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Principles for compensating the epistemic injustices of colonialism

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Abstract
I aim to make headway towards understanding how to compensate properly for epistemic injustices committed during large-scale forms of intergroup domination, with my focus being European colonialism in much of Africa and apartheid in South Africa. I point out that there is a wide array of suggestions about how concretely to effect reparations for these injustices in the literature, and seek to discover which (if any) are justified by a plausible theory of compensatory justice. One potential theory is the principle that people done an injustice should be put into the position they would have been in had the injustice not occurred, while another is to give wrongfully harmed peoples control over what had been taken away from them. These principles have frequently been applied to major racial injustices pertaining to property and opportunity, but I present new reason to think that both have counterintuitive implications when applied to epistemic injustices. Drawing on values and practices salient in parts of South America and Africa as well as some Anglo-American thought about restorative justice, I advance a unique third account of compensatory justice in general that I show both avoids the criticisms facing rivals and has plausible implications for how to respond to the relevant epistemic injustices in particular.

Keywords Compensatory justice · Decolonization of knowledge · Epistemic injustice · Epistemic redress · Indigenous knowledge systems · Reparations

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1 Introducing debate about compensating colonial epistemic injustices

Many scholars these days accept this point: 'The colonial and apartheid orders were not simply political and military conquests and systems of governance, but knowledge projects' (Suttner, 2010: 515–6). The point is not merely that European powers were able to dominate politically and economically unjustly by having influenced indigenous peoples' interpretations of the world, but also that such epistemic influence often was itself an unjust domination. According to the Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in his classic *Decolonising the Mind*, the

> most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonized, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world…. (which) involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture….and the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser (1986: 16).

Both were present in South Africa, which I shall use as a running example in this article.

Condensing decades of complex history, the white and specifically Afrikaaner dictatorship during South Africa's apartheid era adopted laws and policies that prescribed racially segregated educational facilities (Bantu Education Act of 1953; Extension of the University Act of 1959) as well as English and Afrikaans as the media of instruction (Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974). Once universities were segregated, those designated for Black people were very poorly resourced and moreover were controlled by state-sanctioned officials, such that the 'intellectual agenda of the institutions often became no more than that of reproducing material taught in previous years at historically white Afrikaans-medium universities' (Bunting, 2006: 45). Although the latter universities were active supporters of the apartheid regime and English-speaking universities tended not to be, both featured only white lecturers who taught Eurocentric curricula and published little informed by African worldviews (Bunting, 2006 provides a useful overview).

What that meant is that for more than four decades South Africa lacked a well resourced institution of higher education the teaching and research of which systematically considered indigenous African ways of interpreting the world. Black people (and also white people) could not attend a quality university where they could study, say, African philosophies and religions, let alone in an African language (and taught by an African); there was no such thing. Regardless of whether that was the intention of apartheid architects (which F. W. de Klerk, the last apartheid president, is well known for having denied), it was an epistemic injustice. For well more than 20 years decolonial and Afrocentric theorists in South Africa have described it variously as 'spiritual genocide' (Vilakazi, 1998: 76), 'cultural violence' (Odora Hoppers, 2000: 5), 'symbolic castration' (Odora Hoppers, 2001: 74), and 'epistemicide' (Ramose, 2003: 139).

While there is substantial agreement that colonialism and apartheid included serious epistemic injustice done to indigenous populations, there remain many differ-

ences of opinion about how the state (or influential social institutions more generally) should justly respond to it in the post-independence era. There is ubiquitous talk of 'epistemic liberation' and the 'decolonization of knowledge' in the literature, but what concretely should a state or other institution guilty of large-scale epistemic injustice do to compensate victims? Suggestions abound. For example, some support altogether 'jettisoning western epistemological paradigms' in African university settings (Lebakeng et al., 2006: 77; cf. Murove & Mazibuko, 2008: 104–5, 108). Somewhat weaker, but still very robust, is the aim of 'ensuring that it (African epistemology—ed.) assumes its position as the principal epistemology that informs the indigenous people of Africa' (Masaka, 2018: 294). Others prescribe the 'valorization and legitimation of suppressed or silenced knowledges' (Andreotti et al., 2011: 46) or, relatedly, the recognition that 'all human beings were born into valid and legitimate knowledge systems' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020: 154; see also N'Dione et al., 1997: 375; Odora Hoppers, 2000: 9; Mazama, 2001: 388–9; Nyamnjoh, 2012: 140, 147; Masaka, 2018: 289–91), which in principle could be done without jettisoning the Western or even making the African principal. A fourth response would involve learning 'to enlarge our referents for reality and knowledge, acknowledging the gifts and limitations of every knowledge system' (Andreotti, 2012: 25), where limitations suggest a knowledge system's *pro tanto* lack of value/validity/legimitacy. The first four approaches are logically consistent with there being no dialogue between different epistemic frameworks, while a fifth approach would instead promote 'nurturing conversations' between them (Andreotti et al., 2011: 46).

Which of these approaches—or some other one(s)—would be just for agents of epistemic oppression (and, when they are unavailable, those who substantially benefited from their decisions) that should make amends? One strategy to answer this question would be to identify the exact nature of the epistemic injustice and search for a remedy appropriate specifically to it (for merely one instance of this common approach, see Tobi, 2022). The injustice could be a function of lack of access to quality education, grossly unequal funding and other support for indigenous interpretations of the world, subordination of African peoples, prejudicial stereotypes guiding institutional epistemic choices, all four, and even something else.[1] However, that is not my strategy in this article, which is instead to consider the bearing of *comprehensive* accounts of what is owed as a matter of compensatory justice (whether pertaining to land dispossession, theft of household objects, violation of contract, defamation, and so on) on epistemic injustices committed by social institutions during large-scale forms of intergroup domination such as colonialism and apartheid. That is, I appeal to salient views of how to effect compensatory justice *in general*—regardless of the specific nature of the initial wrongdoing that took place—and consider their implications for these specific kinds of epistemic injustices, and I argue that two prominent theories entail, if not absurdities, then at least approaches that many will find unattractive. That calls for a different theory, which I also help to develop and defend as preferable to the other two for avoiding the objections facing them.

[1] For applications of Miranda Fricker's influential typology to colonial practices, see Ogone (2017) and Tobi (2022). For potentially relevant accounts of epistemic injustice transcending that typology, see various contributions to Kidd et al. (2017).

It is an assumption of this project that a plausible comprehensive account of which reparations are owed can be found, in contrast to the idea that different sorts of wrongs call for radically divergent reparatory responses. The latter state of pluralism could be confirmed only after having searched in earnest for a monist account, something that is yet to be done, in at least two respects that this article may be viewed as helping to address. On the one hand, the literature on epistemic decolonization, often composed by those in the Global South, has not been put into conversation with analytic (largely Anglo-American) treatments of compensatory justice. On the other hand, when formulating theories of how to make compensation, usually only values and practices prominent in one tradition (often the Western) are invoked, without the attempt to formulate an approach that would have broad resonance.

In the following section, I begin by taking up what is probably the dominant approach to compensatory justice in contemporary Western philosophy, according to which people done an injustice should be put into the position they would have been in had the injustice not occurred (Sect. 2). I show that, when applied to epistemic injustices of the particular sort mentioned above, this general principle has counterintuitive implications. After that I address an alternate general principle that is salient in Global South discussions, viz., to give wrongfully harmed peoples control over how to heal in the way they see fit, and I argue that it, too, has serious problems in the context of these epistemic injustices (Sect. 3). Next, I draw on some values held by thinkers and practices recommended by policy makers in South America and Africa, elements of which have also been advanced by some contemporary Western restorative justice theorists, to begin to construct and particularly defend an alternative (Sect. 4). I advance the view that a proper compensation for any sort of wrong would express contrition by benefiting victims in fitting ways they accept upon negotiation, with a large contribution being to show that it avoids the criticisms I make of prominent rivals and has plausible implications for how to respond to the relevant epistemic injustices in particular. I conclude by mentioning some issues that merit consideration that I will not have been able to address here, including the prospect of extending the compensatory model to other kinds of injustice (Sect. 5).

2 Compensation as returning victims to an original state

In this essay I am drawing out the implications of general accounts of how to effect compensatory justice for certain epistemic injustices, however they may plausibly be conceived, with one major claim being that two influential versions of the former have counterintuitive implications for the latter. Here, I take up a general account of what is owed as a matter of compensatory justice that has been quite influential, if not dominant, in the Anglo-American philosophical and legal tradition, according to which it consists of returning victims to the condition they would have been in absent an initial injustice. Although this ‘restorational principle’ appears compelling when

considering how to compensate for the theft of, say, a car, I show that, when this account is applied to epistemic injustices of colonialism and like, absurdities ensue.[2]

According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on justice, the corrective form of it 'essentially concerns a bilateral relationship between a wrongdoer and his victim, and demands that the fault be cancelled by restoring the victim to the position she would have been in had the wrongful behaviour not occurred' (Miller, 2017: Sect. 2.2). Similarly, in Robert Nozick's influential terms, 'The principle of rectification presumably will make use of its best estimate of subjunctive information about what would have occurred….if the injustice had not taken place' (1974: 152–3). If you steal my car, the right sort of compensation by this principle is to give me back the car, viz., to put me in the position I would have been in (for all we can tell) had you not stolen it.

In the literature there are two major ways of understanding what might be involved in restoring the victim to *the position* she would have been in, not often explicitly distinguished. Some contend that such is a matter of putting in place 'the conditions that people were relying upon when framing their plans, and so allow them to carry on with their plans with minimal interruption' (Goodin, 1991: 152). Others maintain that such is a matter of 'making them no worse off than they would have been but for the misfortune' (Boxill, 2013: 953). According to the first, the relevant position of the victim is what specifically she would have been *doing* while, according to the second, it is how she would have been *faring*. When arguing against the restorational account below, both versions are targeted.

The restorational account is often employed when considering how to compensate for large-scale racial injustices. For example, one colleague maintains that, when it comes to colonial and apartheid laws that forbade Black people from owning large parts of Southern African territory, 'restitution constitutes returning victims to a condition they would have been in in the absence of the wrong' and hence immediately 'returning lands to previously dispossessed persons' (Oyowe, 2017: 239). Others invoke the restorational conception to ground reparations for the enslavement of West African and diasporic peoples by agents in the UK and the US, with the aim of putting descendants of slaves in a 'more equitable position commensurate with the status they would have attained in the absence of the injustice' (Darity & Mullen, 2020: 3) or 'returning the victim to a condition that preceded the illegal act' (Beckles, 2013: 13; see also Boxill, 2018: 507–9). For a third case, there are those who maintain that proper reparations for colonial infractions of democracy, liberty, and opportunity throughout Africa would 'seek to restore the victims of human rights violations to the original situation in which they were before the violations took place' (Mavedzenge, 2024: 413; see also United Nations General Assembly, 2005: Art. 19 to which he refers).

Despite the appeal of the restorational principle to many friends of reparations for large-scale forms of intergroup domination, I now argue that it has unattractive implications at least when considering how to compensate for epistemic injustices. Given the general aim of trying to 'change the present so that it looks more like the

[2] I also eventually (in Sect. 4) present reason to reconsider the very common judgement that the restorational principle provides the right answer in the case of a stolen car.

present that would have obtained in the absence of the injustice' (mentioned, but not accepted, by Waldron, 1992: 8), there are two distinct ways such an aim would be misdirected in contexts where the injustice consisted of wrongfully impairing people's interpretations of the world, such as well resourced public educational institutions in South Africa (but not merely there) having taught only Western philosophy.

The first sort of counterexample is one in which the epistemic injustice had the (intended or even unintended) effect of improving victims' lives on the whole. In that case, at least in terms of a lost 'faring' well position to be restored, there would be no reason to compensate at all, which is counterintuitive.[3]

For a case to illustrate the concern, note that a belief in witches has been prominent amongst many indigenous African peoples, with John Mbiti, the magisterial historian of African belief systems, remarking, 'Belief in the function and dangers of bad magic, sorcery and witchcraft is deeply rooted in African life….in spite of modern education and religions like Christianity and Islam' (1975: 164; see also 164–71, and Mbiti, 1990: 253–65). One finds a number of African philosophers over the years defending the reasonableness of belief in witchcraft despite challenges from Western sources (e.g., Oluwole, 1992; Moseley, 2004; Mawere, 2011; Omaboe, 2024). In addition, some African governments continue to have laws against witchcraft, with Zimbabwe for instance in 2006 having amended its Witchcraft Suppression Act to recognize the existence of witches, a move welcomed as 'resonating with Zimbabwean culture and tradition' after their existence had been 'deliberately downplayed by the successive colonial governments' (Nhambura, 2006).

However, what if contemporary science, recent interpretations of the Abrahamic faiths, and colonial governments were correct on this one? Suppose that there are in fact no witches.[4] Then, although it could well have been an injustice for public institutions not to instruct that aspect of indigenous African metaphysics and religion and indeed to treat belief in it as backward, it might be that the results of having done so were on the whole advantageous for a number of the victims. It has been quite common, for instance, for those deemed witches to have been put to death for purportedly having used sorcery to harm innocent members of the community such as by sending a mosquito to cause malaria (Mbiti, 1975: 164, 1990: 263). According to one recent statement by three African philosophers reviewing empirical literature, '(A)ll over Africa, thousands of elderly persons accused of witchcraft have been burned, buried alive, hacked and tortured to death' (Iyare et al., 2022: 290). To the extent that colonial epistemic imposition reduced belief in the existence of witches amongst African

[3] This objection is distinct from other, quite influential objections to the restorational principle, such as the claim that it is impossible to know how life would have otherwise been for victims (Waldron, 1992: 7–14) and the non-identity problem (e.g., Waldron, 1992: 12; Sher, 2005; Táíwò, 2022: 127–32). Others who have mentioned the present objection, albeit not in respect of epistemic justice and not considering possible replies, include Táíwò (2022: 129) and Mbozi (2024: 23–4, citing Metz, 2011: 552).

[4] For pragmatic reasons I confess discomfort at criticizing aspects of African philosophy here, as I do not want to contribute to its neglect or others to stereotype it, and I in fact believe that it has much to offer an open-minded enquirer working in any philosophical tradition, on which see, for example, Metz (2021, 2022). When it comes to epistemic reasons, however, I am sympathetic to Kwasi Wiredu's approach to philosophical traditions: '(T)here is no assumption that what comes from Africa is necessarily true, sound, profound et cetera. Much less, of course, should there be an over-valuation of what comes from the West' (2002: 54).

people, presumably there have been fewer such severe harms. In addition, one can reasonably expect their lives to have been improved by virtue of being better able to trace and deal with the real source of harm they have suffered.

Now, if the proper aim of compensatory justice were to give victims the quality of life they would have had in the absence of injustice, then there would be no warrant for any compensation if less acceptance of witchcraft has meant a better quality of life. Indeed, for anyone whose life was spared as a result of colonial denigration of belief in witchcraft, the logic of 'restoring the victim to the position she would have been in had the wrongful behavior not occurred' entails that no compensation is owed at all (or perhaps only a 'compensation' of a kind that would involve the victim's death!).[5]

I am not suggesting that the suppression of beliefs in witchcraft offered a net benefit to indigenous peoples, let alone that it or colonialism more broadly was permissible because of that. One could reasonably doubt the former claim about net benefit to all, given how such suppression was part of, and served to facilitate, systemic domination of Europeans over Africans not merely intellectually but also politically and economically. Instead, my claim is merely that, for those (comparatively few) people whom the suppression of witchcraft did provide a net benefit, the logic of the faring version of the restorational principle entails they are not entitled to any compensation; however, my intuition is that they still would be, given the way they were treated by the state. The mere fact that a certain practice has had a *desirable* result for some does not render that practice morally *justified* (not even *pro tanto*) in respect of them, *contra* what apartheid and colonial apologists often suggest.

At this stage it might be replied that there was indeed no epistemic injustice if the belief in witches has been false and unjustified. It is not merely colonial sympathizers who might advance this view. For example, insofar as the eminent Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu advocates for a kind of conceptual decolonization that involves rejecting only 'undue' colonial influences on indigenous African ways of interpreting the world (1998: 17), one might ascribe to him the view that the failure to disseminate false and unjustified belief, *ex hypothesi* in witches, is not something in need of a decolonial response, i.e., was not undue, and hence was not an epistemic injustice.

Setting aside whether Wiredu would have in fact accepted this implication, it is implausible. Even if African enquirers should let go of a certain traditional belief, it does not follow that no injustice was done in the way they have been treated that would merit reparations of a kind. That is just to say that conceptual decolonization, at least of the sort Wiredu advocates, is merely one facet of how to respond to colonialism's epistemic treatment of indigenous peoples and is consistent with there being additional, compensatory measures that should be adopted in response to it. Why might compensatory measures be apt, supposing that belief in witches was false and unjustified and is not something to hold now? One reason (not necessarily the only one) worth serious consideration is that the belief was dismissed as part of a

[5] An anonymous referee makes the interesting suggestion that this case reveals something additionally problematic about the restorational principle, viz., that it implies we can evaluate which aspects of colonialism merit compensation piecemeal, whereas it is the system as a whole that is to be rejected as unjust and hence as requiring compensation. I lack the space to address this angle properly.

wholesale rejection of African ways of interpreting the world as primitive. It is not as though the apartheid government sifted through indigenous belief systems in search of what was justified as opposed to unjustified, let alone debated with African scholars about that. Instead, European interpretations were taken as epistemically preferable across the board and imposed willy-nilly, expressing the attitude that Africans have nothing to contribute to knowledge production and are merely to be recipients of information from other cultures. That was denigrating, and arguably is sufficient to merit a compensatory response (regardless of any desirable consequences), albeit of a sort other than resurrection of the belief in witchcraft.[6]

For yet another reply, one might suggest that, when interpreting the idea that compensatory justice should give victims the good lives they would have had in the absence of wrongdoing, we are to consider only harm the wrong did immediately and not any further, longer-term consequences of the wrong. In respect to the witch case, then, perhaps we are to compensate only for, say, the psychological harm of knowing one's culture is being treated as inferior by foreigners who have wrested political and economic power, and not any further, potentially desirable results of that treatment.

However, it is common to include longer-term consequences of a wrong when ascertaining the just compensation for it.[7] As Bernard Boxill, who composed the entry titled 'Compensatory Justice' for the *International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, suggests, full compensation

> requires making up, not merely for the harm immediately caused by a wrong done to a victim, but also further harm that the wrong brought in its wake: Compensating him for his disability.... requires making him no worse off than he would have been had he not been disabled; doing that requires counterfactual reasoning. We must consider for example whether he would have been a sure bet to win an Olympic gold medal if he had not been disabled. And if he was we must do what we can to make his condition reasonably close to what it would have been had he won that medal (2013: 955).

Now, by the same logic, if the consequences of an injustice did not bring about net costs to victims, but instead produced net benefits to them, then Boxill's principle of 'making them no worse off than they would have been but for the misfortune' would prescribe no change—or perhaps even change that reduces the victim's quality of life. If all the harm done in the wake of a wrong is in need of compensation to return a victim to the state that would have taken place, as per Boxill, then, by parity of reasoning, one should take all the benefit done in the wake of a wrong into consideration when calculating what is owed (by the faring version of the restorational principle). However, that principle has seriously counterintuitive implications about when and which compensation is owed.

[6] If a reader continued to think that there was no epistemic injustice in the way belief in witchcraft was suppressed, then it would help for me to advance a different example to illustrate the present objection to the restorational principle, that sometimes epistemically unjust policies can bring about net benefits to their victims. For some non-epistemic examples of the problem, see Mbozi (2024: 23–4); and Metz (2024: 386–7).

[7] A point I first made in Metz (2024: 387), borrowing some phrasings from there.

At this point, the friend of the restorational principle might let go of the 'faring' version and instead opt for the 'doing' one. That is, he could suggest that, instead of restoring the *quality of life* the victim would have had without the injustice, the aim should be to restore the *path* her life would have taken. Then, we would not face the absurdity that compensatory justice is inapplicable whenever the initial injustice has improved victims' quality of life relative to what it would have been absent the injustice.

However, a serious absurdity would remain nonetheless, which is the second objection I have to the restorational principle. It is that aiming to 'change the present so that it looks more like the present that would have obtained in the absence of the injustice' (recalling Waldron's pithy formulation) could mean 'compensating' in a way that foreseeably causes serious harm. To continue with the present case, it would presumably mean enabling governments to decolonize by criminalizing witchcraft, thereby educating the general populace in traditional African beliefs, and changing public schools so that they teach students in particular about the importance of killing witches. Then we could expect more instances of the death penalty, deadly force, or other serious harm imposed on people who, I am presently assuming, are not in fact witches because no one is.

Moreover, it could be that, if much of a country's post-colonial people came to believe in witchcraft now due to effectively 'returning the victim to a condition that preceded the illegal act' of colonial epistemic imposition, then poor public policy decisions would be made. One indigenous philosopher who champions the reality of witchcraft has urged his Zimbabwean government to work to resolve power black-outs by capturing witches, who are believed to discharge electricity, as well as to use them to explore space, given their ability to fly long distances in winnowing baskets (Mawere, 2011: 98). If witches do not exist, then devoting substantial resources to such programmes would be an unjust waste of resources, particularly for a country that has one of the lowest GDPs in the world. One might suggest the case is far-fetched, as surely the country's elites know better, but the problem is that they might well not know better if their beliefs were fully returned to a condition that preceded the epistemic injustice many years ago.

Unfortunately, the problem is not merely hypothetical, as similar dynamics in fact took place in post-apartheid South Africa and probably did cost many thousands of lives. At the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, then President Thabo Mbeki and national and provincial ministers of health were averse to adopting 'Western' medical treatments, viz., anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs), and instead supported the provision of clean water and nutritious food alongside medical treatments considered African. In particular, some of them supported eating the African potato as a way to counter AIDS (Zeilhofer, 2003) and using *uBhejane* instead of ARVs to cure HIV, a concoction purportedly sent to a truck driver in a dream by his (bodily) dead grandfather (Cullinan, 2006). It is extremely common for African peoples to believe in the 'living-dead', that is, those whose bodies have died but whose selves continue to reside on Earth for a period of time and who characteristically aim to help those in human form by sending messages to those in altered states such as dreams or trances (Mbiti, 1975: 119–20, 1990: 107–18, 208–12; Edwards et al., 2009: 7–8). Such attempts to decolonize by finding traditional, African solutions to a local problem—and indeed

'jettisoning western epistemological paradigms'—contributed to delays in rolling out ARVs, which in turn cost more than 300,000 South African lives according to a Harvard study (Boseley, 2008; Allen, 2009).

Maintaining that *some* indigenous beliefs are mistaken in ways that would cause serious harm if held by those with influence on society commits me to exactly *none* of the following views: that there would be no losses whatsoever if such false and harmful beliefs were not promulgated; that indigenous beliefs systems have nothing to teach those who do not adhere to them; that the 'modern' is invariably to be preferred to the 'traditional'; that scientific or Western views are always true or most justified; that North American or European drugs will always work on African populations in the same ways; that only those indigenous beliefs passing through a scientific or Western epistemic filter are justified; that the proper authority to determine what to believe rests with those who in fact know best; or that appeal to science does not continue to serve ideological functions in respect of African ways of interpreting the world. All I am contending that truth and benefit must play some kind of role when thinking about how to compensate for the epistemic injustices of colonialism and related practices.

The lesson to be learnt here is that the restorational principle is unduly conservative, as a past quality of life is not necessarily something to use as a benchmark and beliefs held in the past are not always something to adopt now. Ways of interpreting the world are not what are owed compensation; the aim should not be to ensure a certain *interpretation* is present supposing it would have been prominent without injustice. Instead, a proper compensatory justice must be undertaken for the sake of *interpreters* and look forward in the sense of doing what will improve victims' quality of life, regardless of what the world would have been like absent the epistemic injustices done to them.

3 Compensation as putting victims in control

The restorational principle has been salient (if not dominant) in Anglo-American philosophical and jurisprudential thought about how to compensate in general, though recall that many thinkers from the Global South invoke it to prescribe compensation for injustices such as slavery and colonialism. While I had not seen the restorational principle applied to epistemic injustice prior to the analysis in the previous section, the next comprehensive principle, which roughly prescribes giving victims control, has in contrast been propounded by many precisely as the right way to respond to that sort of injustice. Nonetheless, I argue here that it has counterintuitive implications in respect of how to compensate for epistemic injustice that have gone unrecognized and that make it reasonable to search for a different principle.

I start by recounting some ways that the 'control' principle has been articulated in the literature and indicating how it would bear on epistemic injustices committed during large-scale forms of intergroup domination. Beginning more than 20 years ago, one influential South African thinker who has argued for compensation for colonialism and apartheid has championed *sovereignty* as what is centrally owed to victims. Mogobe Ramose's view is perhaps most clearly stated here:

> (T)he recovery and restoration of full, integral and comprehensive sovereignty to the indigenous peoples conquered in the unjust wars of colonisation is a moral and political imperative that may not be consigned to oblivion. The memory of the original injustice of conquest in the unjust wars of colonization shall not be erased until substantive justice in the form of recovery and restoration of lost sovereignty remedies the situation (2007: 310; see also Ramose, 2001).

Sovereignty, or at least 'full', 'absolute' (Ramose, 2001: 108–9), or 'unencumbered' (Ramose, 2001: 121) sovereignty of the sort that he calls for, seems to mean the unilateral authority to decide what happens within a certain realm. At least that sense of these phrases is reasonable to impute to Ramose, given that he describes colonizing governments as having usurped sovereignty (2001: 114) and is apparently critical of a Constitution that would hold a Parliament or popular will 'prisoner' (2001: 115). For him, just compensation for colonized indigenous peoples (which are roughly ethnic groups in Africa often distinguished along linguistic or more broadly cultural lines, such as the Zulu or the Shona) would consist of acceding such sovereignty to them, which could mean 'political independence' of a sort that dissolves the national state and creates 'multiple and disparate kingdoms' (2007: 325).

Although Ramose is speaking of sovereignty over land in the first instance, his point is meant to apply to not just physical but also intellectual territory, as he has long lamented 'the unjustified use of violence at colonization' where '(e)pistemicide was one feature of this defeat' (2003: 139). It follows that, for him, compensating indigenous peoples would include them alone becoming the ones to decide, say, which philosophy is a taught at a public university or which philosophical research is supported by a public foundation (in their respective jurisdictions) (see Thompson, 2002: 61 for a similar view).

For a second instance of the control principle, others more recently have advocated decolonizing epistemic influence in Africa by democratically allocating the power to decide how knowledge is produced. One scholar from South Africa suggests that democratizing the knowledge project is well construed as 'the ultimate aim of decolonisation', a project that would effect redress there for 'a context defined by a minority that still holds control with respect to the rules of engagement vis-à-vis knowledge development and production' (Kumalo, 2021: 1, 2) and hence would mean 'liberation of the majority' of enquirers such as those with philosophical inclinations (Kumalo, 2021: 7). Relatedly, a scholar from Zimbabwe in an essay titled 'African Epistemic Liberation Through Knowledge Democratisation' suggests decentralizing power so that different ethnic groups are accorded the epistemic resources needed to undertake, say, philosophical enquiry on their own terms (Gwaravanda, 2022).

There are similar perspectives prominent in the South American tradition, where again 'democracy' is the watchword, indicating a collective and procedural response to colonial epistemic injustice. Consider the work of the Argentinian Walter Mignolo, for whom 'democratisation of knowing and the known implies that the major demographic constituencies would be seated at the table to redesign the role of the University (and) the aims of education' (2021: x). Although from Portugal, the decolonial theorist Boaventura de Sousa Santos remarks that his influential *Epistemologies of*

the South: Justice Against Epistemicide is inspired by the indigenous South American philosophy of *buen vivir* (2014: 2–3, 238) and there contends that

> preference must be given to the form of knowledge that guarantees the greatest level of participation to the social groups involved in its design, execution, and control….judgments not based on abstract hierarchies between knowledges but stemming from democratic deliberations (2014: 205).

Finally, in a recent essay, a legal scholar from Colombia documents ways that indigenous peoples there have sought to heal in the wake of atrocities committed, whether by the government, paramilitary groups, rebels, or drug traffickers. She points out that these communities have often engaged in public aesthetic activities, such as composing protest songs, weaving clothing that documents violence done to women, or engaging in urban gardening ('symbolic planting') (Bautista Pizarro, 2023). She (along with a former self) maintains that such projects, which will vary from group to group, merit support from those responsible for the atrocities:

> The question regarding how an agent liable for damages could comply with these restorative ends of special justice is something that has to be defined by the Indigenous communities on a case by case basis, since they are, or at least should be, autonomous….(T)he reparation must be 'transformative' in regards to these dimensions of the damages, taking into account that these are peoples, cultures, and territories that have been 'historically violated in their material and immaterial dimension'. Thus, reparations must also aim to strengthen self-determination of peoples….A wrongdoer who is not from the community could have some difficulties in fulfilling these tasks due to cultural differences. However….liable agents could at least undertake logistical tasks or provide resources for members of the community so that they can carry them out (Bautista Pizarro & Metz, 2023: 78).

According to this framework, the right compensation is whatever facilitates implementation of the community's judgement of how it can best grapple with the wrongful ways it has been treated: 'reparation has to be configured in such a way that makes sense for the people involved, according to their traditions or ways of living', such that 'there is in fact no universal model of reparation' (Bautista Pizarro, 2023: 75) beyond the provision of means that would enable the group to achieve its self-chosen ends. The purpose of compensation should be to put indigenous peoples in control of how to deal with their wrongful treatment, whether it is by returning land, facilitating political autonomy, providing money, or performing 'logistical tasks' to promote cultural projects, which might include public aesthetic works or epistemic and specifically philosophical ones.

I submit that what might seem to be the advantage of the control principle as articulated so far is, upon reflection, a serious weakness. The various instances of the control principle all leave open how that control ought to be exercised. The only compensation to be provided, or at least that gets mentioned, are capacities such as *sovereignty*, *political independence*, *democratic power to make rules*, *participation*,

autonomy, *self-determination*, and *resources*, with it left to the historically oppressed group to decide how to actualize them. What if the previously colonized or otherwise wronged group decides to exercise its new-found control in ways that are intuitively severely degrading of, or harmful to, some of its members? The counterexamples to the restorational principle turn out to apply with comparable force to the control principle: a people could conceivably use the control it has been given as a reparative measure to decolonize knowledge by imposing the death penalty for being a witch thought to have infected someone and by directing public hospitals to distribute *uBhejane* instead of ARVs to fight HIV/AIDS.

My claim is not that such policies would in fact be adopted by a given people in Southern Africa and is instead that an intuitively just compensation for colonial epistemic injustice, while often rightly distributing means to historically disadvantaged peoples, would not be open regarding the ends for which they are to be used. Advocates of the control principle often tacitly assume that, once it has the relevant capacity, the group would use it in a way that would benefit its members, including the majority in the case of a democratic dispensation (cf. Kumalo, 2021: 12–13). However, it is wishful thinking to suppose that minorities will invariably be adequately catered for or even that majorities will necessarily benefit; after all, a group's way of interpreting the world might be radically mistaken about what has caused a disease or what would treat it effectively, costing its members dearly.

One tempting reply is to distinguish between a just compensation and an unjust use of the (just) compensation. One might suggest that a former colonial agent ought indeed to compensate for systematic epistemic injustice by providing control to an oppressed group and that, if this group then misused the control it had acquired, that would be a separate matter, a wrong on the part of the group and not the agent. Consider the analogy of an authoritarian state suppressing the civil liberties of a populace. Suppose that, once the liberties were reinstated, the populace would misuse them, wrongly targeting a minority. Regardless of that consequence, so the reply goes, the state indeed ought to reinstate the liberties.

My main response to this powerful suggestion is to maintain that it is not merely groups who were wronged by colonial epistemic imposition but also individuals. Refusal to instruct African philosophy on the part of influential social institutions during the apartheid era in South Africa was an injustice not merely to Zulus as a (great) people but also to them as (dignified) persons. Hence, the state that enforced and encouraged such marginalization must ensure, or at least have good reason to expect, that citizens whose cultures were actively occluded are compensated directly in some way. In particular, if a liable agent foresees (or can foresee) that a group would use its control in ways substantially unfavourable to its members, it has reason to negotiate with the group *about the way it will cede control*. The claim is not that control should not be ceded—in terms of the analogy above, I agree that the civil liberties should be reinstated. However, since the state is also obligated to protect the interests of the minority, the state should reinstate the civil liberties *in a way* that does not foreseeably lead to its subjugation. The state has to consider the foreseeable implications of *how* it 'lifts the boot from the neck' of citizens, granted that it indeed must lift the boot.

This response should help somewhat to dispel the charge of paternalism that is likely forthcoming from some readers. 'It is bad enough that the South African state had deployed universities in ways designed to facilitate white rule and economic privilege and to "civilize" the natives, but now it also refuses to give the Zulu people control over universities in its jurisdiction and is telling it how to use them in ways that *it* deems appropriate!', so the concern might be expressed. The charge would have some bite if the state owed only the Zulu nation compensation for cultural injustice, but I submit that the state also owes Zulu citizens as individuals and so may not neglect how they will fare. It is not *paternalist* to baulk at giving a group power in a certain manner because it would use that to degrade or harm some of its members (as opposed to itself *qua* group) in serious ways. Paternalism is typically understood to be interference with a person's will for her own good (e.g., Dworkin, 2020), with clear cases of interference including forcing, threatening, deceiving, and 'nudging'. Now, *making requests of* a group about how it will exercise control, *pointing out apparent problems* with that, and even going a step further in *negotiating* need not be a matter of *interfering* with it and need not express a condescending attitude; it might instead be a matter of expressing sincere concern for how its members (or even it as a distinct subject of moral consideration) will fare.

Another important point is that it need not be the erstwhile wrongdoer who does the requesting, objecting, requesting, or, in a word, negotiating. A court or some other third party could do so with a people in the light of the ethical reasoning advanced here, which should also remove some of the concern about paternalism or other kind of unjust interference on the part of a previous oppressor.[8]

There are scholars who seem willing to bite the bullet, implicitly holding either that only groups are done epistemic injustice in the course of large-scale forms of intergroup domination requiring 'absolute sovereignty' as compensation, or that the right way to effect compensation for individuals is to give some kind of unrestricted control over epistemic matters to their group. For example, Ramose seems to have a 'what is good for the goose is good for the gander' attitude: if a Parliament unfettered by a Bill of Rights was good for people of European descent during apartheid in South Africa, the same should be good for African people in the post-apartheid era, so is one way to read him[9] (2001: 114–5). In addition, he is explicit about wanting 'the law of the African king' or at least 'African customary law' to become authoritative and not hemmed in (held 'prisoner') by the current, liberal Constitution (2007: 324–7). Similarly, there are anthropologists in Brazil who decry any interference with relatively unassimilated indigenous groups, even given practices that include burying children alive when they are twins, have a disability, or as teens exhibit a transgender identity (for discussion see de Oliviera, 2018). While this case does not concern how to compensate such groups for past cultural injustice, the logic of the anthropologists' position naturally extends to that; if having shown an indigenous people that a disabled person need not be killed was a 'big mistake' because it constituted 'damage'

[8] See Sect. 4 as well where I make the case that even a previous oppressor can have a rightful claim to negotiate terms of a compensatory settlement because of other binding moral obligations.

[9] It could be, though, that Ramose is expressing a restorational approach, seeking a return to the way things were prior to, or would have been apart from, white domination in South Africa.

to a 'cultural practice filled with meaning' (an anthropologist quoted in de Oliviera, 2018), then systematically helping to cover up that new information so that the traditional practice of killing can continue would seem to be the apt compensation.

For those readers unwilling to bite the bullet, we need to develop an alternative conception of how to compensate that at least protects innocent parties—indeed who had been done cultural injustice—from further severe degradation and serious harm, if not does something more positive for them. One option for the friend of the control principle would be to put resources in the hands of individual victims, not groups that had been wronged—or at least not only them, since most friends of the control principle believe in the moral standing of certain kinds of peoples and communities. I believe something like that is attractive, and below I indeed prescribe giving victims a substantial say over the nature of their compensation. However, my alternative includes several additional elements that prevent my account from being aptly labelled a version of the 'control' principle. In particular, I believe that one deep lesson to be learnt from the critical analysis of both the restorational and control principles is this: neither restoring to an original position nor ceding control to a group (or an individual) necessarily involves doing what will improve victims' lives, which, however, should normally be a central aim of compensation.

4 Compensation as negotiating with victims about benefits

The restorational and control principles are not the only general accounts of how to effect compensation in the literature, even if they are the most salient ones applied to the context of large-scale racial domination. Other general principles have been advanced,[10] which one could invoke to consider how to compensate for colonial epistemic injustice in particular. In what follows I instead take a different path, one of drawing on values and practices that have been salient in parts of the Global South, along with some suggestions from Anglo-American restorative justice theorists, to articulate a novel understanding of what is owed as a matter of compensatory justice that I show deserves a hearing, despite lacking the space to defend it relative to all competitors. I work to show that this 'accepted benefits' principle is readily seen to avoid, and even to explain, the problems I have argued face the restorational and control principles.

According to the accepted benefits principle, what is owed as a matter of compensatory justice would, whenever possible, satisfy these three conditions: (a) provide something objectively good to the victims that (b) tracks the degree of the wrong done to them and that (c) the victims are willing to accept. This is not a complete account of compensatory justice as it for instance does not indicate who owes this form of compensation to victims, when it must be provided (say, after a long amount of time has elapsed), and which wrongs merit compensation, for just three glaring omissions. It is instead meant to be a more limited account, viz., of what it is that

[10] Thoughtful comprehensive offerings from the Anglo-American tradition pertaining to large-scale historical (but not directly epistemic) injustice include Thompson (2002) and Táíwò (2022).

should be given to victims—thereby rivalling the (likewise limited) restorational and control principles critically discussed above.

Much of what motivates this approach is a commitment to some kind of expressive, and specifically respect-based, ethic, at least in regard to how to compensate. The core idea is that a proper compensation is one that expresses attitudes and judgements to the dignified victim and those who care for her (such as his family and state) such as that: one should have acted otherwise; the victim deserved better; one is sorry for having mistreated the victim; one feels guilty for having done so.

This approach is similar to, and yet different from, what stands out about the literature on restorative justice and related concepts such as reconciliation. Consider claims salient there: 'The direct concern of restorative justice is the moral quality of future relations between those who have done, allowed, or benefited from wrong and those harmed, deprived, or insulted by it' (Walker, 2006a: 385), and 'The goal….is the reconciliation or reforming of the relationships among the wrongdoer, the victim, and the community' (Radzik, 2009: 83; for similar statements, see Thompson, 2002: 48–53; Walker, 2006b: esp. 23; Almassi, 2018: 103, 105). For much restorative justice theory, a just compensation is what is likely to create a certain relationship in the future, whereas I do not hold that view.[11] Instead, on my account, a compensation can be just because it is respectful, apart from whether it will, is likely to, or even could mend relations between the wrongdoer and the victim. Friends of restorative justice do at times appeal to respect-based judgements of what is appropriate (e.g., Thompson, 2002; Walker, 2006a), but the difference is that, whereas they view such treatment as a reliable means towards future positive interaction, I view it as an end in itself apart from whether forgiveness, trust, collaboration, removal of stigma, reintegration in the community, or the like are forthcoming.[12] Although in the following I do run with some ideas from the restorative justice tradition, the focus on expressing respect as basic as opposed to repairing or creating relationship makes some difference (and in terms of both entailment and explanation), as I point out along the way.

According to the (a) condition of the accepted benefits principle, something that is good for victims beyond merely satisfying contingent and arbitrary preferences should normally be what is given to them as compensation. The category of needs will go some distance here, where appropriate compensation might include enhancing a victim's bodily health, mental stability, sense of security, avoidance of pain, education, development of talents, mobility, ability to communicate, or relationships. I take the meeting of such needs to be the way that is normally appropriate to express contrition to a victim, regardless of whether one did him wrongful harm or non-harmful wrong.

Restorative approaches are often open-ended about what a victim might ask for as compensation in the course of dialogue with a wrongdoer, so long as it is not inherently wrongful or disproportionately large relative to what was done to him (e.g., Radzik, 2009: 122–3). 'Prioritizing victims' perspectives and priorities in the

[11] For one consideration, note that sometimes future interaction will be known to be impossible and yet a just compensation would be available all the same—a victim might, say, have moved away from the wrongdoer.

[12] In contrast to a recent former self of Metz (2024).

determination of appropriate amends in relational repair' is thought to be instrumentally required to establish trust and hence to foster future interaction between the victim and offender, as per one of the very few to have applied restorative justice to epistemic injustice (Almassi, 2018: 105). In contrast, for me, the fact that a victim of epistemic injustice might, say, want his sofa upholstered with a fuscia cover is not as such a relevant desire to satisfy as compensation. A respectful and hence just redress need not satisfy that preference.[13]

The mention of 'whenever possible' or 'normally' is an escape hatch for cases in which the provision of an objective good to the victim is impossible or unreasonably difficult. For example, in the case of a dead victim, arguably one cannot make his life go better, at least not in a particularly substantial way. Even if posthumous benefits are possible, say, the positive influence of and recognition for one's creativity (*vide* Van Gogh), a liable agent might not be in a position to provide them. In such cases, it can be reasonable to shift away from what would improve the victim's quality of life to what would be objectively good for those who identify closely with the victim such as family members (or perhaps to what the victim would have wanted).

According to the (b) condition, the relevant objective good must track the degree of wrong done. So, as alluded to above, the relevant state calling for compensation is not necessarily a *harm* that was done to the victim, which is assumed by friends of the (faring version of the) restorational principle. Instead, some wrongs do not involve harm, understood as a reduced quality of life, but call for compensation regardless, e.g., an unsuccessful attempt to tarnish someone's reputation. In addition, the degree of the wrong should determine the amount of the good such that the greater the wrong, the more good. I speak of benefits that 'track' or 'are fitting' instead of 'are proportionate' since the latter is too strict for being at times either impossible or inappropriate. In order to express contrition adequately given the magnitude of a certain wrong one has done, one must attend to the severity of any harm done, where the greater the harm, the more benefit that is appropriate. However, one need not eradicate it completely, as restorative justice theorists have aptly pointed out (e.g., Thompson, 2002: 51), though for them that is because reconciliation can be possible without that, whereas for me a respectful, contrite response can be.

According to the (c) condition, it would normally be wrong for a liable agent to foist a tracking objective good onto a victim as compensation, as the victim might not want that specific one (or at least not from the agent), a point that friends of restorative justice and reconciliation have also made (e.g., Thompson, 2002: 51–2; Radzik, 2009: 122–3). Instead, often there will be a range of fitting objective goods

[13] What if one had intentionally ruined a person's sofa with that cover? In that case I accept that providing a new fuscia cover might be due (although not necessarily, on which see below), but ultimately because doing so would be expected to help meet a need to feel at home or to overcome a sense of violation or intrusion. That said, I am tempted to add a fourth, (d), condition, according to which the relevant benefit must be suitably related to the nature of the wrong done, where 'suitably related' centrally means being similar in kind or realizing the purpose for which the victim would have (reasonably or characteristically) wanted the wrongfully taken or destroyed good. Hull (2022: 3–4, 19) and Lackey (2022: 70) work with something like (d) in articulating their accounts of epistemic redress. I have yet to think this through, being tempted instead to let the (c) condition of negotiation do real (even if still limited) work. I leave the matter aside for now, since resolving it is not essential for the accepted benefits principle to avoid and explain the objections facing the rival restorational and control principles.

that could be provided and the victim should have a say over which (an approach that, as above, differs from influential restorative justice and reconciliation accounts). Of course, that condition does not entail that the guilty party must provide whatever a victim wants, regardless of how little or how much good it would do her; for there are the (a) and (b) conditions to satisfy. What it does mean is that the guilty party should seek to ascertain what a victim is willing to agree to in respect of a fitting improvement to her life.

Furthermore, there can be situations in which the liable agent has reasonable claims that a victim should take into consideration when negotiating a settlement. One strong example is that of wrongdoer who has other obligations that would be made difficult or impossible to fulfil upon giving the victim what she wants. For a case of non-epistemic wrongdoing to illustrate the point, consider that a mother would not be disrespectful to point out that giving in to a victim's demands would make it hard to care for her children, whilst a post-colonial state that had indeed been epistemically unjust would not be disrespectful to note that acceding to a group's demands would threaten its ability to mete out distributive justice to other citizens. A duty to effect compensatory justice must be contoured to what would enable a liable agent to live up to other weighty duties or at least minimize their infringement.

More contestedly, I am open to the idea that wrongdoers have self-regarding concerns that can place legitimate constraints on the kind of compensation they owe victims. In particular, if, as I think is plausible, all agents have some duties to themselves, then these will need to be balanced against what they owe to victims. Admitting such a consideration could in practice lead to a wrongdoer trying to skew negotiations, but a disinterested third-party could be there to mediate. Suppose negotiations have arrived at the point that a wrongdoer should provide food to a victim for a two year period, and now the victim proposes that the wrongdoer grow it in a garden he tends, which would take several hours a day, whilst the wrongdoer instead suggests having it delivered from a grocery store twice a week. It need not be disrespectful for the wrongdoer to suggest the non-farming alternative or for a mediator to recommend that option (supposing, for now, that compensatory measures need not also be punitive ones, but cf. Metz, 2024, 383–5).

To sum up, consider that satisfying conditions (a) and (b) without (c) would be a matter of foisting fitting benefits onto victims without having consulted them, let alone obtaining their agreement. The restorational principle could prescribe such, unlike the accepted benefits principle. Satisfying (c) without (a) and (b) would amount to giving victims whatever they want, or perhaps the ability to obtain that, even if it would seriously worsen their quality of life. The control principle (whether at the group or individual level) could prescribe such, unlike the accepted benefits principle.

Briefly consider what the accepted benefits principle concretely entails for some cases of non-epistemic injustice, before turning to the sorts of epistemic injustices that are the concern of this article. Black people forced off land during the apartheid era in South Africa so that white-owned mining companies could secure minerals might, some 60 years later, be given cash if that is what they, upon reflection, really choose instead of access to that (or even a similar) territory. If a person recklessly broke another's arm, then, in addition to paying for the hospital bills, he might per-

form tasks that the wounded person cannot undertake, even if he would not have undertaken them had his arm not been injured. Finally, let us reconsider the case of the stolen car, normally thought to be real evidence in favour of the restorational principle: I submit that if the victim would prefer to be given a comparably priced motorcycle instead from the thief, that would in fact be the best way to compensate, with return of the car implausibly labelled 'ideal' (as per Hull, 2022: 3, amongst many others). Insofar as these implications are plausible, they are some support for the accepted benefits principle.

This principle is particularly inspired by some approaches to compensation that have been found welcome in parts of the Global South and specifically at times when responding to large-scale injustice. I do not think this principle is to be believed because of its sources, but rather because it avoids and explains objections facing rivals while entailing intuitively plausible prescriptions. However, seeing that something like it has been put into practice or recommended at times may serve to indicate that it is realistic and that I am not alone in finding its broad approach to be compelling.

One major source of this approach to compensation is the response to social conflict that has been typical of many indigenous African peoples. When a crime has been committed, often the sort of compensation to be made by the offender (or his family if he could not) would be the subject of negotiation between him, his victim, both of their families, as well as members of the broader community (particularly elders), a practice ranging from the Shona in Zimbabwe (Masitera, 2018: 114–6, 118) to the Kom in Cameroon (Waindim, 2019) to the Acholi in Uganda (Latigo, 2008: 102–18). Indeed, according to one study of a wide array of 'traditional' justice systems in Africa, it is typical that 'the problem is viewed as that of the whole community or group', there is 'a high degree of public participation', 'the decision is based on agreement', and there is 'an emphasis on restorative penalties', that is, ones that will improve the victim's quality of life and not primarily seeking retribution or deterrence (Penal Reform International, 2000: 22).[14] Such traditional approaches are well known for having informed transitional justice projects in countries such as South Africa and Rwanda.

What are called 'restorative sanctions' likewise feature in Colombia's Peace Agreement reached between the national government and the FARC rebels in 2016 (Government of the Republic of Colombia, 2016). Restorative sanctions, to be imposed on those responsible for certain wrongs committed during the conflict, are to advance 'the overall aim of realising the rights of victims and consolidating peace. They will need to have the greatest restorative and reparative function in relation to the harm caused' (Government of the Republic of Colombia, 2016: 174). Included amongst a list of such penalties are repairing infrastructure, building houses and schools, engaging in waste disposal, growing crops, fixing roads, and improving access to water/electricity (Government of the Republic of Colombia, 2016: 183–4), all of which are well understood as meeting victims' needs. In addition, the reparative measures are

[14] 'Restorative' in this context connotes improving a victim's quality of life or mending broken relationships; it is therefore not the same sense as the 'restorational principle' prescribing return to an original state.

not to be set down by a court unilaterally, but are meant to be arrived at as part of a negotiation process, where those appearing before the judicial panel

> may submit a detailed individual or collective project for work or activities providing reparations and redress. Such projects will set out the obligations, objectives, phases, timetables, places of implementation and the persons who are to carry them out….Projects must establish a mechanism for discussion with representatives of victims who live in the area of implementation in order to hear their opinion and to ensure that they are not opposed to the project….If the victims consider it appropriate, they may make the Tribunal aware of their opinion on the proposed programme (Government of the Republic of Colombia, 2016: 183).

Although such measures have yet to be systematically put into practice as I write, I find it hard to disagree with the idea that they should be, when it comes to compensatory justice. I particularly appreciate that it is the guilty who are to undertake these kinds of labour, on my view as a proper way to express remorse and regret, something missing from familiar transitional justice projects in the past.

Having spelt out what the accepted benefits principle would involve and some of the sources behind it, what remains to be done is to apply it to the case of colonial epistemic injustice and show that it is not vulnerable to the counterexamples I have contended face the rival principles.[15] To start, recall that one problem facing the (faring) restorational principle is that sometimes epistemic injustices can benefit victims, where specifically some colonial ones done in Africa might have done some good in respect of beliefs pertaining to witchcraft and medicine. If so, then no compensation at all would be in order, if its point were merely to make up for ways in which a wrong has worsened a victim's quality of life relative to how it would have gone absent the injustice. However, the accepted benefits principle prescribes benefits for victims, not as a way to restore an original condition of a putatively good life, but instead as the right way to show respect for one who has been mistreated. The point is to express contrition for having mistreated someone, regardless of whether that mistreatment ended up providing a net benefit to them or not. So, even if the marginalization of African metaphysics and religion happened to benefit indigenous peoples in certain ways, by the accepted benefits approach, they can still be owed compensation.

One might object that surely the mistreatment will typically consist of harm, where the amount of harm done could be outweighed by (intended or unintended) benefits to victims that would not have obtained save for the wrong, rendering my principle vulnerable to the same problem that I have claimed plagues the restorational principle. In reply, first recall that sometimes mistreatment will not be a function of any harm caused but rather disrespect shown; epistemic injustice can come in the form of wrongful harm as well as non-harmful wrong (cf. Hull, 2022 and arguably the witchcraft case above in respect of specific individuals). Secondly, and more

[15] Friends of restorative justice have argued that it is preferable to the restorational principle but they have not discussed my specific objections to that principle or rebutted it in the context of epistemic justice. For two key discussions, see Thompson (2002: 38–51); and Walker (2006a).

deeply, we can understand the harm done to a victim in a way that does not consider what would have happened in the absence of the wrong, *contra* the logic of the restorational principle (recall analysis of the Boxill quote above in Sect. 2). Stomping on my foot merely because you do not like my religious beliefs is a case of wrongful harm that merits compensation regardless of what would have happened to me had you not stomped. That is true even if someone else would have stomped on it had you not (causing the same injury, pain, fear, etc.), or even if you having stomped ends up enabling me to meet a nurse whom I end up happily marrying, which I would have missed out on had you not stomped. Although I can hardly provide a complete account of harm here, what seems centrally relevant is what you did to me, not what would have happened to me had you not; in any event, the accepted benefits principle focuses on the former instead of the latter.

Another problem facing the (doing) restorational principle is that sometimes its prescriptions for correcting epistemic injustices would harm victims, where specifically getting people now to believe wholeheartedly in witchcraft or ancestral advice about HIV might be detrimental to them. Again the accepted benefits principle easily avoids this problem since it prescribes, well, benefits, not return to an original state that might have grossly undesirable consequences for victims' lives at this point in time.

Turning to the control principle, recall that it places no restriction on how to exercise the control, which is left up to the groups (or possibly individuals) that had been done the epistemic injustice during the colonial and apartheid eras. The problem is that there is no guarantee the groups will deploy the political and economic resources in ways that would benefit all individual victims and they might even do so in ways that would harm them and that these individuals might reasonably reject if consulted. The accepted benefits principle, while potentially applying to groups such as peoples who have been done epistemic injustice, also applies directly to individuals. By it, each dignified person merits compensation for having been mistreated as a way to be shown respect, where that furthermore involves doing what will improve their quality of life.

Finally, then, how should, for instance, the South African state effect compensation for the sort of injustice mentioned at the start of this essay? What concretely should it do to correct for the fact of having treated African philosophical ideas as anathema in spaces of quality higher education? Regardless of whether or not that practice caused a net amount of harm to some, it was certainly an indignity to all that merits a reparative response. What should that be?

In some ways, that cannot be specified in advance, given the requirement to negotiate with victims about a settlement; their consent is supposed to influence which benefits are given. In addition, there will be a variety of views about what precisely was wrong with the apartheid government's epistemic treatment of Black South Africans, which might inform what victims reasonably deem an objective good that would help make up for the harm done to them. However, I can advance some plausible hypotheses about the nature of the wrong done and some educated guesses about what many would accept as likely to make their lives go objectively better in relevant ways.

So, to begin, the accepted benefits principle entails that it would be *pro tanto* wrong for South African higher education to 'jettison' western epistemological paradigms,

supposing they contain some real kernels of truth about, say, medicine, engineering, physics, and mathematics from which indigenous Africans could benefit. Or if we focus strictly on what Western philosophy from the past 50 years might offer, we could point to rich analyses of the nature of linguistic reference, significant enquiry into the truth-conditions of moral claims, intricate reflection on personal identity, and careful thought about when we have knowledge. It is unlikely that one culture has all the answers. Even if African interpretations were dismissed for insufficient epistemic reasons, say, because of prejudice or an interest in comprehensive domination on the part of white officials, it does not follow that only such interpretations would be good for contemporary African people.

Should the South African state instead at least be 'ensuring' that African paradigms become the 'the principal epistemology that informs the indigenous people'? Doing so would likely require undertaking enquiry substantially in indigenous languages and minimizing the use of, if not altogether abjuring, English or other Western languages, as many decolonial thinkers have maintained. However, serious costs of doing so would include an inability for those in African academic settings to take advantage of the global *lingua franca* used at conferences and journals as well as an inability for (often very economically impoverished) students to participate in the global job market. Knowing Zulu well and to point of being able to do philosophy in it would be an important way to compensate that some victims would gladly accept, but that project would have to be balanced against risks of parochialism. Some students in South Africa might reasonably refuse compensation of a sort that strove above all to impart 'authentically' African ways of interpreting the world shorn of 'alien' influences (common terms in the decolonial literature). 'Ensuring' that a certain way of interpreting the world becomes the principal epistemology risks both failing to benefit victims adequately and running roughshod over what victims would themselves accept; that is true, regardless of how one conceives of the injustice done to Black South Africans, e.g., as a deprivation of educational opportunity, a neglect of African intellectual sources, or even a more active denigration of those.

Should then at least African philosophy and other epistemic perspectives be 'valorized', 'legitimated', or 'recognized as valid'? That would not stymie other kinds of enquiry. However, even here I pause, depending on what precisely these terms mean and whether they are intended to extend to literally all views that have been characteristic of the African tradition. Should twenty-first century public universities in South Africa indeed strive to legitimate belief in witches and witchcraft? The accepted benefits principle entails not, *if* such a policy risked substantial harm and other (distributive) injustice, which is in substantial respects an empirical matter I cannot answer. This principle would readily prescribe enquiring into what indigenous peoples have believed about witches, what any self-described 'witches' in Africa say about themselves, what it would mean for there to be good evidence that witches exist, whether we have such evidence, and how widespread belief in witches might affect society for good or ill. However, I doubt that such enquiries count as 'valorization', 'validation', or the like, which are instead routinely demanded a priori for oppressed epistemic traditions and which I submit are inappropriate in the light of a requirement that victims be expected to benefit from compensatory justice. It is implausible to expect everything in a tradition to be true, justified, revealing, or use-

ful, where instead some of it might well be false or harmful. In the case where indigenous views are both false and harmful, the benefits principle I have defended entails that there is strong reason not to valorize them for purposes of compensatory justice, *contra* some other views.

Of the common decolonial recommendations sketched at the start of this essay, then, there remain 'acknowledging the gifts and limitations of every knowledge system' and promoting 'nurturing conversations' between them.[16] I expect a number of readers will find these approaches intuitively attractive, but, with the accepted benefits principle, we can give them some theoretical support. These practices would indeed be *good for interpreters* if they elected to take them up, even if not supportive of specific *interpretations* of the world, where it is again the interpreters who are alone owed compensation, not the interpretations.

To undertake these practices, the South African state would be just to: create university posts dedicated to African philosophy; hire for them particularly Africans, given their familiarity with the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of that field; provide funds and time to Africanize curricula; provide the same to support research into African philosophy; help to fund the publication and more general promulgation of African philosophy, say, by subsidizing open access fees for work in that field and supporting centres; encourage chairs, deans, and other managers to negotiate with staff to Africanize and to celebrate their successes in doing so; host intercultural panels, workshops, and conferences that would put African philosophers into dialogue and indeed debate with those from other traditions.

At this point I have one more important recommendation about how to effect compensation for epistemic injustices that were part of colonial and apartheid regimes in Africa. The above prescriptions pertain largely to a university setting, but the reality is that it is not merely or even principally today's students who are the victims of those injustices. It is natural for us academics to consider how the academy might change (cf. the Mignolo quote above), but there is a large blindspot in doing so. In South Africa, for example, estimates of those who obtain a bachelor degree range from only 1 (Hanrahan-Soar, 2012) to at most 6% (Nkosi, 2021) of the population, and so any change at universities would directly affect a small percentage. It is plausible, though, to suppose that African people in general were treated in degrading ways by the marginalization of African philosophy and other systems of thought, and so a proper compensation would mean enabling the many who will remain outside the

[16] Suggested forms of reparation beyond the decolonial literature are prima facie less compelling in the present context. For instance, Hull (2022) speaks of an 'epistemic redress' that would involve a change of belief on the part of former wrongdoers, particularly about their victims, but in the post-colonial context such seems too little and also too late given that many actual oppressors are long dead and out of power. Another powerful idea advanced under the heading of 'epistemic reparation' is hearing out victims of certain kinds of epistemic injustice (championed by Lackey, 2022), but that, too, does not seem *centrally* relevant in the post-colonial context. Lackey is aware of the intergenerational dynamics of large-scale epistemic domination (e.g., 2022: 68–9), but her central form of reparation, 'the right to be known', does not squarely address, say, the major injustice of refusal to discuss African ideas in social institutions charitably. While there do remain some elderly people whose African ways of interpreting the world were rendered invisible and indeed villified during apartheid (and while of course the nature of the injustice done to them should be publicized), a particularly glaring concern is that typical descendants now lack the sort of African voice to be heard that they might have had. A different kind of compensation is needed for them.

academy to access African interpretations of the world. In practice, that could mean that the South African Department of Higher Education and Training would support short courses, winter schools, public lectures, subsidized books, Youtube videos, TV shows, and, heck, even TikTok reels to reach the masses.

5 Concluding thoughts about extending the principle

I close briefly, merely by indicating some next steps to take, supposing I am correct that the accepted benefits principle indeed avoids and explains objections to much more prominent general accounts of what is owed as part of compensatory justice and supports some intuitive prescriptions for how to respond specifically to epistemic injustices committed during large-scale forms of intergroup domination. First, the accepted benefits principle might need refinement when it comes to the kind of objective good that should be offered (see note 13). Should only epistemic related goods be provided for epistemic injustices? Second, the theoretical underpinnings of this principle deserve further articulation. I have spoken of expressive considerations such as respect and contrition, but those admittedly could use more careful explication and motivation. Third, it is worth considering whether the principle provides plausible prescriptions for how to respond to other kinds of epistemic injustices. For example, I have not discussed testimonial injustice at all in this essay but it would be a natural topic to address, and it is also worth considering how the accepted benefits approach might bear on kinds of epistemic reparations that have been proposed for contexts different from colonialism in Africa. Fourth, since the accepted benefits principle is being put forth as a good candidate for a general account of what is owed in respect of reparations, it should be applied to a variety of cases of non-epistemic wrongdoing to test it. Does it make good sense of how to compensate for, say, violation of contract and defamation?

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