it is better to be cautious when ignoring work produced outside the perceived mainstream. Hu (2016)’s survey of recent Chinese literature is a laudable example of a more cautious approach.

result of careful consideration. Rather, it is the result of a linguistic barrier: a significant percentage of the philosophers publishing in English are either unable or unwilling to spend the resources necessary to seriously engage philosophy that is published in another language. And, given the prestige that English-language philosophy enjoys and continues to accrue, those philosophers have less and less professional incentive to spend those resources.

Let's assume, for the sake of discussion, that the Scholar's non-English work is comparable to much of the work done in English. The marginalization of his work is a straightforward injustice because the scholar's work does not merit the degree of marginalization that it receives. While the Scholar interacts with work of comparable quality to his own, others fail to engage with work of comparable quality, namely his. To be sure, the Scholar may be well-regarded in his own linguistically defined academic community. But his ability to achieve a higher level of professional standing within academic philosophy more broadly is hampered by the fact that his work is not in English.²³

In addition, the Scholar's diminished status has repercussions for other people who depend upon said status. In this vignette, the Scholar's student, Zhang San, is applying to Anglophone graduate programs. But the diminished status of the Scholar is likely to hinder Zhang San's ability to be admitted to such programs. Consequently, Zhang San lacks an equal opportunity to join the broader English-language academic community. Thus, the asymmetric insularity of English-language philosophy constitutes a further injustice to Zhang San and anyone else who is similarly affected.

In fact, the rise of English as the lingua franca of academic philosophy might create a vicious cycle of unequal opportunity (cf. Van Parijs, 2011, pp. 91–95). Philosophers who write in languages other than English have their scholarship ignored. As a consequence, they have a comparatively more difficult time placing their students in Anglophone programs. Those students become the next generation of philosophers who write in languages other than English. Their scholarship is also ignored. As a consequence, they also have a comparatively more difficult time placing their students in Anglophone

²³ Cf. Wolters' discussion of "team asymmetry" (2015, pp. 192–193, 195–196).

programs. And so on. A version of this vicious cycle might operate even among non-Anglophone programs. Although there are exceptions and complications, many non-Anglophone programs across the globe now award additional prestige to those philosophers who succeed in engaging English-language scholarship. Those philosophers who do not succeed in engaging English-language scholarship might have a comparatively more difficult time placing their students in these non-Anglophone programs. And so on.

Of course, there are many places along the cycle where interventions may be made. Many non-Anglophone programs have tried to develop partnerships with Anglophone programs, for instance. But the fact that a lingua franca can create such a vicious cycle is something to worry about, regardless of the benefits that the existence of a lingua franca brings.

II.4 The student

In the fourth vignette, a student has to work harder to reach a native-speaker student's level of linguistic competence. The student also has to develop skills that a native English-speaking student doesn't need to develop. This need is obviously an extra burden for the non-native student. But not every extra burden constitutes an injustice. What makes an extra burden an injustice is the way in which it fits into a broader structure.

In this context, the extra burden taken on by the non-native student constitutes an injustice because it is an unfair distribution of the costs of producing a public good. If we agree that having a global lingua franca for academic philosophy is a good thing, then the burden of bringing about that good should be fairly shared. But in reality, the burden is taken on almost entirely by non-native speakers. Of course, some native speakers may contribute to the public good by doing a disproportionate amount of editing for non-native publications or by producing most of the materials that are used to learn English in the classroom. But even that work is done by a small minority of academic philosophy's native English speakers. Most native speakers cannot even be bothered to adjust their English to a more accessible variety. Thus, native speakers of English are, in the technical sense, free-riders.

The severity of the injustice inflicted by free-riding depends on a variety of empirical issues that we cannot adequately detail here. But we want to briefly discuss the difficulty of learning academic English. In general, the difficulty of learning a language decreases as that language becomes more widespread. But academic philosophy is an extremely small piece of the world. How widespread English is in academic philosophy will have nearly no effect on how difficult it is to learn, because almost everyone who is learning it comes from outside academic philosophy. To be fair, English is becoming more widespread in general, not just in academic philosophy. But English-learning resources remain scarce in most of the world. This scarcity is all the more worrisome if academic philosophy aspires to be accessible to everyone, not just the members of a relatively wealthy and highly educated elite who have adequate access to English-learning resources.

This free-riding argument is adapted from the one developed by Van Parijs (2011, pp. 50–86). As with Van Parijs’s original argument, there are grounds for reasonable disagreement. Consider the response developed by Harb (2021). According to Harb, sometimes it is not unfair for people to free-ride on public goods that are produced for self-serving reasons. For instance, it is not unfair for a son-in-law to use his father-in-law’s Netflix subscription without financially contributing when the father-in-law pays for the subscription solely for his own desire to watch Netflix. Analogously, perhaps it is not unfair for native speakers of English to free-ride on the establishment of English as the lingua franca of academic philosophy, because non-native speakers contribute to this public good for their own self-interested reasons (intellectual curiosity, career advancement, etc.).

Whatever you think of free-riding on public goods produced for purely self-serving reasons, the situation for English in academic philosophy is more complicated. As even Harb concedes (2021, p. 117), it is unfair to free-ride when the free-rider is part of a cooperative agreement for producing the good in question. We admit that there are grounds for reasonable disagreement about whether there is a cooperative agreement for establishing English as the lingua franca of academic philosophy, who is part of that agreement, and what the terms of the agreement are. (In fact we, the authors, disagree with each other on some of the details.) Nevertheless, there is a case to be made that the aforementioned

announcements made by philosophy journals constitute a commitment to establishing English as the lingua franca of academic philosophy. Insofar as those journals benefit from this new reality without sharing its costs, they are unfairly free-riding.

The vignette also hints at a particularly insidious effect of the way in which English has come to dominate academic philosophy. Earlier, we mentioned that when English is used in academic philosophy it is typically used heterogeneously in the sense that it involves native and non-native speakers of English. Furthermore, those non-native speakers are typically evaluated exonormatively insofar as their contributions are expected to follow norms of usage that are established by people other than them—i.e., by native English speakers.

When any student begins to study philosophy, there will be many things that they do not understand. In the case of a non-native English speaker, they know that in some instances their lack of understanding is attributable to some issue of linguistic competence. They may need to look up a word that they are unfamiliar with (e.g., “transcendental”) or ask about the origin of an idiom that does not occur in their native language (e.g., “hit the bull’s-eye”). Consequently, when a non-native English speaker is confronted with some piece of philosophy that seems particularly challenging or obscure, they might be primed to think that the fault lies with them and their linguistic competence. Indeed, that is often the case. By contrast, when a native speaker is confronted with some piece of philosophy that seems particularly challenging or obscure, they are much less likely to blame their own linguistic competence. As a result, a non-native speaker might be more likely to conclude that they are not linguistically competent enough to participate in the philosophical conversation—even when the non-native speaker and the native speaker are presented with the exact same piece of philosophy.

Exonormativity exacerbates this hermeneutical difference. If a native speaker is being obscure, it can be difficult for a non-native speaker to get an accusation of obscurity to stick. “Who are you,” someone might ask, “to judge what is obscure in *my* language?” Similarly, it is much easier for a native speaker to move from “that is not how *I* would say it” to “that is not how *you* should say it.” When only some philosophers are empowered to contribute to the linguistic norms of academic philosophy,

legitimate differences in style and rhetoric can be twisted into differences between “proper” and “improper” English (cf. Hyland, 2016, p. 66).

III. Injustice, both linguistic and epistemic

In the previous section, we identified some injustices that exist in academic philosophy. In this section, we develop a framework that offers a unified explanation of these injustices. According to this explanation, many of these injustices are instances of epistemic injustice: specifically, a kind of epistemic injustice normally called “distributive epistemic injustice.” Now, while we think that epistemic injustice is an interesting object of study in its own right, our focus in this paper is on injustices in academic philosophy. Consequently, in what follows we shall spend less time directly theorizing about epistemic injustice and evaluating proposed taxonomies of it.

At first pass, an epistemic injustice is an injustice wherein someone is harmed or wronged in their capacity as a knower or, more generally, as an epistemic agent (Fricker, 2007, p. 1). An epistemic injustice, like other injustices, often involves power or discrimination such that one group in a position of power harms or wrongs another group (cf. Dotson, 2012; Medina, 2013). What makes an injustice distinctively epistemic, however, is that the harms or wrongs involve an agent’s status as someone who can know things, share information, understand the world, provide justifications, and so on.

Knowledge and language are intimately related. One of the important ways—if not *the* most important way—in which someone may express what they know is through language: by verbalizing what they know, writing it down, signing it, and so on. Such expressions of knowledge are typically realized in a specific language. Furthermore, one of the important ways—if not, again, *the* most important way—in which someone exercises their epistemic agency is through participation in a community. But that participation is also typically mediated by the use of a specific language. Given the intimate relationship between knowledge and language, we should expect there to be overlap between epistemic injustice and linguistic injustice.

One type of epistemic injustice is distributional epistemic injustice (Coady, 2010, 2017; cf. Fricker, 2013, p. 1318, 2017, p. 53).²⁴ In general, distributional injustice involves the unfair, undeserving, or otherwise unjust distribution of goods. Distributional *epistemic* injustice, then, involves the unfair, undeserving, or otherwise unjust distribution of epistemic goods. Of course, not every distribution of goods constitutes an injustice—not even every unequal distribution. Whether or not a distribution of goods is unfair, undeserving, or otherwise unjust can depend on a variety of factors. It can be undeserving if it does not respect the appropriate merits of the people receiving the goods, it can be unfair if it creates inequality in the distribution of opportunities that it is reasonable for people to pursue, and it can be unjust if it systematically harms one group of people over others, just to mention a few types of case.

So what is an epistemic good? One oft-discussed epistemic good is credibility: someone is more or less credible to the extent that they are believed when they offer testimony (Fricker, 2007, ch. 2–3). Credibility appears to be a finite good insofar as disagreement raises the question of whose testimony should be believed. In principle, credibility could be distributed equally between the disagreeing parties. More often, though, one person is taken to be more credible than the other, and thus the testimony of the more credible person is believed and that of the less credible person is disbelieved (cf. Medina, 2011).

But credibility is not the only epistemic good. The list of epistemic goods includes certain states, such as true belief, knowledge, and understanding; and the list includes certain opportunities, such as

²⁴ As we mentioned in the beginning of this section, we don't want to spend too much time directly theorizing about epistemic injustice. That being said, someone might wonder whether distributional epistemic injustice is “really” epistemic injustice since distributional epistemic injustice doesn't essentially involve testimonial exchanges or the creation of meaning. In general, we are wary of attempts to preemptively limit the scope of epistemic injustice (cf. Dotson, 2012). We deny the idea that epistemic injustice essentially involves testimonial exchanges or the creation of meaning. (See Perrine (2023) for a discussion and defense.) Regardless of whether the injustices we identify fail to meet someone's preferred standard for what epistemic injustice “really” is, we think that they remain worthy of attention.

education, access to information, and freedom from censorship. The list also includes epistemic goods that are essential for meaningfully participating in a community, such as someone's credibility within that community as well as their standing to speak, their perceived expertise, and their ability to contribute to group epistemic goods like group understanding and group meaning. There are also more introspective epistemic goods, such as someone's ability to understand their own personal experience and someone's opportunity to spend time and resources to reflect on their life.

There are likely to exist other epistemic goods that we've failed to identify. The list of these goods might also be hierarchical: philosophers may (and in fact already do) try to analyze the relations between these epistemic goods to see which of them, if any, can be explained in terms of others. While we don't have an answer to what the final list looks like in every detail, we do think that it will be wide-ranging and comprise more than credibility.

Using our understanding of epistemic injustice as the unfair, undeserving, or otherwise unjust distribution of epistemic goods, we can provide a unifying framework for explaining the potential injustices brought about by the rise of English as the lingua franca of academic philosophy. As we see it, all of our vignettes contain a distributional injustice regarding one or more epistemic goods.

When discussing the Referee vignette, we argued that the immediate consequence of the referee's request for more idiomatic English entails an unequal distribution of resources wherein the non-native speaker has to spend time and energy revising their paper rather than advancing their knowledge. We also argued that this unequal distribution is unnecessary and undeserving. When this undeserving distribution of time and energy is part of a larger and more systematic pattern, it leads to fewer publications for non-native speakers. But publications are a key means through which philosophers acquire important epistemic goods: credibility, prestige, entitlement to participate in the more elite activities of academic philosophy, and so on. Thus, the referee's request constitutes a local epistemic injustice and might also be part of a more systemic epistemic injustice. In addition, these standards for publishing involve an exonormative structure where some members of the community (all of the non-native English-speaking philosophers) are expected to follow standards set by others (including native English-speaking

philosophers as well as non-philosophers). This exnormative structure is unjust insofar as it involves a distribution of norm-creation that does not reflect who is deserving of creating those standards.

When discussing the Translator vignette, we dismissed the idea that underrepresentation of translated work by itself constitutes an injustice. Our dismissal can be substantiated by appealing to our framework: translations are (somewhat) public goods that everyone benefits from. There is no meaningful sense in which underrepresentation itself constitutes an unjust distribution of epistemic goods. But English has become the prestigious philosophical language, and an increasing percentage of academic philosophy is published in English. These facts lead to an unequal distribution of access between the philosophers who don't speak English and those who do. This unequal distribution is almost certainly undeserving: native speakers have greater access to more prestigious forms of academic philosophy by accident, in virtue of where they were born.

We also discussed how languages are not philosophically neutral. We argued that languages differ with respect to which philosophical ideas they make salient, and the rise of English as the lingua franca of academic philosophy might lead to the marginalization of philosophers whose ideas are less salient in English. We think that this marginalization can also be understood in terms of distributional epistemic injustice. Linguistic differences lead to an undeserving distribution of credibility within academic philosophy not in virtue of which ideas intrinsically merit less discussion but in virtue of the language in which those ideas are discussed.

When discussing the Scholar vignette, we showed how the asymmetric insularity of English-language philosophy leads to an unequal distribution of reputation. This unequal distribution is also undeserving insofar as the difference is due not to the quality of the work but rather to the language in which it is published. This epistemic injustice can generate future injustices. The Scholar's undeservedly low reputation has a negative impact on those who depend on that reputation, including the student who is applying to Anglophone graduate programs. Thus, the students of English-speaking philosophers have undeservedly greater access to educational opportunities compared with students of philosophers who do not speak English.

When discussing the Student vignette, we argued that the extra burden taken on by non-native speaking students is unfair because it allows native speaking students to free-ride on the public good of having a shared lingua franca. Interestingly, this argument does not fit our framework of distributional epistemic injustice. But the second argument that we considered does. Native-speaking students and non-native speaking students differ in their hermeneutical resources, and non-native speaking students are more likely to connect their self-perception of philosophical competence to their self-perception of linguistic competence. That difference is unfair. More importantly, the perceived exornativity of English leads to an unequal distribution of philosophers' standing to speak and their ability to set norms. Non-native speaking philosophers are not given an equal standing to set the linguistic norms of their own professional community. In fact, native speakers of English are put into a position to judge what constitutes good philosophical English *even when those native speakers are not professional philosophers*. We think that this distribution is intolerable.

While we think that our framework of distributive epistemic injustice captures an especially important dimension of injustice in academic philosophy, we do not think that other frameworks are useless. Consider a framework based on what is sometimes called "participatory epistemic injustice" (see Hookway, 2010; Grasswick, 2017, pp. 315–318, for some discussions). Participatory epistemic injustice occurs when a person unfairly, undeservingly, or otherwise unjustly lacks the ability to fully participate in some kind of worthwhile epistemic practice. For example, in some circumstances it is a participatory epistemic injustice for a person to ask questions in a group setting and be ignored. Many typical examples of participatory epistemic injustice involve conversational contexts—a person's questions are ignored, their requests for information are taken less seriously, the depth of engagement they receive from interlocutors is less than it should be, and so on. But participatory epistemic injustice need not be limited to conversational contexts. And when it is not so limited, it might overlap with distributive epistemic injustice. Thus, a framework based on participatory epistemic injustice might capture another, overlapping, dimension of injustice in academic philosophy.

In a recent pair of papers (2022a, 2022b), Amandine Catala also identifies injustices in academic philosophy and develops a framework to explain them based on epistemic injustice. But while we develop our framework in terms of distributional injustice, Catala uses the original categories described in Fricker (2007) and develops her framework in terms of testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. She characterizes testimonial injustice in terms of an undue credibility deficit attributable to a prejudice against the speaker's social group (2022a, p. 331, 2022b, p. 6) and hermeneutical injustice in terms of an undue intelligibility deficit caused by biases in the conceptual or expressive resources of a group (2022a, p. 331, 2022b, p. 11).

Catala's discussion is rich and interesting and we are largely sympathetic to her diagnosis of potential cases of epistemic injustice in academic philosophy. However, we suspect that the two categories of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice cannot adequately explain all of the instances of injustice that we've identified. For instance, in the Referee vignette, the referee objects to the publication of a paper on the basis of its supposedly unidiomatic English. It doesn't seem right to say that the referee has a bias against the author because the paper is anonymous. It also doesn't seem right to say that the referee gives a credibility deficit to the assertions the author makes; rather, the referee is opposed to the paper being accepted for publication. Thus, it doesn't seem right to say that this is an instance of testimonial injustice. Now consider the Scholar vignette, where the scholar's letter of recommendation is not received as well as it should have been. It doesn't seem right to say that someone on an admissions committee has a prejudice against a scholar that they don't know at a school that they have never heard of in a country that they have never visited. So, while some kind of injustice occurs in this case, it doesn't seem right to characterize that injustice as an instance of testimonial injustice. Likewise, very few of the injustices that we have identified seem to be properly characterized as instances of hermeneutical injustice. In the Student vignette, the student has to work harder than native English speakers to perform comparably in their courses. But the situation is readily intelligible: the student has sufficient conceptual resources to understand that the problem originates in part because they are doing philosophy in their non-native language. To be clear, we don't mean to imply that Catala's framework is intrinsically problematic

or that it cannot be used to understand some potential cases of the epistemic injustices that are attributable to English being the lingua franca of academic philosophy. Rather, we mean to show that broadening the concept of epistemic injustice to include distributive epistemic injustice help us to better understand many more types of injustice that academic philosophy faces (compare Dotson, 2012; Fricker, 2017).

To sum up, in this section we have argued that many of the linguistic injustices we have identified involve epistemic injustice. Specifically, they involve a distributive epistemic injustice where one or more epistemic good are unfairly, undeservingly, or otherwise unjustly distributed. At this point, a natural question to raise is: Who is responsible for these injustices?

In general, there are two potential answers to that question. On the one hand, a distributional injustice of any kind can be an intentional expression of power—consider, for instance, apartheid in South Africa during the second half of the twentieth century. On the other hand, a distributional injustice can be structural. In particular, independent actors might, without intention, produce a system that, as a matter of fact, yields an unfair, undeserving, or otherwise unjust distribution of some good.

We think that structural facts can explain many of the epistemic injustices we have identified. Without a doubt, there are bad actors who act on their prejudices at the expense of others. But there are also many well-meaning actors who, despite their best intentions, end up perpetuating structural injustices. If anyone is to blame for these injustices, it is academic philosophy as a whole. Therefore, it is the responsibility of academic philosophy as a whole to fix them.

IV. Some tentative proposals

Academic philosophy lacks widely accepted “best practices” for addressing unjust linguistic discrimination within the profession. The Barcelona Principles are one attempt that is gaining momentum.²⁵ But we think that our account of distributive epistemic injustice provides a new and

²⁵ For a statement of the Barcelona Principles, see Contesi (2021); for further discussion of them, see Stohlman-Vanderveen (2021).

consequential evaluative angle. That being the case, we conclude by discussing some proposals. We are moderately hesitant to do so since we think that the process should involve more stakeholders—especially those who bear the brunt of the injustices involved. Furthermore, a full reckoning of these proposals would require an extensive cost–benefit analysis that we lack the space to undertake here. But, in an effort to galvanize discussion, we shall introduce some concrete proposals and tentatively evaluate their merits. We shall do this by pairing similar proposals.²⁶

Proposal 1A: Increase assistance with English

According to this proposal, journals (or the publishers that work with them) should provide additional English-language services to non-native English speakers.²⁷ These services should include editorial services like proofreading as well as training services analogous to that provided by a writing center at a university. These services should be provided for free.

This proposal is admirable in its attempt to correct for the unjust burdens placed on non-native speakers as well as their unequal access to English-language resources. But we think that such an intervention would perpetuate the biased way in which non-native English is evaluated. The proposal implicitly legitimizes an exnormative structure whereby non-native English-speaking philosophers should follow the standards set by native speakers, including those who are not part of academic philosophy. Yet we have argued that this exnormative structure contributes to an epistemic injustice regarding the distribution of philosophers’ standing to speak and their ability to set professional norms.

²⁶ We don’t discuss proposals regarding teaching in this paper because successful teaching is highly contextual in a way that defies uniform proposals. What it takes to teach well at a state school in the middle of the US is very different from what it takes to teach well at an elite university in China. But we discuss such proposals elsewhere.

²⁷ See, for instance, the Taylor & Francis editing services, Lex Academic, and similar organizations.

Proposal 1B: Abandon “readability” standards

According to this proposal, journals should stop advising reviewers to evaluate a submission’s “readability.” This proposal not only speaks against evaluations of how “idiomatic” the English is but also against evaluations of “flair” and “style”; and it cautions against overly subjective evaluations such as whether the submission is “enjoyable” or “exciting” to read.²⁸

We enjoy readable philosophy that is written with flair. But to advise reviewers to evaluate submissions on the basis of these features is to arouse their native-speaker biases. A journal may try to mitigate these biases by explicitly telling their reviewers that some submissions are written by non-native English speakers and non-idiomatic language should not be given undue weight. But this mitigation tactic effectively asks people to engage in a behavior that elicits their biases and then instructs them to disregard those biases. For that reason, we think that academic philosophy’s best chance at minimizing the injustices caused by such biases (like the aforementioned epistemic injustice regarding non-native speakers’ ability to set professional norms) is to abandon readability standards altogether.

Proposal 2A: Diversifying the canon

According to this proposal, the philosophical canon of academic philosophy should expand beyond the mainstream Western canon so as to include work from other traditions such as Indian philosophy.²⁹ This proposal entails, at a minimum, that philosophers should acknowledge a wider range of historical precedents to the views that they discuss.

²⁸ In a sense, this proposal is stronger than Principle 2 of the Barcelona Principles, which only cautions against giving “undue weight” to readability standards.

²⁹ Compare this proposal with what is suggested in Van Norden (2017, pp. 31–37). Note, however, that Van Norden’s concerns are much broader than the role of English in academic philosophy.

We are skeptical about the value of establishing a canon for academic philosophy. But the concept of a canon seems practically unavoidable and, that being the case, we endorse the proposal insofar as it would be better for the canon of academic philosophy to include many traditions across the world. Diversifying the canon to include other traditions might also help with some of the injustices we discuss. For instance, it might legitimize philosophers from those traditions and thereby provide them with the credibility and prestige that they are unjustly deprived of. But we doubt that diversifying the canon will do much to combat most of the injustices we have identified. If diversifying the canon just means including long-dead philosophers on a syllabus or citing them in a paper, then we fail to see how that helps contemporary philosophers, especially those with limited access to English.

Proposal 2B: Expand the SEP

According to this proposal, the SEP (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*) should expand into languages beyond English. This expansion could be achieved by translating English-language entries into as many languages as is feasible. Alternatively (or in addition), this expansion could be achieved by commissioning original entries in other languages and, when appropriate, translating them into English. Entries on the same topic could be coordinated using something like Wikipedia's inter-language links.

The SEP is already a wonderful resource; it is easy to use, available for free, and makes high-quality work more accessible to philosophers all over the world. But the rise of English will make academic philosophy increasingly inaccessible to those philosophers who do not speak English. Expanding the SEP into additional languages would avoid making the SEP itself inaccessible to philosophers who don't speak English. Expanding the SEP would also enable it to serve as an entry point to less accessible research. First and foremost, philosophers who don't speak English could use the SEP to more easily identify English-language research to engage with. In addition, translations of non-English entries into English

could help combat the asymmetric insularity of English-language philosophy. We acknowledge that this proposal would require substantial funding to be realized. It might also be too operationally complex for the existing team. Perhaps, then, the work could be licensed to local academic communities. We are confident that the global community has more than enough scholars who are qualified and motivated to produce high-quality translations of the SEP.

Proposal 3A: Increase non-native English speaker representation

According to this proposal, the editorial boards of journals, the admissions committees of graduate programs, and so on, should include more non-native speaking philosophers.³⁰ While it is impractical to aim for a precise number, academic philosophy should at least aim to have its institutions include a proportion of non-native speakers that is comparable to that found at peer institutions in other disciplines.

Increased representation is rarely a bad thing. But as things currently stand, many non-native speaking philosophers are part of other demographics that are also underrepresented in academic philosophy. As such, there is a risk of overburdening them with administrative tasks. Setting that issue aside, this proposal attempts to directly intervene on the distribution of powerful epistemic goods like prestige and the authority to set professional norms. It also promises to indirectly intervene on the distribution of other epistemic goods through the actions of the non-native speakers of English who are put into positions of power. But the fact that someone is a non-native speaker does not guarantee that they are sensitive to the injustices we have identified. (Speaking personally, the most fanatical defender of the requirement of “idiomatic English” we know is himself a non-native speaker of English.) So a proposal to increase representation risks substituting mere tokenism for lasting solutions.

³⁰ Compare with Principle 3 of the Barcelona Principles.

Proposal 3B: Increase cross-linguistic representation

According to this proposal, journals should publish material that spotlights non-English language philosophy, especially that which is produced in non-Anglophone countries.³¹ Journals may organize special issues that contain a translation of an influential contemporary paper along with critical engagement. Or they may commit to making such translations a regular part of their issues alongside discussion notes and book reviews.

We think that this proposal offers a better intervention on the distribution of prestige and similar epistemic goods because it directly targets a major cause of the undeserving differences: English-language philosophy's asymmetric insularity. Of course, what is translated and spotlighted should be rigorously selected. But many countries already have vibrant academic communities, local journals, and so on. These pre-existing resources could be used to coordinate the publication of material aimed for a more international audience.

V. Conclusion

A lot more could be said about these six proposals. A lot more could be said about other proposals that we weren't able to discuss. Yet we hope that our discussion motivates other philosophers to take distributive epistemic injustice more seriously. If English is going to be the lingua franca of academic philosophy worldwide, then academic philosophers should try, as a community, to make the transition as free as it can be from the problems that we have identified. The global community of academic philosophy can be a diverse community. But a diverse community that fails to be appropriately inclusive is unjust.

³¹ This proposal is similar to Principle 4 of the Barcelona Principles.

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