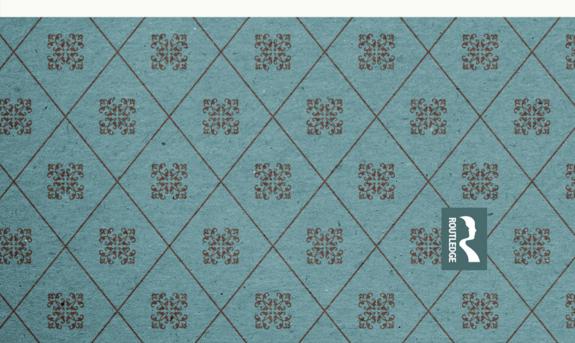# THE EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE OF GENOCIDE DENIALISM

Melanie Altanian

"The wrong of genocidal violence extends for generations after the attacks have stopped, particularly when the harm is compounded by deniers and state-sponsored denialism. Drawing on the experience of generations of Armenians, Altanian reflects on what it is to remember, to bear witness, and to know, showing how denial attacks survivors' and descendants' moral value, their social existence, and their epistemological standing as those who know."

Anne O'Byrne, *Stony Brook University, USA*

"*The Epistemic Injustice of Genocide Denialism* provides a timely analysis of the harms and wrongs of genocide denial, not only with respect to those who actively engage such denials, but also with respect to those who maintain the structural conditions that make such denials possible."

Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., *Miami University (Ohio), USA*

"Altanian's interdisciplinary philosophical study is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding the specific harms of genocide denialism."

Imge Oranlı, *Arizona State University, USA*

The Epistemic Injustice of Genocide Denialism

The injustice of genocide denial is commonly understood as a violation of the dignity of victims, survivors, and their descendants, and further described as an assault on truth and memory. This book rethinks the normative relationship between dignity, truth, and memory in relation to genocide denial by adopting the framework of epistemic injustice.

This framework performs two functions. First, it introduces constructive normative vocabulary into genocide scholarship through which we can gain a better understanding of the normative impacts of genocide denial when it is institutionalized and systematic. Second, it develops and enriches current scholarship on epistemic injustice with a further, underexplored case study. Genocide denialism is relevant for political and social epistemology, as it presents a substantive epistemic practice that distorts normativity and social reality in ways that maintain domination. This generates pervasive ignorance that makes denial rather than recognition of genocide appear as the morally and epistemically right thing to do. By focusing on the prominent case of Turkey's denialism of the Armenian genocide, the book shows the serious consequences of this kind of epistemic injustice for the victim group and society as a whole.

The Epistemic Injustice of Genocide Denialism will appeal to students and scholars working in social, political, and applied epistemology, social and political philosophy, genocide studies, Armenian studies, and memory studies.

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Preface

My philosophical investigation into genocide denialism was prompted by two central realizations:

1. The presumably common view that genocide denial violates the dignity of victims and constitutes an assault on truth and memory. I was seeking a normative answer to the question of how these dimensions of harm are interrelated, specifically the potential for an "epistemic assault" on truthful memory to violate the dignity of genocide survivors and their descendants.
2. The frequent downplaying of the pernicious implications of (at least some cases of) genocide denial. There seems to be a prevailing view that genocide deniers cannot and should not be taken seriously unless practicing hate speech. They are considered to be simply irrational, isolated individuals subscribing to a fringe phenomenon.

To assess genocide denial and its implications adequately, we must consider its enabling background conditions. Doing so may point us to *systematic* denial and the norms and rationalizations it produces. This book is, then, also intended to counter the tendency to trivialize and obscure the perniciousness of systematic genocide denial. Genocide denial takes a systematic form when it constitutes a sustained institutional practice, one that demands historical, contextual, empirical, normative, and conceptual analyses.

Oppressors aim at depriving their victims of resources and opportunities to adequately understand, communicate, and resist their enduring injustice. This is why we should be careful not to reduce genocide to a narrow legal matter. We should not reduce it to a legal instrument aimed at bringing individual perpetrators to justice. Instead, we should recognize the concept of genocide as an important resource against this deprivation or distortion of language, thought, and understanding required for social and

political change. While deficient or harmful concepts should be open to critical analysis, any meaningful discussion of the concept of genocide must reflect on ways to meaningfully employ and therefore contextualize it. Some might argue that the concept of genocide is too vague to be meaningfully employed and is thus useless or unnecessary. This undermines the concept's empowering effect on genocide survivors and descendants particularly in the context of pernicious genocide denialism. These groups can employ the concept to gain a critical awareness of their historical experiences and the legacies of a specific group-based injustice. They might then be equipped to resist their ongoing oppression and claim transformative justice.

A conceptual analysis of genocide that disregards the tangible implications of genocide denialism feeds into a reductionist approach; an approach that treats genocide denialism as a mere disagreement about conceptual definitions. This can, in turn, obscure the role of genocide denialism in sustaining injustice. This is surely an unsatisfactory outcome for someone interested in the project of justice or (as I shall mostly be concerned with) the project of identifying injustice.

I hope that this book will serve as a resource for survivors and descendants as they attempt to resist ongoing rationalizations and justifications of their suffering. I also hope that my analysis will help to prevent continued misunderstandings of what is at stake in genocide denial. My analysis can, then, help us to discern how to direct the relevant liberatory efforts.

Acknowledgments

Introduction

In this book, I establish an account of genocide denial as an additional injustice suffered by members of the group targeted during genocide: *epistemic injustice*. The idea of exploring the epistemological dimension of harms caused or constituted by genocide denial is inspired by the common understanding of genocide denial as an assault on truth and memory (see, e.g., Lipstadt 1993; Vidal-Naquet 1992). The wrong of genocide denial is often described as a violation of the dignity of survivors and their descendants. This has motivated some states to adopt legislation criminalizing genocide denial. This seems warranted insofar as genocide denial denigrates or discriminates against a group of persons with the intention of instigating hatred and violence. Legislation to criminalize genocide denial is, therefore, usually part of general anti-racism and hate speech legislation.[1]

My aim in this book is not to provide an account of whether or not we should criminalize genocide denial. Nor do I intend to explicate the kinds of utterances that constitute legally relevant hate speech.[2] After all, genocide denial can constitute serious harm – a violation of human dignity – regardless of its *legal* status. Rather than focusing on the narrow legal treatment of genocide denial and legally protected speech, my interest lies in the broader normative question of understanding which harms are caused or constituted by genocide denial. I am particularly interested in long-term institutionalized practices of denial; in short, *denialism*. Acknowledging that genocide denial "is an extremely dangerous form of language, of thought and of propaganda" (Charny and Fromer 1998, 48) leads to my concern with the *epistemic harms* of genocide denialism.

One of my central arguments is that long-term genocide denialism functions to consolidate relations of domination through epistemic means. Long-term genocide denialism generates pervasive ignorance, ignorance that distorts, obscures, and normalizes relations of domination. I am, then, following Miranda Fricker's concern to focus on the epistemological dimension of how the powerful constitute or structure the world for their purposes, namely "that the powerful have some sort of unfair advantage in

'structuring' our *understandings* of the social world" (1999, 191). Thus, my concern is not only with *individual instances* of genocide denial (which is what legal discourses focus on), but also with the specific institutional and structural conditions that give rise to *patterns and practices* of genocide denial. Focusing on the very practice of genocide denial allows us to consider the broader scope of harms constituted by genocide denial. Genocide denial harms not only immediate victims/survivors of genocide. It also harms – in different and to be identified ways – their descendants, the group targeted during genocide, and members of a post-genocidal society more generally.

My inter- or transgenerational focus makes the insights generated in this book relevant to the study of contemporary genocides and historical genocides: genocides that happened before the international legal codification of "genocide" and where most of the direct victims and perpetrators have died. These genocides include European colonial genocides in Africa (e.g., Belgian Congo, German Southwest Africa, and French Algeria), European colonial genocides in North America (targeting Native Americans and the Indigenous peoples of Canada), Ottoman genocides (targeting Armenians, Pontic Greeks, and Assyrian/Syriac/Chaldean Christians), the Circassian genocide (under Imperial Russia), the Ukrainian genocide (under Soviet Russia), and others.[3]

My focus on the practice of genocide denial helps to analytically distinguish the *harms of genocide denial* from the *harms of genocide* (and the responsibilities that result from each). Most of the genocides in human history have not been properly dealt with. Instead, histories of oppression and social violence are often wilfully distorted or suppressed by the perpetrator group and their successors. This has persisted regardless of legal codification in the second half of the 20th century. Examples include denials of the Cambodian genocide (Kiernan 2008), denials of the Rwandan genocide (Hintjens and van Oijen 2020; Tirrell 2015, 14–17), and ongoing official Serb denial of the Bosnian genocide (Obradovic-Wochnik 2009).[4] Even tribunals cannot overcome the social and political tenacity of genocide denial and thereby the harms that denial causes or constitutes. This highlights why we should not restrict an analysis of the normative dimensions and implications of genocide denial to the domain of law. Instead, we must establish a broader understanding of genocide denial's harms and the conditions, practices, and processes that perpetuate those harms.

An applied philosophical approach to understanding the harms of genocide denialism demands a dialogue between empirical and normative analyses. My point of departure is the practical normative challenge of genocide denialism. In Chapters 1 and 2, I offer an account of the harms of genocide and its denial. This account is succinct but also

sufficiently comprehensive to prepare the reader for Chapters 3–5. I draw mostly on a specific case study: the historical and ongoing Turkish denial of the 1915–1917 Armenian genocide (and by extension denials of the genocides of Pontic Greeks and Chaldean/Assyrian/Syriac Christians).[5] This will provide pertinent insights into (a) the conditions for long-term, *consolidative* genocide denialism and (b) genocide denialism's status as an ongoing source of collective and state violence. This means that the Armenian genocide is not an "issue of the past". It is an ongoing source of injustice.

A peculiar characteristic of Armenian genocide denialism is that it is state-organized. According to Cohen, it is the "most consistent, strident and elaborate state-organized attempt to conceal a record of past atrocities" (2001, 134).[6] This case also has crucial (legal) historical relevance. Its aftermath brought about the first, albeit failed, attempt at an international prosecution of "crimes against humanity and civilization". Understandably, the Holocaust has mostly shaped US and Western European scholarship on genocide and its denial. Studying the Armenian genocide can raise awareness of the crucial inter-imperial entanglements between Imperial Germany and the Ottoman Empire (especially from the 1870s onwards). Among other things, it shows how the Armenian genocide is significantly entangled with European (especially German) history. The parallels between anti-Armenian and anti-Semitic racism at the time were no coincidence.[7]

I believe that theories of epistemic injustice and agential and structural conceptions of ignorance provide critical tools for improving our understanding of the wrongs and harms of genocide denialism. Such theories adopt what some have called a "critical" (Dieleman 2017) or "non-ideal" approach. As Mills writes, the mark of the non-ideal is "locating issues of normative theory, moral and political, in the actual non-ideal world in which we live" (2011, 428) with a specific focus on "constraining circumstances" (429). Following this critical theoretical approach, my goal in this book is to argue as follows: *Circumstances of genocide denialism pose unwarranted disabling constraints on epistemic agency, and this constitutes epistemic oppression*. Defending this claim will involve exploring two intertwined theses:

1 Genocide denialism should not be understood and explained as an epistemological "other" (i.e., a matter of epistemic neglect). Rather, it should be understood and explained as a *substantive epistemic practice*, one that generates and maintains ignorance and *ignorant agency*.
2 This kind of ignorance is *pernicious*, because it gives rise to *epistemic oppression*.

Epistemic oppression refers to persistent and systematic epistemic injustice. Conceptualizing it in this way uncovers its underlying institutional and social-structural enabling conditions. Epistemic oppression is concerned not only with individuals but also with structured relationships between social groups. This allows a relational conceptualization of epistemic harms caused or constituted by genocide denialism. I shall elaborate on this motif in relation to two interrelated forms of epistemic oppression (i.e., constraints on epistemic agency):

1 Testimonial oppression, which concerns institutionalized disabling constraints on genocide testimony.
2 Hermeneutical oppression, which concerns institutionalized disabling constraints on genocide remembrance.

The epistemic injustice framework helps to shed light on the epistemic harms of genocide denialism. The epistemic harms of genocide denialism are sometimes neglected or obscured owing to the prominence of a certain field of scholarship on genocide testimony. Briefly elaborating on this point will underscore the relevance of my focus on genocide denialism's epistemic harms. It will situate my analysis within scholarship on genocide testimony/bearing witness and theses about the im/possibility of genocide testimony particularly prominent in the European philosophical tradition. The Euro- or Western-centric tradition of philosophical genocide scholarship was largely developed in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The result is that speaking of genocide testimony in terms of an *epistemic practice* can give rise to a certain confusion. How is genocide testimony possible when genocide aims at the destruction of both the witness and the archive? In other words, how can one witness "an event without a witness" (Laub 1992; Derrida 1996; Nichanian 2009)? Moreover, how can genocide victims testify to genocide if genocide perverts both morality and the language we use to make sense of the social world? (Kusch 2017).

The above questions point to the so-called "impossibility of testimony" or the "unsayability thesis" (Agamben 2002). The impossibility of testimony in relation to traumatic events such as genocides has been at the centre of philosophical scholarship dealing with the Holocaust. Along with the central notion of "bearing witness", this scholarship largely focuses on Holocaust survivor testimony. A notable exception was the work of Marc Nichanian, who engaged with this tradition having in mind a historical genocide continuously and systematically denied, namely the Armenian genocide. This scholarship has been critical of the idea that survivor testimony should be conceived in ethical *and* epistemological terms. Nichanian (2009) maintains that such an understanding of genocide testimony can

play into the hands of genocide deniers and get survivors caught up in a futile game of continuously documenting and proving historical facts (just to have those facts' evidential value challenged and doubted again). The idea is that genocide testimony cannot have the status of *proof* because it entails *interpretation* ("the logic of proof is the logic of the murderer" [Nichanian 2009, 47]). A related concern is that traumatic experiences of extraordinary violence and dehumanization (which took an exceptional form and scope in the Holocaust) cannot be made intelligible in ways that fulfil epistemological requirements for testimony in the first place. The general idea, then, is that bearing witness to genocide (and correspondingly hearing and believing witness testimony) is a fundamentally ethical, rather than epistemological, matter.

This is only a brief motivation for my analytical focus on the *epistemic* harms of genocide denialism. I do not intend to provide an in-depth reconstruction of the abovementioned theoretical accounts of genocide testimony/bearing witness. Schmidt (2015, 2019) and others (Krämer and Weigel 2017) have already pointed to the valuable contribution such scholarship made in centring the ethical dimensions of survivor testimony. Survivor testimony can fail to fulfil (traditional) epistemological criteria for what it takes to count as an act of knowledge transmission.[8] That said, Schmidt and others also point to the pitfalls of a rather narrow ethical account of survivor testimony. It might too quickly exclude the epistemological dimension and its ethical and political implications. The latter is especially relevant to my analysis. This is because what characterizes cases such as the Armenian genocide is *unjustified wilful and systematic epistemic contestation* by the perpetrators' institutional and individual successors. This can be *epistemically harmful* to (potential) testifiers.

Nichanian (2009) falls short of acknowledging this ethico-epistemic dimension of harm. After all, testifiers seek to be recognized as epistemic contributors (despite the context of denialism and the "language games" deniers coerce them into). This epistemic dimension of harm has been neglected or obscured in the aforementioned literature on genocide testimony under conditions of domination. When it comes to survivor testimony, the worry is mostly not with an inability to document the truth of experienced violations. Rather, it is with *not being believed* and with being unjustly de-authorized, discredited, and *silenced*. As I shall argue, truth also matters for our integrity and projects of self-constitution, and hence for personal reports and memories of moral violation. It is, of course, crucial to acknowledge the moral dimension of genocide testimony and its reasonable impact on hearers' responsibilities. That said, to ignore the epistemic value of genocide testimony runs the risk of obscuring a central epistemic injustice, namely that genocide denial discredits the victim/survivor as an *epistemic agent*.

In writing about Holocaust survivor testimony, Schmidt argues:

> In fact, recent historical studies show that many survivors of the concentration camps indeed wanted to testify immediately after their liberation and only gradually fell silent, after their reports found little understanding and resonance among their relatives, friends, but also at the societal level.
>
> > (2019, 201, my translation from the German original)

This also applies to Armenian genocide survivors' memoirs and *collaborative* memory activities attempting to reconstruct Ottoman Armenian life.[9] We should, then, avoid adapting the concept of testimony to circumvent the "logic of the murderer". Instead, we should insist on both the ethical *and* epistemic value of genocide testimony to reveal genocide denialism for what it is. It is a substantive epistemic practice constituting epistemic (including testimonial) oppression. Against this backdrop, one of my main purposes in this book is to acknowledge the epistemological relevance of genocide testimony and genocide remembrance. These activities count as instances of *epistemic resistance* to the "pernicious ignorance" promoted by genocide denialism.[10] It follows that we must consider testimony and remembrance as social-epistemic practices. They are practices where epistemic agents seek to participate in the generation of knowledge and understanding related to a morally salient matter.[11]

Dialogue between the conceptual and theoretical repertoire employed to approach the phenomenon of genocide denialism can enrich scholarship on epistemic injustice and genocide denial. It can do so by introducing an epistemological dimension to the harmful implications of genocide denialism. My focus in this book is on those at the "receiving end" of epistemic injustice. I shall, however, also investigate denialism as an *epistemically* irresponsible practice. It is a matter of dysfunctional practices of belief-formation and their maintenance. It is, consequently, of substantive epistemological concern. This becomes evident once we broaden our analytical focus to include considerations of doxastic states and epistemic agency, belief-forming practices, and their social and political conditions. Identifying the specific epistemic harms of genocide denialism is also a *practical* necessity. For the purpose of this book, I shall primarily focus on how we can judge the phenomenon in question *as unjust*, and specifically as *epistemically* unjust. Nonetheless, I hope that my investigation will inform formulations of action-guiding principles or policies that seek to mitigate or eliminate genocide denialism and its epistemic harms. As the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (2005) emphasizes, a full and effective exercise of the *right to know* provides a vital safeguard against the recurrence of violations. Or, as the common saying goes, "a crime denied is a crime repeated".

Given the above, this book should contribute an as-yet underdeveloped philosophical perspective to Armenian genocide scholarship. The insights generated will also be relevant to other cases sharing similar institutional and structural features. These include systematic denials of genocide and practices of social violence in general.

In Chapter 1, I aim to secure an understanding of what genocide denial is (i.e., what denial means in relation to genocide). I do so by addressing important misconceptions about genocide denial pertaining to (a) the concept of genocide, and (b) the role of denial in relation to genocide. I begin with an introduction and critical discussion of the concept and the distinct wrong of genocide. I then discuss how denial features in different phases of genocide and its aftermath. The core idea is that denial is not the "final stage" of genocide. It is a constant feature of the genocidal process. It spans the preceding and the execution phases and often continues in a genocide's immediate and long-term aftermath. The latter is most likely to occur in contexts of impunity. I shall illustrate as much by invoking the case of the Armenian genocide.

I shall provide a brief historical overview of the denial and rationalization that characterized the preceding and execution phases of the Armenian genocide. I then turn to the problem of impunity as a solid basis for long-term genocide denial. In so doing, I shall employ the holistic framework found in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (2005) report to combat impunity. This framework emphasizes the *right to know*, the *right to justice*, the *right to reparations* and *guarantees of non-recurrence*. I discuss how the immediate aftermath of the Armenian genocide involved the first, albeit failed, international attempt to prosecute genocide perpetrators. This failure to combat impunity helped to consolidate long-term genocide denialism and Turkish domination in Turkey. The chapter ends by teasing out and motivating my epistemological analysis of genocide denialism and its pernicious implications.

In Chapter 2, I focus on the epistemology of genocide denialism. The first task is to define a working understanding of both individual denial and systematic denial (denialism) and their relations to knowledge or (rather) *ignorance*.

- *Individual denial* can refer to the communicative act of denying (as a form of lying) or the psychologically more complex process of being in denial.
- *Systematic denial* (denialism) is a collective achievement requiring broader social and institutional support. It refers to *patterns and practices* of denial and not mere *instances* of denial.

I shall emphasize (a) the mutually reinforcing relationship between individual denial and systematic denial and (b) their implications for epistemic

agency, particularly of dominant and structurally privileged members of society. Drawing on Bardon (2020), I shall also distinguish between two components of (being in) denial: *motivated cognition* and *rationalization*. This distinction shall help us carve out the co-constitutive relationship between denial and ignorance, which I elucidate by adopting an agential and structural conception of ignorance. Specifically, I argue that genocide denialism both (a) causes ignorance about genocide and related matters and (b) constitutes ignorant agents and thereby *active ignorance*. I illustrate this using the example of Turkish national education policy and its role in cultivating what José Medina (2013) calls "epistemic vices of the privileged". I shall focus on the epistemic vices of epistemic arrogance and closed-mindedness. I then briefly turn to examples from denialist scholarship to add empirical support to the claim that ignorance produced about genocide evinces genocide *mis*recognition rather than lack of recognition. It involves the distortion of (a) facts about genocide through the mistreatment of evidence and (b) the very norms that should be guiding inquiry in this domain. This provides the empirical basis for my attempt to understand the epistemic wrong of genocide denialism in terms of epistemic domination and oppression (Chapters 3–5). The chapter ends with a critical note on the mischaracterization of genocide denialism as a problem of "collective amnesia" and "forgetting". I stress the need for a differentiated understanding of the "silences" surrounding genocide and argue that genocide denialism is a problem of coerced silence or communicative and/ or pre-emptive silencing. This necessitates an investigation of genocide denialism through the framework of epistemic injustice.

In Chapter 3, I introduce the concepts that can enable an investigation into which epistemic harms are caused or constituted by genocide denialism. I aim to establish the basis for the claim that genocide denialism generates and sustains *epistemically pernicious* ignorance. I begin by outlining Fricker's (2007) theory of epistemic injustice and her basic formulations of systematic discriminatory epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. I shall complement this with another form of epistemic injustice, namely what Gaile Pohlhaus Jr. (2012) calls "wilful hermeneutical ignorance".

I also discuss some of the relevant objections and modifications to Fricker's central cases of epistemic injustice (which are especially applicable to cases and contexts of social injustice). I then introduce my account of the wrong of epistemic injustice in terms of epistemic domination and oppression. In so doing, I widen or shift our focus from the individual knower to (a) *knowers in relation* and *epistemic communities* and (b) *relations of epistemic authority, recognition*, and *power*. This emphasizes the institutional and structural conditions within which our epistemic agency is embedded. It thereby shines a light on sustained patterns and practices

of denial. Drawing from topical theories of oppression, I define epistemic domination/oppression as:

> Unwarranted institutionalized disabling constraints on knowers (or epistemic agents more generally), specifically constraints that epistemically misrecognize, de-authorize and disempower knowers.

I develop this claim in Chapters 4 and 5 by referencing two interrelated epistemic practices that are relevant in the aftermath of genocide: *genocide remembrance* and *genocide testimony*.

In Chapter 4, I draw on and further develop the previously introduced notions of hermeneutical injustice and wilful hermeneutical ignorance. I do so to argue that long-term genocide denialism – understood as *collective genocide misremembrance* and *memory distortion* – constitutes *hermeneutical oppression*. An institutional context characterized by genocide denialism generates disabling constraints on the epistemic agency of members of the historically targeted group. It does so by preventing them from participating in relevant social practices of meaning-making. They are excluded from the collective endeavour of giving meaning to the past.

I begin by outlining some of the social and political functions of collective memory. I also explicate the moral and epistemic value of individual and collective genocide remembrance. Drawing on Campbell's (2003) reconstructive account of memory, I argue that one of the ways in which genocide denialism wrongs individual rememberers is by constraining them in their capacity to learn by experience and thereby develop personhood and moral agency. I shall illustrate the mechanisms of hermeneutical oppression with examples of Armenian genocide denialism. Here, collective memory is distorted through the introduction of (a) problematic definitions of the concept of genocide, (b) the concept of "just memory", and (c) misconceptions of historiographical research. I end the chapter by discussing the mutually reinforcing relationship between hermeneutical oppression and testimonial oppression. Memory depends not only on available hermeneutical resources but also on whether rememberers can effectively articulate their memories, that is, whether they can testify to the past and count on appropriate social uptake. Remembering, as a practice involving self-constitution, depends on how others respond to expressions of self-knowledge and self-understanding. As I shall argue in more detail in Chapter 5, this further renders rememberers vulnerable to testimonial oppression.

In Chapter 5, I investigate how the institutional and structural conditions of genocide denialism and its effects on processes of interpretation and understanding affect interpersonal communication (i.e., epistemically relevant linguistic exchanges such as testimony). I argue that the intra- and

interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels of genocide denialism relate to and reinforce one another in ways that constitute *testimonial oppression*. Testimonial oppression is a matter of systematic coercion (coercive power rooted in specific institutional and structural epistemic background conditions). Under such conditions, even non-racist, "naive", or everyday denial can contribute to testimonial oppression. It can maintain what Kristie Dotson (2011) refers to as "practices of silencing".

I begin the chapter by briefly elaborating on the account of testimony that I adopt and how it figures in my analysis of conversational genocide denial and testimonial oppression. I then introduce Dotson's account of *testimonial smothering*. This is a practice of silencing that is especially relevant to the context of genocide denialism. The pernicious ignorance generated by genocide denialism not only (a) persistently invalidates genocide survivors and descendants as knowers but also (b) coerces them to silence themselves. I shall explicate the effects of testimonial oppression in terms of the systematic failure to epistemically recognize those testifying to genocide. This failure ultimately coerces testifiers to act in ways that further their own oppression. I conclude the chapter with a critical exploration of individual responsibility for denial and testimonial incompetence under aggravating institutional and structural conditions.

Notes

1 See Article 261bis of the Swiss Criminal Code: "… any person who publicly denigrates or discriminates against another or a group of persons on the grounds of their race, ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation in a manner that violates human dignity, whether verbally, in writing or pictorially, by using gestures, through acts of aggression or by other means, or any person who on any of these grounds denies, trivialises or seeks justification for genocide or other crimes against humanity…", translated English version available at: https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/54/757_781_799/en#art_261_bis

2 See Kahn (2016) for an insightful analysis of this issue.

3 Applying the officially adopted UN definition of "genocide" to colonial genocides is often disputed. However, Raphael Lemkin (1944), who coined the term to refer to the "destruction of nations", employed a broad definition, one that accommodates colonialism as inherently genocidal.

4 There are, of course, many other and more recent genocides whose perpetrators have yet to be held accountable. These include the Bangladesh genocide and the genocides of Tigrayans, Rohingyas, and Uyghurs.

5 I hereby do not suggest an equation of these denials, even though the destructions of these groups were part of the same genocidal process. They require their own studies to identify both historical differences and similarities (and the interrelatedness) of the ways in which genocide was denied and rationalized for each targeted group. See, e.g., Travis (2011), Gaunt et al. (2017), Hassiotis (1992), and Meichanetsidis (2015) for relevant studies. However, in the post-Ottoman, Turkish context, I indeed suggest that the *harmful implications* of genocide denial are similar for all groups targeted during the Ottoman genocides. This

should become evident once I explore how genocide denialism functions to consolidate Turkish domination in Chapters 1 and 2.

6 As I shall show and as historians and social scientists have generally acknowledged, this is probably because the Armenian genocide represents the Turkish nation-state's foundational crime. That said, I am not in a position to judge whether this is *the* most consistent, strident, and elaborate case. A plethora of foundational atrocities committed by former colonial and imperial states remain to be acknowledged and repaired. The Turkish situation is, nonetheless, a striking and illuminating case of state-organized denialism.

7 In the first book-length critique of Eurocentrism in Continental Philosophy of Evil through an engagement with the Armenian Genocide and its denial, Oranlı (2015, 2023) offers a philosophical lens attentive to evils' historical and ideological continuities and thereby answers the need for a global framework for addressing the political evils experienced around the world.

8 This would require some engagement with the specific conception of testimony against which these scholars were arguing. From a more recent perspective though, the rich scholarship on testimonial injustice shows that the criteria for what counts as testimony have been substantially broadened. I believe this is partly because the epistemological significance of testimony is no longer restricted to its potential to directly transmit knowledge. Instead, other types of testimonial content are recognized as epistemologically significant (i.e., as resources from which to generate knowledge and understanding).

9 The *Houshamadyan* project attempts to reconstruct Ottoman Armenian town and village life based on a variety of sources (including inherited objects, music, memoirs, and oral or written testimony.

10 According to Dotson, "pernicious ignorance" is "any reliable ignorance that, in a given context, harms another person (or set of persons)" (where "[r]eliable ignorance is ignorance that is consistent or follows from a predictable epistemic gap in cognitive resources") (2011, 238).

11 This broad understanding of epistemic practices suggests that the issue is not primarily about whether one possesses actual knowledge. It is more generally about (a) practices where we "*contribute to the pool of shared epistemic materials* – materials for knowledge, understanding, and very often for practical deliberation" (Fricker 2015, 76) and (b) whether an epistemic subject is regarded as a prima facie guide to truth, and thereby *epistemically respected*.

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Part I

Genocide and genocide denialism

1   On genocide denial

Misconceptions about genocide and its denial abound. Examples include (1) when genocide is narrowly conceived of as a legal matter and its scope reduced to massacre and physical extermination and (2) when denial is claimed to be the "final stage" of genocide. My aim in this chapter is to clear up some of these misconceptions. I do so by, first, engaging in a critical discussion of the concept of genocide and its broader significance and, second, defending the view that denial is a constant feature of the genocidal process. It spans the preceding phase and the execution phase. It can even continue in a genocide's immediate and long-term aftermath and thereby constitute a long-term legacy.

Gaining an accurate understanding of the concept of genocide – one that goes beyond its legal application – is crucial for assessing epistemic harms (and broader practical harms) that stem from genocide *denialism*. Such an understanding also helps one to identify different forms of denialism. A notable form is *wilful hermeneutical ignorance*, which involves the wilful introduction or spread of misconceptions about genocide. This, I contend, constitutes hermeneutical oppression (see Section 4.3).

Acknowledging how denial functions throughout the genocidal process helps to highlight the continuity of epistemic harm suffered by groups targeted for genocide. Combined with impunity, this can constitute a long-term legacy, one that consolidates domination for later generations. I am particularly concerned with this kind of "consolidative" denial (Theriault 2017). I shall argue that consolidative denial perpetuates historical injustice and is an ongoing source of extant injustices. This challenges the "historical" status of historical injustices and thereby stresses their continued relevance.

I shall draw on the case of the Armenian genocide (1915–1917) to substantiate the empirical claim that denial is a constant feature of the genocidal process. The Armenian genocide is an instance of historical failure to combat impunity in the immediate aftermath of the genocide. This is the case despite the genocide being proceeded by the first (albeit failed) attempt at international condemnation and prosecutions for "crimes against humanity". This

was also the 20th century's first attempt at so-called transitional justice. I end the chapter by teasing out and motivating an epistemological analysis of genocide denialism and its pernicious implications.

1.1   What is "genocide"?

1.1.1   *Legal definition*

The official legal definition of genocide can be found in the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (hereafter: Genocide Convention). The Genocide Convention was adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on 9 December 1948. As a human rights treaty, it does not in itself provide for (legal) enforcement mechanisms under international law or create a criminal legal institution to try individuals. It is, instead, an instrument of international law, one mandating that signatories (i.e., national governments) pass domestic laws to criminalize genocide. Article 2 of the Genocide Convention offers the following definition of the crime of genocide:

> In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

The Genocide Convention was drafted in 1948. Following the Holocaust, genocide was now codified as a distinct crime subject to international criminal law. However, the Genocide Convention's official legal definition resulted from a negotiation process. It reflects a compromise that UN Member States reached while drafting the Convention. Then and now, one of the central objections to the above definition is that it is arbitrarily narrow by including only "national, ethnical, racial, or religious" groups and excluding political and other social groups.

Raphael Lemkin's earlier definition of this crime included a broader conception of the potential target groups. As early as 1933, he speaks of

> acts of extermination directed against the ethnic, religious or social collectivities whatever the motive (political, religious, etc.); for example massacres, pogroms, actions undertaken to ruin the economic existence of the members of a collectivity, etc.
>
> (Lemkin 1933)

Genocide scholars urge broadening the scope of potential genocide targets.[1] Larry May suggests that the wording in international law should be changed to "a *publicly recognized* group that is relatively stable and significant for the identity of its members, such as a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" (2010, 57). In fact, in 2010, Switzerland amended its domestic criminal code to include social and political groups more broadly.[2]

Scholars have questioned and debated several other facets of the UN definition and the Genocide Convention as a whole. In what follows, I clarify the concept of genocide that I shall employ in my analysis. I then critically discuss some of the other facets just mentioned, and with it the distinct harm of genocide. Of course, much more can and has been said about the concept of genocide and its harms. My aim is not to provide a comprehensive literature review. Instead, I intend to provide some clarifications and a critical perspective on certain issues that are often distorted, ignored, or obscured in both academic and public discourse about genocide.

1.1.2 Conceptual use of "genocide"

The Genocide Convention is often criticized for its potential to be wielded as a political instrument and for evoking double standards. It appears to selectively hold individuals and states accountable for genocides and crimes against humanity. A response of outrage and action versus silence or wilful ignorance often appears to be motivated by state interests. In the context of historical genocides such as the Armenian genocide, genocide deniers often refer to the principle of legality. They claim that we cannot call historical crimes "genocide" because the relevant legal norm was not in place yet.[3] These objections are irrelevant to my analysis for (at least) the following reasons:

1 Its (potential or actual) political misuse or exploitation does not make the concept of genocide a faulty normative category per se. In contexts of genocide *denialism*, the subject matter of genocide becomes politically salient. This is not surprising. Genocide is a collective injustice, usually related to the consolidation of domination (with its accompanying ideology). It, therefore, takes on a political meaning (I press this point in Section 1.2).
2 Relatedly, using the concept of genocide is not just a narrow legal matter. It is also a social, moral, political, psychological, and – I suggest – *epistemic* matter. In fact, these dimensions are intricately entwined. Ultimately, addressing historical injustices and determining sociopolitical, moral, and epistemic responsibilities does not require a successful *legal* application of the Genocide Convention.[4]

Note that, in adopting the concept of genocide, I am not concerned with the question of what genocide really (or essentially) is. I am also not

concerned with a comparative conceptual analysis related to whether "crime against humanity" is a more ameliorative concept than is genocide. Any meaningful discussion of genocide must reflect on the ways in which it can be meaningfully employed, thus requiring contextualization (cf. Mazur 2017, 142–143). As such, my central concern is the following:

> The meaning and value of the concept of genocide as a hermeneutical resource for both (a) genocide survivors and descendants and (b) these persons' or groups' claims to social and political justice, specifically epistemic justice.[5]

This concern is a core motif running through my book. It is prompted by the fact that genocide leads to *transgenerational harms* (harms to individuals, groups, and societies). These harms cannot simply be repaired through legal prosecutions of individual perpetrators (which is the primary purpose of the legal codification of the crime of genocide). Survivors of genocide may have, among other things, lost their language, their socioeconomic security, their homes and belongings, their material heritage, and their communities (or community in general). They have also suffered various other inhuman and traumatizing violations. Genocide perpetrators impose a hierarchical perspective, one that enforces a strong symbolic message of social superiority (for the perpetrators) and inferiority (for the victims). I shall argue throughout the book that, without proper redress in the aftermath of genocide, there will be continued discrimination against the group (or groups) formerly targeted for genocide.

1.1.3   Intentional destruction

Another controversial feature of genocide concerns the intentional destruction of the group in question. The *intention* to destroy a group as such need not involve the (partial or complete) murder of all group members. Acts and policies other than physical extermination can achieve group destruction. As May points out,

> [o]ne can destroy a group by disconnecting the members of the group from the group, for instance, by forbidding them to speak their native language or by dispersing them so that any group coherence is destroyed.[6]
> (2010, 62)

In other words, a group can be destroyed *in its form*, even if individual members (physically) survive. The legal definition of genocide acknowledges this to some extent. It lists a variety of actions that can be committed with the intention to destroy a group. These include causing serious bodily

or mental harm to group members, imposing measures to prevent births within the group, or forcibly transferring children from their group to another group.[7] Mental harm, I contend, can also involve inflicting fear, shame, or internalized oppression that coerces individuals to hide or deny their group membership, or assimilate due to reasons of survival.

As mentioned, the concept of genocide recognizes the wrong done to a social group "as such". However, this does not imply that actions committed with the sole aim of destroying a group are the only genocidal actions. Genocides are usually committed to further some other goal. While some perpetrators act out of a "mere desire to harm", the organizers, planners, and coordinators of genocide are driven by other interests.[8] In any case, the victim group is intended as victim (whether in the furtherance of another aim or not). This suffices to establish the condition that the relevant group is destroyed *non-accidentally* (Lang 2010, 87–88).

The destruction of a group has strong moral implications. This has prompted the inclusion of the concept of genocide in international law. How, then, are such groups constituted, and what is especially egregious about destroying them? Answering these questions will grant insights into the normative force of the concept and its practical complexity.

1.1.4   The group condition

Claudia Card has developed an influential account of genocide as "social death" or loss of "social vitality". Here, genocide consists in the loss of relationships that create community. The communities we belong to set the context that gives meaning to our life choices and goals. They provide a basis for meaningful existence. This means that the moral dimension of group destruction goes further than "individual choice, individual goals, individual careers, and body counts" (Card 2003, 63). The kind of harm "suffered by individual victims of genocide, in virtue of their group membership, is not captured by other crimes" (68). More specifically, Card argues that genocidal harm is morally distinct because

> it is not just that one's group membership is occasion for harms that are definable independently of one's identity. When a group with its own cultural identity is destroyed, its survivors lose their cultural heritage, and may even lose their intergenerational connections.
>
> (73)

In this sense, genocide is a crime that wrongs victims by destroying their basis for a meaningful existence, namely their cultural belonging.

An objection to Card's account points to the fact that genocides are usually unsuccessful in bringing about absolute social death. Enough victims

survive and enough potential targets escape so that the group's overall cultural traditions are preserved. Card maintains that the issue is not whether certain traditions survive in some form, but whether *survivors* can sustain their meaningful intergenerational connections. Cultural traditions are meaningfully sustained only when there is "a family or community setting for observance" (75). The aim of genocide is specifically to destroy these settings. Doing so, in turn, destroys survivors' ability to meaningfully connect with their cultural heritage and traditions.

Card tries to tease out the *collective* character of genocidal harm. I consider her social death thesis to be a plausible account of the distinct moral harm of genocide. However, I worry that it represents a *moral oversimplification* when we adopt the perspective of the victims/survivors. Whether or not the connections Card emphasizes are meaningful for each survivor does not affect whether survivors should be considered as victims of genocide. In other words, one can be a victim of genocide regardless of whether one meaningfully (self-)identifies with the targeted culture or community. This is particularly the case when individual victims are targeted based on the *perpetrators' understanding* of the target group.[9]

As much as it misrecognizes and destroys a group or cultural identity, genocide seems to resemble a form of unjustifiable "collective punishment", one that disregards persons' individuality and their choice of meaningful relationships. In this sense, genocide is not only a collective crime (a crime perpetrated in the name of a collective against another identifiable or identified collective). It is also a *collectivizing* crime. This seems to me to be a core feature of genocide's perniciousness. It also relates to the question of what concept of "group" we are working with when we call attention to or try to determine a genocide. Getting a more differentiated understanding of the group condition also helps to substantiate the claim that genocide (and its denial) can give rise to a variety of communities and identities over time.

1.1.5 Identification of groups as targets

Genocide does not assume an account of groups as ontologically distinct entities existing independently from individuals. However, groups are also not merely accumulations of individuals. So, when can we say that a group – qua potential target of genocide – exists? In line with the previous discussion, I think that answering this question requires adopting an account of social groups that acknowledges both *voluntary group formation* and *nonvoluntary group formation*. Such an account does not render a group's existence-condition dependent on voluntary self-identification.

Ann Cudd has put forward a differentiated understanding of social groups, whereby social groups are constituted by structured relationships

between individual members. These structured relationships are based either on voluntary formation (owing to, e.g., common commitments) or non-voluntary formation (owing to, e.g., shared experiences of oppression). Cudd writes that:

> *A social group is a collection of persons who share (or would share under similar circumstances) a set of social constraints on action.* The account fits both voluntary and nonvoluntary social groups, since it does not refer to the cause or reason for the existence of similar social constraints on the persons who share them.
>
> (2006, 44)

Membership is externally, rather than internally, determined when social groups form non-voluntarily owing to shared (and sometimes unjust) constraints on individual agency. As Cudd notes, non-voluntary

> [s]ocial groups are formed not by the intentions of the individuals in them to join together and share in a particular project, but by the actions, beliefs, and attitudes of others, both in the group and out, that constrain their choices in patterned and socially significant ways.
>
> (Ibid.)

This means that members can experience membership in a social group in various socially significant ways. This significance is not always a personal choice. It is not always a product of voluntary collectivization based on shared personal interests and commitments.

Why adopt such a broad conception of social groups instead of, say, Larry May's nominalist conception? According to May, a group exists only if it is (a) "publicly recognized" (i.e., internally *and* externally recognized) and (b) "significant for the identity of its members" (where members are related to each other through organizational structure, solidarity or common interests) (2010, 31–35). The problem is that May's view might struggle to account for cases where the target group is not publicly recognized or even misrecognized by the perpetrators. After all, self-naming on behalf of victim groups can differ significantly from perpetrators' externally imposed naming.

A case in point are the colonial genocides of "Indians" – a denotation created and assigned by the colonizers of the Americas. We might say that "Indians" came to non-voluntarily exist after colonial genocide because of externally imposed constraints on their agency. However, it would be problematic to require that they identified and existed as "Indians" beforehand for them to count as targets of genocide. Another example is groups that fight for external recognition while genocide is ongoing, such

as in the case of the Rohingya. The Myanmar government does not recognize Rohingya Muslims as a distinct ethnic community but instead considers them to be "illegal immigrants from Bangladesh" (Kironska and Peng 2021, 19). Similarly, the Russian government resorted to historical anti-Ukrainian tropes to legitimize its recent attacks on Ukraine, which involve the denial of the existence of Ukrainian identity, language, or statehood. In turn, it is rendered an "artificial entity" that presents an existential threat to what is claimed to be one Russian nation (see, e.g., Gaufman 2023). Claiming that the targets do not actually constitute a (protected) group in the first place can thus become a strategy for genocide denial and justification.

Perhaps this is a weakness of the legal definition of genocide. In any case, what matters for our purposes (vis-à-vis genocide's distinct harms) is that genocide wrongs victims in their capacity for both individual and collective self-determination.[10] This is the case regardless of whether individual victims identify with the target group or not. Some victims are committed to their group membership. They are, then, violated in virtue of their group belonging. For other victims, perpetrators impose the significance of a specific group belonging on them, thereby making them targets for the perpetrators' genocidal acts. Indeed, the systematic hate speech that usually prepares and accompanies genocides forges group identities. It has real constructive power. Groups are not only misrecognized and demonized; genocide is the epitome of a crime based on an essentializing ideology, one that determines how a particular social group is to be understood and then destroyed on that basis.[11] This disregards (a) victims' individuality (they are treated merely as members of a demonized group) and (b) a group's heterogeneity and capacity to change.[12]

Given the above, identifying the wrong of genocide in terms of the destruction of a meaningful basis for individual cultural identification seems too narrow. It is especially cruel that genocide *presupposes* a homogeneous, essentialized, and static victim group, one defined by the perpetrators. This denies people their right to count as individuals. It also robs individual group members of their capacity to determine their group identity, their relationship to other groups (and members therein), and their place in society. Certainly, group membership can become important for non-voluntary, moral, and political reasons when it is a matter of survival and resistance to social injustice. It need not merely relate to cultural considerations. This becomes especially relevant in cases of long-term genocide denial and the intergenerational struggles for genocide recognition to which denial gives rise.

I now turn to genocide denial and how it features in various phases of the genocidal process. Distinguishing different phases of denial will help us identify genocide denial's importantly different harmful features. It will also highlight genocide denial's capacity to be an ongoing source of harm.

1.2 Denial as a constant feature of genocide

Denial is a pervasive phenomenon. States repeatedly deny crimes committed by their predecessors or their own institutions. They also deny crimes committed by other states with which they have economic or political ties. But, why focus on the harms of *denial* and not only the harm of genocide? Is denial not just a feature of genocide – its "final stage" (Stanton 1996)? One reason to think of denial as the final stage of genocide is that it aims to forget – that is, destroy – the memory of the injustice. This makes group destruction complete. Not only is the group destroyed, but its destruction is forgotten. It is as if the group never existed in the first place. However, if we focus on survivors and descendants of groups targeted for genocide rather than thinking of genocide as the complete physical annihilation of a group, then it becomes clear that we need a more nuanced understanding of the harm of genocide denial. We can attain such an understanding by looking closely at how denial features in a genocide's various phases. A nuanced approach to the role and implications of denial allows us to identify denial as an *additional injustice*. It is an injustice towards genocide victims, survivors, and descendants, but it also harms members of society at large. I shall explore this latter motif by focusing on epistemic harms.

Like Hovannisian (1986) and Theriault (2017), I consider denial to be a constant feature of genocide. It naturally plays a crucial role in the execution phase, but also often features in the short- and long-term aftermath. This sustains its legacy. I also propose adding a preceding phase, one that prepares fertile ground for the denial and rationalization (or "justification") of genocidal policies and actions.

I shall employ a broader conception of denial than one often finds in the literature. As we shall see in the next chapter, my analysis and conception of denial goes beyond Theriault's definition. Theriault defines denial as

> a verbal strategy consisting of assertions that events that constitute genocide are not happening or did not happen or that the events in question are or were something other than genocide.
>
> (2017, 47)

I acknowledge that genocide denial can be an "insincere" verbal strategy (like lying), but it can also be "sincere" in the sense that someone can *be in denial*. This happens when people start to "believe the lies". They seek to rationalize their beliefs and justify their behaviour. Sincere denial is important for understanding the widespread support and implementation of genocidal policies that one sees during a genocide. It is also crucial for making sense of habitual, sustained patterns and practices of denial (as opposed to instances of denial). As we shall see, this makes denial particularly relevant to epistemic injustice.

1.2.1   *Preceding and execution phases*

According to Medina, collective injustices such as genocides are

> typically preceded by symbolic stigmatizations of the targeted popula-
> tion and by particular expressive harms that become socially accepted
> and even habitual (the use of slurs and denigrating language against that
> group; attitudes and discourses that make them suspect and cast doubt
> on their acceptability; the demonization of their behaviour, culture, and
> customs; etc.)
>
> (2013, 250)

The social habituation of verbal violence and stigmatizations suggest that
denial and rationalizing justifications also precede genocide.[13] In the case
of the Armenian genocide, the process of social exclusion, stigmatization
and demonization intensified during the Ottoman Empire's *Tanzimat* era
(1839–1876).[14] I would not necessarily say that this marked the beginning
of the genocidal process, but it did, however, generate fertile ground for
continued discrimination and subsequent episodes of collective and state
violence.[15] As Astourian points out,

> genocides are rooted in the fertile ground of past socio-political dis-
> crimination and in the collective phantasms shaped by the unequal rela-
> tions between the dominant and the dominated groups.
>
> (1990, 112)

What does this mean for the Armenian genocide's preceding phase? Two
relevant Imperial edicts were passed during the *Tanzimat* era:

1 In the edict of 1839, "Sharia-based discrimination of non-Muslims was
   abolished, and equality for all Ottoman subjects regardless of religious
   and ethnic affiliation was proclaimed" (Grigoriadis 2012, 283).
2 In the edict of 1856, the "protection of fundamental human rights and
   civil liberties and their extension to non-Muslims were specified" (ibid.).

These reforms were met with resentment. There were discussions about
a "natural inequality" between Muslims and non-Muslims among the
heretofore ruling class, the religious establishment, and many officials.
They feared an end to established power relations and Ottoman-imperialist
domination. The edicts were regarded as breaching Islamic law and centu-
ries of Ottoman tradition.

The Muslim ruling class sought to reinstate its domination by denying
equal rights to non-Muslims. This led to the first series of large-scale
attacks on Ottoman Armenians and Assyrians. These were known as the

Hamidian massacres, perpetrated between 1894 and 1897.[16] The massacres happened during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876–1909), who abolished the reforms in an attempt to establish his version of an Islamic state. For the first time in Ottoman history, the Ottoman Empire came to have a clear Muslim majority. This was partly attributable to settlement policies, whereby Muslim immigrants were settled among or replaced seemingly "hostile" or "disloyal" non-Muslims. Already prior to *Hamidian* rule, Ottoman lands became a new home for many Muslims fleeing from or being deported due to Russian persecution during the 19th century, such as Crimean Tatars and Circassians. Muslim refugees from the Caucasus and the Balkans entered the Ottoman Empire during the later *Hamidian* and *Ittihadist* eras.[17] I shall return to this topic shortly.

Notably, to justify an Ottoman-German military alliance during the *Hamidian* rule, a pro-Ottoman/anti-Armenian element of the German press denied that religion played a role in the persecution of Armenians. This side-lined the fact that the victims' Christianity was a significant factor in their persecution. As Ihrig notes,

> [r]ace started to be a central category in the debates, with a focus on supposedly unsavoury characteristics of the Armenian "people". ...In getting rid of the victims' Christianity, the papers not only shifted focus to their alleged national and racial qualities, but simultaneously began justifying the killing in a more global fashion…
>
> (2016, 46)

There was a focus on Armenians' commercial activities. As merchants and traders, they were portrayed as "deceitful", "treacherous", "seditious" or "greedy usurers".[18] It is no coincidence that this mirrors common anti-Semitic tropes.[19]

The denial of the religious factor did not correspond to reality. It obscured the fact that the *Hamidian massacres* also targeted the Assyrians. Tens of thousands of Christians converted to Islam in the hope of escaping violence.[20] However, rising anti-Armenian racism meant that even the most devout convert could not escape discrimination and persecution. They remained "infidels" (tr. *gavur*).[21] Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Ottoman authorities ignited these prejudices for strategic ends.

Besides their religious denigration and the use of "infidel" as a slur, several other attitudes, discourses, and conspiracy claims were generated to denigrate and alienate Armenians. They were labelled as economic and cultural agents working for Europe. There were also claims that the French–Russian axis operated behind an Armenian appeal to the British. The Germans strongly promoted this narrative and "the suspicion grew that a British, French, Russian, or even Franco-Russian plot lurked behind every stew that brewed in the Oriental cauldron" (Scherer 2001, 308, cited in Ihrig 2016, 28).[22]

The German political leadership and Foreign Office's entrenched anti-Armenian stance (especially under Wilhelmian rule, 1888–1918) has been well documented. The rationalization and even outright justification of collective violence were used to exonerate the Ottoman regime from blame. They were also used to abrogate responsibility for prevention or intervention by self-interested third parties. These patterns of denial and rationalization were repeated during the Armenian genocide of 1915–1917. There, an ideology of Turkish racial supremacy – or *Turkism* – was especially relevant. It served to support the rationalizing justifications during the genocide's execution phase, which was carried out by the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP; also known as *Ittihadists*).

The Young Turk revolution in 1908 forced Sultan Abdul Hamid II to restore the 1876 Constitution. However, a military coup on 23 January 1913 put an end to liberal opposition. The coup was engineered by a small circle within the party. It established what European observers described as a triumvirate consisting of Enver Pasha, Talaat Bey and Djemal Pasha. However, the group was divided, and it was war minister Enver Pasha's and interior minister Talaat Bey's factions that ultimately led the Empire into the First World War alongside Germany and executed the Armenian genocide.[23] The CUP propagated an ideology of (Pan-)Turkism and the notion of a homogeneous (Turkish) national polity and economy. As a central committee member, Ziya Gökalp crucially shaped the CUP's economic and Turkish-nationalist policies (Kaiser 2014, 82–83). He was the party's leading ideologue and advocated extremist views that strongly influenced Talaat (Kieser 2018, 11–12, 98–106). Gökalp defined a nation as follows:

> [A] society consisting of people who speak the same language, have had the same education and are united in their religious, moral and aesthetic ideals – in short, those who have a common culture and religion.
>
> <div align="right">(Transl. and cited in Heyd 1950, 63)</div>

Gökalp also considered total and unquestioning service to the nation as the basis of general morality. Armenians or Christians were already excluded from state power. Gökalp's ideology also excluded them from the moral community and society at large.

Having established a rationalizing justification for their exclusion from the Turkish nation in the making, Turkish-nationalist economic policies further sought to deprive Armenians of their livelihoods. There were boycotts of Greek businesses between 1912 and 1914, which were extended to Armenians and Assyrian/Syriac/Chaldean Christians. This was proceeded by violent deportation policies and the replacement of businesses by Turkish or Muslim entrepreneurs and landlords (see Kaiser 2010, 373–374). The

government also sought to expropriate Armenian houses and farms as part of an ambitious settlement programme for Muslim immigrants from the Balkans. The goal was to create Muslim and Turkish majority populations. As Kaiser notes, "[b]y 'Turkifying' entire regions as well as other non-Turkish and non-Muslim communities, the CUP sought to remove competing claims to Ottoman territory" (2010, 381). Such demographic resettlement policies remained a central part of CUP rule (Dündar 2006). This highlights how the religious element was considered important to the Turkish nation's composition. Settlement policies during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913) bolstered a "national awakening". There was growing "grassroots support" for anti-Armenian and/or general anti-Christian policies and atrocities (Çetinkaya 2015). However, confiscations and lootings mostly enriched high-ranking functionaries, former officers, bureaucrats, and local elites supporting the CUP (Astourian 1990, 135).

The above suggests that the government adopted its agenda to destroy the Ottoman Empire's non-Turkish and non-Muslim communities well before the beginning of the First World War. However, the actual onset of the Armenian genocide came with the enforcement of a new confiscation policy, which (like the deportation policy) was given the semblance of retroactive legality.[24] Such actions were implemented through various draconian social and economic policies, laws, decrees, and overarching theories of nationalist awakening. The institutional and theoretical justification was expressed in terms of exclusionary racist conceptualizations of the (Muslim-)Turkish nation, a nation that had to be "engineered" (Şeker 2013, 3), liberated and defended.

The above discussion shows that denial and rationalization (of wrongdoing) were an integral part of the genocide from the beginning. As Yves Ternon notes, "the Armenian genocide was prepared by lies and carried out based on lies" (1998, 193).[25] Ternon goes on to explain how the CUP prepared the argumentative and normative grounds and belief system for both *committing genocide* and its *subsequent denial*. This again brings the ambiguous use of the term *denial* into focus. Ternon's usage suggests that perpetrators knew that they were engaging in wrongful acts, and that they knowingly distorted social reality to create a fiction. They fashioned official archival documents to "conceal the murder behind a screen of legitimacy" (ibid., my translation). However, it is plausible that (at least some) perpetrators were convinced of their righteousness. They were, then, *in denial* about their wrongdoing.[26] This broadens the scope of genocide denial from (a) a narrowly conceived act of denying or "verbal strategy" (Theriault 2017, 47), to (b) denial rooted in a complex cognitive and emotional defence mechanism, a mechanism that does not presuppose the acknowledgment of facts. Note, however, that these two conceptions are mutually reinforcing. After all, the more convincing, widespread, and

systematic the lies and fabrications are – the *communication* of denial – the more likely people believe them and will be *in denial* when confronted with counter-information. This is the kind of (socially co-constituted) cognitive and emotional condition required to enable both the systematic perpetration of heinous acts and long-term, sustained denial.

1.2.2   Aftermath

Denial in the immediate or short-term aftermath of genocide is meant to help perpetrators escape accountability for their actions. The same applies to bystanders escaping accountability for their inaction. As Theriault notes, denial is usually not effective in legal contexts. During trial proceedings, "denials are treated skeptically and subjected to careful application of evidence standards" (2017, 50). Because denial only has limited effect in court, perpetrators will try to stall or prevent legal proceedings from occurring in the first place. This is achieved "through geopolitical, economic, military, and other forces and factors that prevent the proper legal process" (ibid.). Such attempts were widespread and systematic after the Armenian genocide.[27] As I intend to show, both the establishment and the effectiveness of tribunals to prosecute perpetrators are subject to these manoeuvres. While the success or failure of tribunals themselves might not be significantly affected by denial, their success or failure will have an impact on (a) the efficacy of denial in the social, political, and epistemic spheres and (b) the consolidation of domination. The Ottoman tribunals after the First World War offer a case in point. Some perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity were prosecuted in accordance with Ottoman law because there was no international legal instrument for prosecuting *genocide*. These prosecutions ultimately failed and instead gave rise to a norm of *impunity*.

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) defines *impunity* as follows:

> [T]he impossibility, de jure or de facto, of bringing the perpetrators of violations to account – whether in criminal, civil, administrative or disciplinary proceedings – since they are not subject to any inquiry that might lead to their being accused, arrested, tried and, if found guilty, sentenced to appropriate penalties, and to making reparations to their victims.
>
> (2005, 6)

The UNCHR obliges states to combat impunity and thereby protect and promote human rights in the aftermath of "serious crimes under international law".[28] It recommends a holistic approach to *combating impunity*, one that addresses principles of the *right to justice*, the *right to know*, the

right to reparations and *guarantees of non-recurrence*. The principles formulated in the report are "intended as guidelines to assist States in developing effective measures for combating impunity" (5). They should not be seen as rights and principles that can be addressed in isolation from one another. Rather, they depend on one another in the attainment of justice.

For example, so-called symbolic reparations (such as political apologies) are not sufficient unless they are accompanied by institutional transformations. Such transformations should address and rectify unjust material conditions to achieve full moral repair and render recurrences of social violence less likely. Prosecution and punishment of individual perpetrators is insufficient for addressing and transforming the social structures that enable societal complicity and support for atrocities. Education and commemorative measures (e.g., building museums and memorials) can misinform and mislead the public when they (a) disregard insights from those who experienced the relevant injustice or (b) focus exclusively on victimhood without acknowledging perpetrators' accountability and the conditions of perpetration.

I shall adopt a holistic normative-conceptual framework (of the sort advanced by the UNCHR) to explore how these principles were addressed in the immediate aftermath of the Ottoman genocides. A failure to meet these normative principles of transitional justice means a failure to combat impunity, and impunity provides a solid basis for long-term denial.

1.2.2.1   The Right to Justice

Within such a holistic conceptual framework, the right to justice refers specifically to "criminal justice". It refers to victims' right to a fair remedy and to the State's duty to investigate, prosecute, and duly punish perpetrators. What happened, then, to the perpetrators after the Ottoman genocide(s)? The aftermath of the First World War set a historical precedent. On 24 May 1915, a joint statement by France, Great Britain, and Russia condemned the Ottoman government's acts as "crimes against humanity and civilization". This was the first international condemnation of a government systematically targeting and persecuting its own citizens (Garibian 2016, 242; see also Trumpener 1968, 209–210). The condemnation was expressed following the Ottoman government's order to deport the Armenian population in the Eastern provinces. The order was the product of the so-called *Tehcir law*, passed by the Ottoman Parliament on 27 May 1915. However, the destruction of the Ottoman Armenian cultural, intellectual, and political elite had already begun a month earlier. The international *political* condemnation was soon followed by concrete steps towards legal prosecution immediately after the First World War. Owing to the lack of appropriate international legal instruments, the Allies

demanded that the Ottoman state set up an extraordinary tribunal based on the Ottoman Penal Code.

As early as 14 December 1918, Ottoman Imperial authorization established a court-martial to prosecute the CUP cabinet and leadership. According to Garibian,

> [i]ts stated aim was to judge crimes, which had "revolted all humanity", were "of a nature that would forever cause the conscience of humankind to quiver with horror" and were contrary to the "rules of law and of humanity". The chief culprits (including Talaat Pacha) were sentenced to death *in absentia*, while lower-ranking *Ittihadists* were given prison sentences of 15 years with hard labour, and some former ministers were acquitted.
>
> (2016, 245, footnotes omitted)

The charges focused on the systematic massacres, deportations, and illegal personal profiteering (Balint 2013, 87).

During the Paris Peace Conference (18 January 1919 to 21 January 1920), there were further international demands to prosecute the Young Turk leadership. Garibian writes:

> [T]he group known as the Commission of Fifteen, led by the American Secretary of State Robert Lansing, had the job of examining individuals' responsibility for breaches of the laws and customs of war. Alongside its work in preparation for the trials of German war criminals, it envisaged prosecuting Turkish officials for "crimes against the laws of humanity" committed against the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire outside the scope of the international armed conflict. In a report dated March 5, 1919, the Commission specified the breaches in question: systematic terrorism, murders and massacres, violations of the honor of women, confiscation of private property, looting, confiscations of property belonging to communities or educational and charitable institutions, wanton destruction of public or private property, deportation and forced labor, executions of civilians on false allegations of war crimes and violations against civilian and military personnel.
>
> (2016, 242)

Including "crimes against the laws of humanity" in its definitive report of 29 March 1919 meant that

> the Commission of Fifteen would facilitate the subsequent insertion of several articles into the Treaty of Sèvres from August 10, 1920, calling

for the prosecution of Turkish officials by an international tribunal…
This was a first in international law.

(2016, 245–246)

However, these tribunals were abolished with the rising nationalist move-
ment under Mustafa Kemal. The movement opposed the Sultan, largely
because of his cooperation with the Allies, his condemnation of the CUP,
and his support for the Treaty of Sèvres. From a nationalist perspective,
these were considered to be acts of treason.[29] On 6 November 1922, the
Angora government took over the Constantinople Sultanate. In March
1923, the Angora National Assembly decided that "all those imprisoned by
decisions from both civil and military courts were granted a general
amnesty" (Akçam and Dadrian 2011, 265). The Treaty of Sèvres was never
ratified. It was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne, which became the
founding document of the Turkish Republic. Parts of the Treaty of Sèvres
that dealt with prosecuting crimes against humanity and the cessation of
territory to Armenia were dropped. The Treaty of Lausanne's preamble
makes it clear that the priority was now to "re-establish the relations of
friendship and commerce" and "that these relations must be based on
respect for the independence and sovereignty of States" (Carnegie
Endowment for International Peace 1924b). In this way, legal justice was
trumped by geopolitical, economic, and military interests.

We can see how a population might not acknowledge or accept a tribu-
nal's legitimacy (despite initial efforts at legal prosecution). This is particu-
larly the case when tribunals are (at least partly) instituted by victorious
powers in a post-war context.[30] Garibian notes that as much as tribunals
to prosecute Ottoman crimes

illustrate the limitations of a system of national justice hastily drawn up
in a period of political transition, with the clear aim of obtaining more
favourable treatment from the Allies at the Paris Peace Conference, these
trials are nonetheless of undeniable historical and legal importance.

(2016, 245)

In the context of genocide denial, tribunals and archives documenting these
trial proceedings are undeniably epistemically important. This is the case
particularly with regard to the *right to know* (Section 1.2.2.4).

1.2.2.2 *Guarantees of non-recurrence*

Guarantees of non-recurrence generally refer to the need for institutional
change, change that is required for a state to condemn and deal with its

violent institutional legacy. This can generate conditions that prevent recurrence of violations. To this end, the UNCHR report stipulates that

> [s]tates must undertake institutional reforms and other measures necessary to ensure respect for the rule of law, foster and sustain a culture of respect for human rights, and restore or establish public trust in government institutions.
>
> (2005, 17)

In this regard, the Treaty of Sèvres would have secured essential provisions for those having now become Turkish nationals belonging to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities (specifically victims of deportations, forced religious conversions, and the like). Minority protection clauses are notable in the Treaty's Articles 140–151.[31] What is important as regards real institutional transformation is that the Treaty requested the Turkish government to implement "a scheme for the organization of an electoral system based on the principle of proportional representation of racial minorities" (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 1924a). The Treaty can, thus, be considered one of the first manifestations of international protection of human rights, especially as it relates to special protections for national minorities (Schabas 2009, 19). Thus, the Turkish government could have instituted conditions that would guarantee the non-recurrence of similar rights violations.

Although the requirement to prosecute Ottoman war criminals was dropped, the Treaty of Lausanne maintained the minority protection clauses. It referred to minorities using the blanket term "non-Muslims", although "Turkish authorities interpreted it to refer exclusively to Armenians, Greeks, and Jews" (Grigoriadis 2012, 284).[32] The Treaty referred to equal civil and political rights, equality before the law, language rights, and the right to religious freedom (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 1924b). However, as Ekmekçioğlu (2014) notes, these demands to protect minority rights paradoxically entrenched the divisions that had been formed during the preceding violent decades. Indeed, the Kemalist government continued with Turkification policies. It introduced various measures aimed at the economic and social marginalization of non-Muslims and the emergence of a Turkish bourgeoisie. This highlights Turkism's ideological and institutional continuity into the newly founded Turkish Republic. As noted by Grigoriadis:

> Following the introduction of the new Turkish Civil Code, leaders of the three recognized minorities [Armenians, Greeks and Jews] were forced in 1925 to renounce the rights outlined in the Treaty of Lausanne. In 1926 a law imposed the use of Turkish in all business correspondence

and transactions. In 1932 a law identified a list of professions that would henceforth be banned to non-Muslims for reasons of national security. As a result, thousands of non-Muslim professionals had to leave Turkey.

(2012, 284)

We can see that impunity provided a foundation for recurring collective and state violence perpetuated by Kemalist forces (both before and after the establishment of the Turkish Republic). Impunity became a reward for those perpetrators "who embraced the emerging nationalist movement and joined its ranks" (Akçam and Dadrian 2011, 1). Even though some perpetrators were prosecuted and sentenced to death (albeit often *in absentia*), the fact that these sentences were retrospectively deemed null and void by the new Kemalist government sent a strong signal to both previous members of the CUP and nationalists supporting Kemal.[33] This shows that the national and international community failed to (a) enforce legal justice and (b) transform institutions to guarantee non-recurrence. In fact, convicted criminals were and continue to be glorified as national heroes. This gives survivors and their descendants persistent reasons for insecurity.[34] The continuation of Turkism and Turkification policies that accompanied the genocide and proceeding nation-state building both (a) present an ongoing credible threat to the groups targeted in the genocide and (b) continue to find targets for collective and state violence in the Republican era.[35] Importantly, these post-genocide conditions coerced Armenians and other groups targeted during genocide to act in ways that further their own oppression, as I will elaborate specifically from Chapter 3 onwards.[36]

1.2.2.3 Right to reparations

According to the UNCHR report, the right to reparations "shall cover all injuries suffered by victims; it shall include measures of restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, and satisfaction as provided by international law" (2005, 17). Besides recognizing crimes and legally prosecuting perpetrators, the Treaty of Sèvres also stressed reparations for "Turkish subjects of non-Turkish race". It urged the Turkish government to recognize that enforced conversions to Islam were invalid[37] and to recognize the injustice of the 1915 law regarding Abandoned Properties (see footnote 24). Article 142 states the following:

> In order to repair so far as possible the wrongs inflicted on individuals in the course of the massacres perpetrated in Turkey during the war, the Turkish Government undertakes to afford all the assistance in its power

or in that of the Turkish authorities in the search for and deliverance of all persons, of whatever race or religion, who have disappeared, been carried off, interned or placed in captivity since November 1, 1914.

(Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 1924a)

Regarding the return of illegally seized properties of the deported, Article 144 states that the

Turkish Government solemnly undertakes to facilitate to the greatest possible extent the return to their homes and re-establishment in their businesses of the Turkish subjects of non-Turkish race who have been forcibly driven from their homes by fear of massacre or any other form of pressure since January 1, 1914. It recognises that any immovable or movable property of the said Turkish subjects or of the communities to which they belong, which can be recovered, must be restored to them as soon as possible, in whatever hands it may be found.

(Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 1924a)

Reparations in contexts of transitional justice do not just involve returning or compensating for (movable or immovable) properties that were seized.[38] Other injuries must be addressed and repaired. This calls for morally, socially, and epistemically reparative measures. Among them are official apologies, memorials, or museums. These can provide a locus for public remembrance and education. As mentioned, such forms of reparation require *recognition* of the injustice. But this is absent post the establishment of the Turkish Republic. In fact, the 1922 military coup by Mustafa Kemal's nationalist movement was accompanied by a dismantling of the first memorial dedicated to the victims of the Armenian genocide (erected in 1919 in Constantinople).[39] I shall argue that *epistemic injuries* must also be repaired. The *right to know* offers a starting point for thinking about epistemic injuries and what the respective epistemic reparations should entail.

1.2.2.4   Right to know

The right to know is an individual and collective right. Following the UNCHR, it consists of the following general principles:

The Inalienable Right to the Truth: Every people has the inalienable right to know the truth about past events concerning the perpetration of heinous crimes and about the circumstances and reasons that led, through massive or systematic violations, to the perpetration of those

crimes. Full and effective exercise of the right to the truth provides a vital safeguard against the recurrence of violations.

The Duty to Preserve Memory: A people's knowledge of the history of its oppression is part of its heritage and, as such, must be ensured by appropriate measures in fulfilment of the State's duty to preserve archives and other evidence concerning violations of human rights and humanitarian law and to facilitate knowledge of those violations. Such measures shall be aimed at preserving the collective memory from extinction and, in particular, at guarding against the development of revisionist and negationist arguments.

The Victims' Right to Know: Irrespective of any legal proceedings, victims and their families have the imprescriptible right to know the truth about the circumstances in which violations took place and, in the event of death or disappearance, the victims' fate.

Guarantees to Give Effect to the Right to Know: States must take appropriate action, including measures necessary to ensure the independent and effective operation of the judiciary, to give effect to the right to know. Appropriate measures to ensure this right may include nonjudicial processes that complement the role of the judiciary. Societies that have experienced heinous crimes perpetrated on a massive or systematic basis may benefit in particular from the creation of a truth commission or other commission of inquiry to establish the facts surrounding those violations so that the truth may be ascertained and to prevent the disappearance of evidence. Regardless of whether a State establishes such a body, it must ensure the preservation of, and access to, archives concerning violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

(UNCHR 2005, 7–8)

In the context of the Armenian genocide, perhaps the biggest blow to the right to know was the Turkish Republic's establishment and the concomitant creation of a new Kemalist Turkish Republican historiography and identity. Kemal's Turkish Republican identity, with its dissociation from a "shameful Ottoman past" and imposed Turkification reforms, misrecognizes past atrocities, social-historical reality, and the legitimate existence of national minorities. Minorities and their histories of oppression quickly become national security issues.

The topic of epistemic rights and their violation through genocide denial is at the centre of this book. I shall discuss these topics in depth from the next chapter onwards. I have argued elsewhere (Altanian 2022) that the UNCHR's notion of the *right to know* focuses too narrowly on victims' right *to knowledge* about injustice. I shall, consequently, defend the following claim throughout the rest of this book: *Epistemic rights should*

include a recognition of victims as knowledgeable, or, more generally, as equal epistemic contributors to knowledge about and understanding of injustice. This broadly corresponds to Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which highlights a person's right to not only *seek and receive*, but also to *impart* information.

1.2.3   Long-term "consolidative" denial

Impunity provides a basis for long-term, "consolidative" denial. Here, "perpetrators, their supporters, and typically a critical mass of their progeny seek to consolidate the gains made through genocide" (Theriault 2017, 54). Such gains include material benefits in land and moveable wealth, but also increased political, demographic, and military power. There is also a "conceptual dimension" (55) related to preserving a positive national self-image and rehabilitating the perpetrator's image and group's identity. Along with "geopolitical pressure and exploitation of the weakened economic, political, social, and cultural position of victim groups, denial is a central tool for advancing consolidation" (54). Denial consolidates relations of domination and thereby preserves the attitudes, practices, material conditions, and even institutions that initially enabled the genocide. It does so by *obscuring and normalizing* such relations. This undermines processes of democratization, including cultivating a democratic culture based on respect for shared values such as human rights, freedom, and equality.

As mentioned, long-term denial lays the grounds for ongoing harms and threats of further collective and state violence. Armenians' ongoing political powerlessness in Turkey is apparent when we consider that Garo Paylan was one of the first (and until recently only) Armenian members of the Turkish Parliament in decades. He was the only parliamentarian who has persistently spoken out about the Armenian genocide. He has, in turn, faced death threats and attempts at *silencing*.[40] On 21 July 2017, the Turkish Parliament's constitutional committee passed a bill banning any mention of the Armenian genocide.[41]

Long-term denial became particularly prevalent after the 1980 military coup. The Turkish government then embarked on an international and professionalized path of genocide denialism. It did so by providing

> additional training for Turkish diplomats and officially encourage[d] historians and intellectuals of statecraft to respond to the Armenian claims of genocide as a "problem" of the Turkish state.
>
> (Aybak 2016, 126)

Aybak has recounted his experiences as a student at the Faculty of Political Science's Diplomacy and International Relations Department in Ankara

during the early 1980s. Students had to attend a newly introduced faculty seminar entitled "the Armenian Question" (Turkish: "Ermeni sorunu"). Aybak writes:

> Since all dissident academics were dismissed by the military government this was convened by senior or retired ambassadors. In the 1980s, a substantial number of pamphlets also started to surface, using official Ottoman sources. These were not attempting to write a critical history but were polemical documents mainly sponsored and published by the Turkish government and institutions of the state to challenge the Armenian claims. Some of them were simply selectively reproduced copies of certain Ottoman Documents. These publications largely intended to claim that the Ottoman Government deported the Armenians from the war zones for security reasons and that the regime went to considerable trouble to protect the lives and properties of the Armenians.
>
> (Ibid.)

The military coup had broad consequences for academic freedom in Turkey. Higher education activities in Turkey are supervised and effectively controlled by the Council of Higher Education, which was created after the coup. This was when "denial of academic freedom was enshrined in law… by Turkey's military rulers" (Ugur 2016, 4). Article 4 of the Higher Education Act

> provides that the aim of higher education is to "educate students so that they… will be conscious of the privilege of being a Turk" and "enhance the welfare of the Turkish state as a whole, conducive to national and territorial indivisibility".
>
> (4–5)

This motif is included in the 1982 Turkish Constitution, which demands ideological conformity from (public and private) institutions. Article 130 states that scientific research must not engage "in activities against the existence and independence of the State, and against the integrity and indivisibility of the nation and the country". The Council of Higher Education's influence became most apparent in January 2016, when *Academics for Peace* signed a petition protesting state violence against Kurds in Eastern Turkey. Academics – especially the petitions' signatories – then came under severe attack. As Ugur (2016) suggests, the persecution of *Academics for Peace* has exposed the institutionalized denial of academic freedom in Turkey.

Government attempts to "counter Armenian claims" gained new momentum around the time of the Armenian genocide's centenary in 2015. This involved the

whole community of state bureaucrats, leaders, foreign policy experts, historians, diplomats and advisers who make claims to "expert opinion and legitimate knowledge" regarding the Armenian "problem".

(Aybak 2016, 132)

Aybak notes that this mobilization effort constitutes a form of state-sponsored racism. Here,

racist discourse is produced and reproduced by diplomatic and geopolitical statecraft to sustain the continuity between state sovereignty, cultural/racial identity, history and territorial space as a defensive ideology.

(126)

The Turkish government implemented processes that rationalize and institute governing norms and expectations of ethno-racial supremacism (I return to this topic in the next chapter).

Long-term denial still obstructs material reparation efforts today. This is evident in the difficulties Armenians have when attempting to reclaim seized immovable assets. In 2012, the Hrant Dink Foundation published a significant report on Armenians' seized properties, their history and present status.[42] Moreover, the Armenian Genocide Reparations Study Group was initiated in 2007, which in March 2015 published a thorough report titled *Resolution with Justice: Reparations for the Armenian Genocide*.[43] This shows the several recent efforts to identify Armenian movable and immovable property. However, legal demands by Armenian organizations and political or religious institutions for material restitution or reparations on behalf of descendants have largely failed (at least when addressed to the Turkish state).[44] The Armenian Church took the first legal action against Turkey to return illegally seized properties. The lawsuit was submitted to the European Court of Human Rights on 25 April 2015, and demanded the return of the Armenian spiritual centre in *Sis*. However, the Court rejected the lawsuit "for failure to exhaust domestic remedies" (Gharibian 2018).

Long-term denial also thwarts attempts at so-called symbolic reparations such as apologies and memorials. Turkey (and Turkish communities abroad) have repeatedly attacked and criticized motions to establish memorials, while "apologies" are used to promote denialism (I elaborate on this in Section 4.3.2).[45]

1.3   The epistemic perniciousness of genocide denial

The above discussion of denial as a constant feature of genocide has brought a variety of resultant harms to light. To summarize, denial serves to dehumanize the target group and legitimize their social exclusion during

the preceding and execution phases. This paves the way for the group's destruction. In the immediate aftermath, denial serves to achieve and maintain impunity. This violates the victims' right to justice, guarantees of non-recurrence, their right to know, and the right to reparations. Long-term denial maintains relations of domination, which consolidates the putatively inferior status of genocide survivors and their descendants.

From an epistemological point of view, denial produces and maintains distortions of both social reality and normativity. This, in turn, provides rationalizing justifications for wrongdoing. Accomplishing this requires the continuous discrediting, distortion, and misinterpretation of the target group's epistemic contributions. They are supposed to be both morally *and* epistemically distrusted. This brings those at the "losing end" of denial into view. These are the silenced, those whose words and actions are doubted, distorted, distrusted, and misinterpreted. Thus, producing and maintaining ignorance is only one epistemologically relevant aspect of denial. Another relates to an intrinsic epistemic perniciousness. In this section, I briefly motivate the need for an epistemological perspective on the pernicious dimensions and implications of genocide denial.

Not all genocides are accompanied by impunity and long-term denial. My reason for focusing on cases of long-term denial is that they raise the crucial, but non-evident question of whether and how future members of the target group are thereby subjected to epistemic injustice. As mentioned in the preface, my motivation for analysing the epistemic harms of genocide denialism stems from the common view that genocide denial is harmful because it (a) violates the dignity of survivors and descendants and (b) constitutes an assault on truth and memory. As such, the key question I aim to answer is how genocide denial violates human dignity qua assaults on truth and memory. Human dignity can be violated in a variety of ways. However, a prominent view is that genocide denial represents a violation of human dignity when it takes the form of racist hate speech and then, granted criminal legislation, becomes legally relevant. I shall briefly present this view. I then explicate how my account diverges from such (narrow) cases. I intend to offer a broader account of the conditions under which genocide denial constitutes a violation of human dignity.

Human dignity is a normative concept, one that comes with a variety of definitions. However, it is commonly held that human dignity is inviolable and that it must be respected and protected. It is both a fundamental right in itself and constitutes the real basis of fundamental human rights. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights acknowledges this kind of role for human dignity. Its preamble states that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world". There are various potential affronts to human dignity. These commonly

include statements that demean, humiliate, or ridicule individuals or groups on account of their origins, status, or beliefs. Other examples include disseminating negative prejudices against certain social groups or intimating that members of those groups are inferior. It might also involve restricting individuals' or a group's equal participation in political processes owing to their beliefs, status, or origins. Affronts to human dignity can also relate to degrading living conditions and the deprivation of basic needs (Schachter 1983, 852).

In legal discourse, a common way to deal with instances of genocide denial is to treat it as hateful and socially exclusionary speech. Criminalizing genocide denial usually forms part of anti-discrimination and anti-racism law. Importantly, the underlying idea is that denying genocide is not merely the expression of an opinion. It also enacts or delivers a form of what Lynne Tirrell calls *linguistic violence*. Linguistic violence is part and parcel of genocidal violence. Tirrell refers to it as

> violence enacted or delivered through discursive behaviors, that is, through speech acts that would ordinarily constitute social or psychological damage to the targeted person, as well as through speech acts that generate permissions for physical damage, including assault and death.
>
> (2012, 176)

I contend that genocide denial is a form of discursive behaviour constituting social or psychological damage to a targeted person. It can also take the form of a speech act that generates permissions for physical damage. This is not to say that all instances of harmful genocide denial take the form of explicit denigration and hateful speech (with the intention to incite further violence). Genocide deniers usually couch their denial in terms that are not obviously informed by hateful, racist or other socially discriminatory attitudes. To be properly assessed, instances of genocide denial must be contextualized.

Which belief system is the denier protecting or maintaining through his denial? What assumptions towards the target underlie his opposition to information or evidence that runs counter to his belief? Is the denier perhaps using "coded language", historically informed coded messages of hatred? While the intentions of genocide deniers are often intransparent, we can (to a certain degree) make inferences from the general political, epistemic, and discursive context within which the denial is embedded. For example, the claim that Armenians were "peacefully relocated" to the Syrian desert for reasons of "military security" and were to be protected until they could return might appear to be a neutral statement about historical events. However, it conveys the message that Armenians,

as a collective, posed an actual security threat, one that provoked a "justified military response". Seen in the context of genocide denialism, the statement promotes the *provocation thesis*. It characterizes Armenians as subversive elements, as an ongoing national security "problem". Such characterizations have the potential to incite further hostility against Armenians, to encourage their social exclusion, and to thereby violate their dignity.

Given my previous discussion of denial as constituting a long-term legacy, we can reasonably assume that the beliefs of racial superiority and attitudes of ethno-religious hatred that initially enabled genocide continue to be expressed. In contexts where blatant expressions of group hatred are no longer politically acceptable, they might be expressed in subtle or implicit ways through denial. But it is especially salient in contexts characterized by *institutional discrimination* associated with formal policies that feed (and are, in turn, fed by) *cultural discrimination*. As Dovidio et al. note, the latter refers to discrimination that is

> deeply embedded in the fibre of a culture's history, standards and normative ways of behaving. ...We [...] define cultural discrimination as beliefs about the superiority of a dominant group's cultural heritage over those of other groups, and the expression of such beliefs in individual actions or institutional policies.
>
> (2010, 11)

This is a reasonable characterization given that Armenians in Turkey continue to deal with verbal violence, derogation, and stigmatizing expressive treatment. In fact, calling someone "Armenian" is still commonly used as an insult in Turkish society.[46]

The above discussion suggests that oppression is present when a social group experiences institutional discrimination and social exclusion. I am especially concerned with a pertinent type of socially discriminatory exclusion called *epistemic exclusion*. This is the discriminatory exclusion of a group or members of a group from their broader epistemic community and the cooperative epistemic practices that constitute that community. In the proceeding analysis, I shall, therefore, be concerned first and foremost with epistemically relevant discursive practices, involving what Fricker (2015) calls our social-epistemic "capability of epistemic contribution". I shall be concerned with its normative evaluation and with the external *disabling* conditions that constitute epistemic oppression.

The idea that there is an epistemic dimension to genocide denial's harm is not entirely surprising. In line with the UNCHR framework and transitional justice scholarship, it is acknowledged that victims, survivors, and descendants have a distinct *epistemic right*: the *right to know*, including a *right to memory*. This is both an individual and a collective right (recall

Section 1.2.2.4). Harms related to epistemic rights violations are usually spelled out in consequential terms or what Fricker (2007) calls secondary (epistemic and practical) harms to individuals and society more generally. If we follow the general principles formulated in the UN report, then a failure to fulfil the right to know is likely to result in (a) a loss of collective memory and thereby cultural heritage, (b) the facilitation of revisionist and denialist arguments, and (c) the recurrence of violations. Thus, one reason to take genocide denial epistemologically seriously relates to knowledge production more generally or, rather, ignorance production and its various consequent harms.

Historian Maria Karlsson has stressed the importance of taking genocide denial epistemologically seriously. In relation to historiographical knowledge production, she writes:

> Described as "rape of history", "an assault on truth and memory", or as a case of pseudo-history, genocide denial is often understood and explained as an epistemological "other", and when approaching it most scholars tend to resort back to the secure grounds of objectivity and truth. Denial influences scholarly history whether we like it or not… Genocide denial has had the effect of turning the study of past atrocities away from controversial questions and perspectives, comparisons and analyses, towards mere description and fact – focusing on continuously verifying documents, finding reliable demographic data, and counting victims even when the events as such have been proven beyond doubt.
>
> (2015, 12)

Karlsson is emphasizing how genocide denial influences which questions we ask and which perspectives and sources of evidence we attend to when answering them. Denial can cause us to overlook important questions and insights. Karlsson's comparative analysis of Western historiographical denialism about the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide demonstrates a variety of common denial patterns. In both cases, historians repeatedly deploy certain arguments or rhetorical devices. We can expect that these patterns and practices also apply to other instances of genocide denial. Her examples include the following (Karlsson 2015, 190–192):

Hard denial:

- Stating that "there was no 'genocide', nothing happened".
- Stating that "the genocide is a myth".
- Stating that "there were no gas chambers/death marches".

Rationalization and trivialization:

- Adopting an ethical stand; claiming that "all peoples of the Empire/of Europe suffered during the First/Second World War".
- Adopting the provocation thesis; stating that "Armenians formed a revolutionary minority, and provoked the Ottomans to take action" or that "the Jews were a belligerent part of WWII, and Germany therefore had to take care of this internal enemy".

Relativization:

- Stating that "the Muslim population suffered more because more Muslims than Armenians died during the war" or "Allied bombings meant that Germans and Austrians suffered most during the war".
- Inverting roles: insinuating that "Armenians were the perpetrators and Muslims were the victims" or "Jews planned to exterminate Germans; Germans were the true victims of genocide".

Self-victimization:

- Self-confirmatory behaviour: claiming to be a "seeker of truth" and having been made to personally suffer because of it.
- Denigrating others: claiming that scholars writing on the Armenian genocide or Holocaust are "partisans" of the Armenian or Jewish cause, and hence unreliable.

I shall argue that the patterns of denial Karlsson calls "soft denial" (as opposed to "hard denial") are especially pernicious. This is because they generate and maintain various kinds of distortions about genocide; they have thus decidedly pernicious effects on societal discourse and understanding more generally. Soft denial will affect what one says about the genocide and how one says it. It will affect which perspectives and sources of evidence are considered when beliefs about the genocide are generated or maintained. It also instigates continuous efforts to refute deniers' "soft denial" arguments. We might, then, fail to examine more important issues or to properly recognize the evidential value of official state archives *and* survivor testimonies. Evidence-based responses to genocide denial and efforts to refute deniers are anyway futile. Denial is precisely not rooted in the absence of evidence.[47] Denial requires sustained efforts at rationalizing the dominating belief system and continually *silencing* members of the target group.

Misunderstandings[48] propagated by a government pose significant challenges to a community of moral and epistemic agents. It becomes

near impossible to (a) engage as equals in practices of collective reasoning and (b) develop accurate, shared understandings of past and present social relations.[49] This introduces a second and related way in which we should take genocide denial epistemologically seriously: genocide denial also constitutes a primary or intrinsic epistemic wrong, that is, wrong to one's status as an epistemic agent. I flesh out this idea from Chapter 3 onwards, focusing specifically on *members of the formerly targeted group*.

In the next chapter, I look at the epistemological problems of genocide denialism. I identify the specific epistemic disadvantages that society – especially members of the formerly *perpetrating* group – incur through genocide denialism.

Notes

1 See, e.g., Chalk (1994), Charny (1994), Bauer (2009), May (2010). See also *Revised and Updated Report on the Question of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (Whitaker Report), UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1985/6, 2 July 1985, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/108352

2 See Art. 264 "Bundesgesetz über die Änderung von Bundesgesetzen zur Umsetzung des Römer Statuts des Internationalen Strafgerichtshofes", https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/official-compilation/2010/4963.pdf

3 The principle of legality states the following: "No one may be accused or convicted of a criminal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a criminal offence under national or international law at the time it was committed, nor may a heavier penalty be imposed than that which was applicable at the time the criminal offence was committed." https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule101

4 I would even argue that the legal arena is an ineffective deterrent against genocide. This is substantiated by the Genocide Convention's lack of preventive force (see also Chalk and Jonassohn 1990, 11–12; Maddox 2015).

5 This leaves open the possibility that the meaning or significance of the concept can change over time and need not remain true to the historical purposes for which it was coined. The concept might even become meaningless in the future. This is, however, not our present concern.

6 Language oppression, or so-called "linguistic assimilation", takes on a crucial role here. This is the case even though different states participating in drafting the Genocide Convention have disputed its inclusion therein (see Roche 2022a). The 6th Committee on the Draft Convention on Genocide ultimately deleted an article dealing with cultural genocide, specifically as it relates to language. According to Roche, this led to guaranteed impunity "for all states [carrying] out assimilationist policies against linguistic minorities". See Roche (2022b) for an account of how linguistic oppression can be fatal.

7 Lemkin makes a similar point: "Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves" (1944, 79).

8 See Barnes (2005) for an analysis of the "functional utility" of genocide, the different categories of intent and the motives that give rise to this intent.

9 See Chalk and Jonassohn (1990) for more on the idea that the target group is subjectively defined by the perpetrators.

10 Note that I am employing a relational conception of self-determination. This will become clearer in my discussion of hermeneutical and testimonial oppression.

11 I shall argue in Chapter 2 that the ideology of Turkism/Turkish supremacism essentializes both the perpetrator group (in-group) and the victim group (out-group).

12 Consider the Armenian genocide victims/survivors who were deported or murdered despite (a) thinking of themselves as *Ottomans*, (b) contributing to the 1908 Young Turk revolution, or (c) having fought in the Ottoman Army during the First World War. This contradicts the perpetrator's image of Armenians as "treacherous backstabbers and divisive national threats" (a portrayal that parallels anti-Semitism).

13 For an account focusing on the case of the Rwandan genocide, see Tirrell (2012).

14 See Kaiser (2010) for a historical overview of the Armenian genocide contextualized within wider Ottoman demographic policies and late Ottoman history.

15 Especially the *Hamidian massacres* (1894–1897) and the *Adana massacre* (1909).

16 See Suny (2018) for an argument that the *Hamidian massacres* should be analytically distinguished from the later genocide.

17 See Şeker (2013) for a discussion of military conquest, colonization through deportation and settlement as the primary means by which the Ottoman Empire was formed.

18 See also Kaiser (1998) for an account of the German construction of a dominant paradigm about Ottoman Armenians.

19 German essentialist and racist anti-Armenian discourse presented "both a duplicate and an extension of modern German anti-Semitism" (Ihrig 2016, 60; see also 114). The perception of Armenians as "true Jews of the Orient" was prominent in the last decades of Imperial Germany. Anti-Armenian rhetoric continued well into the Third Reich, where the Nazi party drew lessons from the Turkish experience. These ideas were expressed in the weekly paper of the SA ("Sturmabteilung"), *Heimatland* (Ihrig 2016, 320–332).

20 The term *Hamidian massacre* remains imprecise. It does not adequately account for the complexity, scope and importance of this episode of collective violence that was inflicted on Armenians and Assyrians under *Hamidian* rule. As Adjemian and Nichanian point out, it "massively destabilized Armenian communities in Eastern Anatolia, resulting in waves of conversions, socio-economic devastation, and also internal and external migrations, especially to Constantinople and the urban centers of Anatolia, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Egypt, and the Americas" (2018, 19).

21 Balancar's (2013) collection of survivor testimonies from Diyarbakir also attests to sustained patterns of prejudice and the use of "infidel" [tr. *gavur*] and "Armenian" as derogatory terms. A neighbourhood in Diyarbakir's *Sur* district that had been mostly populated by Christians and Jews was called *gavur mahallesi*, the "neighbourhood of infidels". See Kaiser (2014) for a historical study of the extermination of Armenians in Diyarbakir.

22 See Steinberg (2018) for an account of Armenian-British relations and Armenian attempts to have their concerns and social grievances heard on the international stage.

23 See Aksakal (2008) for a historical account of the Ottoman leaders' decision to enter the war. See Kieser (2018) for a discussion of Talaat Bey's central role in the genocide.

24 See Kaiser (2006) for an account of the fictional character of Ottoman government policies' legality. This applies to both the "deportation law" and the law of so-called "abandoned properties". See Kaiser (2019) for a historical study of the provincial officials' systematic role in the massacres and the extortions of movable properties accompanying deportations in Erzurum province. See Pauer-Studer (2020) for an account of distortions of legal normativity in the Nazi German context.

25 My translation from the original French: "Le génocide arménien fut préparé par le mensonge et accompli dans le mensonge."

26 This corresponds to what Pauer-Studer and Velleman (2011) refer to as the distortion of morality at the level of its social articulation in the Third Reich. Nazi perpetrators could maintain false moral self-conceptions by drawing on a morally inversed normative framework "brought about by an ideological re-interpretation of moral concepts such as equality, respect, and even the Aristotelian mean" (352). This was not a problem of the general absence of fundamental moral concepts or principles.

27 See Hovannisian (1986, 115–119) for some examples.

28 This phrase "encompasses grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, and of Additional Protocol I thereto of 1977 and other violations of international humanitarian law that are crimes under international law, genocide, crimes against humanity, and other violations of internationally protected human rights that are crimes under international law and/or which international law requires States to penalize, such as torture, enforced disappearance, extrajudicial execution, and slavery" (UNCHR 2005, 6).

29 The military tribunals also sentenced Kemal himself, supporters of the nationalist movement and sixteen of those attempting to assassinate the Grand Vizier (Akçam and Dadrian 2011, 261).

30 This problem might also apply to recent cases, such as questioning the legitimacy of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and its conviction of perpetrators of the Srebrenica genocide (a genocide still officially denied by the Serb government and nationalists).

31 For example, Article 145 emphasizes that all Turkish nationals are equal before the law and enjoy the same civil and political rights (including access to public employments, functions and honours, and engagement in all professions and industries).

32 Minorities that were unrecognized by the Turkish state included Assyrians/Syriacs/Chaldeans, Yezidis and Alevis.

33 Some of the main perpetrators, including Talaat Pasha, escaped to Germany.

34 There are graves of honour for perpetrators of the genocide who fled to Germany. Talaat Pasha was assassinated by Soghomon Tehlirian in 1921 in Berlin. He was initially buried there at the Turkish cemetery but had his corpse returned to Istanbul in 1943 under the National Socialist regime. He was given a state funeral at the honorary Monument of Liberty in Şişli (where Enver Pasha is also buried). Various streets in Turkey still carry Talaat Pasha's name.

35 The imposition of this "social order" has repeatedly led to policies of massacre, destruction, and assimilation during the Republican era. These policies relate to population exchanges, expropriations, pillages, and the like. Besides Greeks, Armenians, and Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac Christians, victims include Alevis,

Alevi Kurds or leftist political groups that have historically opposed (Sunni Muslim-)Turkish ethno-nationalism (see Astourian and Kévorkian 2021).

36 For in-depth historical studies on this point, see Suciyan (2016), and Ekmekçioğlu (2016), especially its fourth chapter on "A Tamed Minority".

37 See Kaiser (2018) for a historical study of forced conversions of Armenians during the genocide.

38 See Kurt (2018) for a historical study of administrative regulations and implementation processes related to the restitution of Armenian properties at the local level.

39 The monument was established on the premises of the Pangaltı Armenian Cemetery. The cemetery was confiscated and demolished by the Turkish government in the 1930s. It was located in today's well-known Gezi Park near Istanbul's Taksim Square.

40 Paylan also filed a criminal complaint against a Turkish politician over threats against him. Paylan referred specifically to "incitement to commit a crime", "incitement to public hatred and enmity", and "insult and threat" (Cupolo 2021). Since the 2023 elections, the politician is no longer member of the Turkish parliament.

41 "Turkish Parliament Committee Bans Mentioning of Armenian Genocide in Parliament", *The Armenian Weekly*, 24 July 2017, https://armenianweekly.com/2017/07/24/turkish-parliament-committee-bans-mentioning-of-armenian-genocide-in-parliament/

42 The project was published as a book titled *The 2012 Declaration: The Seized Properties of Armenian Foundations in Istanbul*. See https://hrantdink.org/en/bolis/activities/projects/cultural-heritage/14-2012-declaration-the-seized-properties-of-armenian-foundations

43 Complete report available at https://www.armeniangenocidereparations.info/?page_id=229

44 Some lawsuits against insurance companies have been successful. An example is a 2004 lawsuit against New York Life Insurance Company and a 2005 lawsuit against the French insurance company AXA.

45 See Erbal (2012) for a critical analysis of political discourses around memory and monuments in Turkey. Erbal uses the example of Aksoy's "Monument of Humanity". Another example is the Armenian genocide memorial in Geneva, Switzerland; see "Long-Delayed, Disputed Armenian Memorial Unveiled in Geneva", *swissinfo*, 14 April 2018, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/commemoration_long-delayed--disputed-armenian-memorial-unveiled-in-geneva/44047132

46 Turkish-Armenian journalist Hayko Bağdat was fined for *ironically* calling the mayor of Ankara an "Armenian" on Twitter. In response to a court case, Bağdat gave the following explanation for why he called the mayor an "Armenian": "Whenever he grabs a microphone or takes the keyboard in his hands, he calls his political rivals, the voters of his political rivals… journalists, and anyone he is angry with, 'Armenian.' He constantly says they are traitors because they are 'Armenians' or they have 'Armenian' roots, as if all elements making trouble for this country must somehow have a relationship to 'Armenianness'" (cited in Benli 2015). Anti-Armenian sentiments are also expressed in relation to the Kurdish struggle. Armenians are sometimes even identified with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). During intensified state repression of Kurds beginning in 2015, a man exclaimed the following at a Turkish serviceman's state funeral: "The PKK are all Armenians, but are hiding. I am Kurdish and a Muslim, but I am not an Armenian. The end of

Armenians is near. God willingly, we will bring an end to them. Oh Armenians, whatever you do it is in vain, we know you well" (my translation from Turkish original, "'PKK'lıların hepsi Ermeni!'", *Sabah*, 2 September 2015). These examples demonstrate how Armenians are still blamed when anything threatens the alleged unity and indivisibility of the "Turkish nation". See Tremblay (2015) for further discussion.

47 I shall use "rationalization" as an umbrella term for the different "soft denial" strategies Karlsson identifies. Relativization, trivialization and so on present different forms of denial and rationalization at work.

48 Misunderstanding typically involves ignorance or false beliefs. But it can also involve failing to appreciate or identify the salience, significance, and importance of what is known.

49 As Pohlhaus Jr points out (and as will be elaborated in the next chapters), "accuracy and epistemic justice are inherently linked" (2012, 733). In other words, one's account of the world being accurate and robust depends on epistemically just institutions and conditions.

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2 An epistemology of genocide denialism

In the previous chapter, I argued that long-term genocide denial consolidates domination. It is particularly robust against a background of impunity. However, genocide denial thereby constitutes not only social and political harms. It also constitutes epistemic harms. I shall argue in the following chapters that the nature of these epistemic harms differs depending on the epistemic agents' social locations.

In this chapter, I focus on the epistemic disadvantages that mostly affect individuals in positions of dominant privilege and how this leads to sustained patterns and practices of genocide denial. My primary epistemological concern is, then, not with mere instances of denial. Rather, it is with the conditions that facilitate the collective efforts and support characteristic of genocide *denialism* (i.e., systematic denial). In what follows, I first introduce a distinction between denial as a psycho-social phenomenon (rather than a mere verbal strategy) and denialism as a collective achievement. This will provide a nuanced understanding of denial, one that can help to identify (systematic) denial's epistemically harmful implications. I then clarify the relationship between denial, denialism, and ignorance. I do so by drawing on (a) agential and structural conceptions of ignorance and (b) insights from vice epistemology. This allows me to establish an account of genocide denialism as an "epistemology of ignorance" that contributes to the development of epistemic vices on behalf of those in positions of dominant privilege. This renders their epistemic agency dysfunctional. I aim to show how this account manifests in the Turkish institutional context, arguing that genocide denialism rationalizes and normalizes the governing norms and expectations of Turkism (i.e., ethno-racial supremacism). This provides the empirical and explanatory basis for my account of the wrong of genocide denialism in terms of epistemic oppression developed in the later chapters, since it (at least partly) explains the persistency and reliability of ignorance that constitutes such oppression.

For the purposes of this book, I do not provide a comprehensive review of research on the psychology and sociology of genocide denial.[1] My primary aim is to identify and elaborate the epistemic harms constituted by genocide denialism. In so doing, I shall focus on those wronged by genocide denialism. I will not attempt to fully explain how and why people or groups of people deny genocides, which is an empirical question. It is, however, necessary to attend to the "psychologically deeper" problem of (being in) denial (rather than just denying as a form of lying or verbal strategy). It is necessary to account for, among other things, how leading agents of denialism might intentionally exploit the human tendency towards self-defensive denial. To consolidate domination, these agents produce rationalizations, nurture self-deception, and promote the defensive attitudes that ground sustained practices of denial. The case of genocide denialism demonstrates as much. To emphasize its importance, I shall focus on genocide denialism as it is rooted in both (institutional and individual) epistemic vices and active ignorance.

2.1   Denial and denialism

2.1.1   *Motivated cognition and rationalization*

As mentioned, "denial" can refer to two things:

1 Denial as an emotionally motivated, cognitive defence mechanism. Here, someone is *in denial* about something.
2 Denial as a verbal strategy or communicative act. Here, someone *is denying* something.

The latter can be rooted in the former but need not be. If accused criminals deny their violations in court while being fully convinced of their innocence, then they are in denial about their culpability or the facts substantiating their violations. However, they can also deny their violations without falsely believing in their innocence to escape accountability. Here, denial is a form of *lying*, a deliberate distortion of the facts to gain some presumed advantage.[2] This is different from someone being *in denial* about their culpability. This makes denial more complex; it is a matter of *motivated reasoning*.

Both senses of denial are relevant to my analysis. Their effects in terms of epistemic oppression do not depend on the denying agent's internal motives and cognitive processes. Both senses contribute to the generation and maintenance of the ignorance that grounds epistemic oppression (whether in the form of deliberate lies, deception, and disinformation,[3] or misrecognition rooted in motivated ignorance and self-deception). However, analysing the conditions that encourage agents to *be in denial* calls for a more nuanced

approach to the (social and political) epistemic dimensions of genocide denialism. Such an approach must go deeper on a human level, so to say. Among other things, it allows us to highlight inhibitions on deniers' self-conceptions. We can, then, notice denialism's harmful effects on those we would generally consider as situated in advantageous positions of dominant privilege. This is my primary concern in this chapter.

I shall premise my working understanding of denial (in the sense of *being in denial*) on Adrian Bardon's (2020) psycho-social conception. For Bardon, denial is a special case of motivated reasoning, one that entails two components:

1 *Motivated cognition*, which is "the unconscious tendency to process information in ways that primarily serve non-epistemic interests or needs, that is, motives other than the acquisition of accurate or true belief" (4).
2 *Overt rationalization*, which is "the process of retroactively inventing defensive justifications for holding those beliefs formed via motivated cognition" (ibid.). It is a specific way of responding to or behaving towards factual claims, information, or evidence that challenges one's beliefs.

In both being-in-denial and denying-as-lying, we presuppose that there are facts of the matter or that there is something to be known or adequately understood. However, unlike denying-as-lying, being-in-denial precludes the acceptance of the relevant fact, knowledge, or interpretation. A denier actively tries to defend and maintain their false belief(s), ignorance, and misunderstandings.

Bardon describes the cognitive processes underlying denial and motivated cognition as follows:

> Motivated cognition is the sincere confounding of an emotional need – usually of a self-serving, self-protective, and/or social identity-defining sort – to hold a certain view of things with having good reasons to hold that view. To be in denial, then, is to engage in a kind of psychological projection – that is, *to unconsciously mistake the emotional value of denying something for actually having good reasons to deny it.*
>
> (30)

Various powerful emotional needs can encourage denial. These include the need for affirmation, status, security, and/or meaning.[4] These needs have a collective or social dimension. I shall illustrate as much when I turn to denialism as a collective achievement later in this chapter.

The collective or social dimension is also relevant to the second component of denial: *rationalization*. Rationalization is especially problematic from an epistemological point of view. The denier actively participates in

epistemic practices such as argumentation, asking questions, gathering evidence, providing reasons, and so on. By doing so, he displays both his doxastic state (having a false belief) and his epistemic attitudes (e.g., being closed-minded or arrogant). At the level of rationalization, the person in denial actively maintains, contributes to, or promotes ignorance. Such rationalizations are primarily based on practical rather than epistemic reasons, and they necessarily involve the avoidance of or coping with perceived threats. Applied to the case of genocide denial, practical reasons might be

> to avoid external threats (payment of reparations, restitution, giving up territory), to defend the perpetrator's self-image ("Our people, unlike others, do not commit barbarous acts."), to reject and dehumanize the victims ("They are unworthy of our concern."), and to justify the genocide ("The dead were traitors, they committed horrible atrocities, they massacred our women and children").
>
> (Smith 2014, 104)

Thus, in trying to explain and make sense of denial, we need to look at the broader context. We need to look at conditions that (a) encourage denial and (b) enable deniers to rationalize the socially and politically shaped beliefs, norms, and motives that guide and foster denial.

A few clarifications are due. One concerns the notion of "justification" in relation to genocide denial. While it might make sense to distinguish genocide denial from genocide justification, these two notions often overlap. This is because to be in denial involves a process of rationalization. Not all genocide deniers believe that genocide is justified. In fact, most genocide deniers probably deny genocide *because* they think that it is inherently wrong. Nonetheless, how they go about rationalizing the beliefs that ground genocide denial can paradoxically amount to the justification of *a specific case of genocide*. This highlights an inconsistency in their application of the concept. It can take the form of statements such as "It was not a genocide, but whatever happened, they deserved it because they were unruly, rebellious, and subversive". Consider someone who denies that the Armenian genocide happened because "Muslims do not commit genocide".[5] This statement acknowledges that genocide is an atrocity that would "taint Muslim identity". However, someone denying the Armenian genocide on this basis must reinterpret evidence of atrocities to explain away genocidal intent. Thus, an intent to destroy becomes an intent to "defend oneself against an existential threat". This ultimately demonizes the target group as a whole and *justifies all means in the relevant case*. A genocide denier mistakes a potential *functional explanation* of genocide

for its justification. In this case, the sincere genocide denier engages in an inconsistent application of the concept of genocide (assuming he has knowledge of the concept in the first place).

As stated, we are interested in the *epistemology* of genocide denialism. Another clarification pertains to the relationship between denial and knowledge – or rather, ignorance. Bardon argues that the real issue with denial is motivated reasoning and not ignorance per se. However, I shall argue in the next section that pervasive ignorance (e.g., widely available and shared false beliefs, disinformation, misunderstandings, or "pseudo-science") makes it easier for deniers to (a) engage in rationalizations (thereby remaining in denial) and (b) re-produce ignorance. Consider the evolution-denying creationist. According to Bardon, the creationist

> is emotionally threatened by this particular conclusion in a way likely to color his or her assessment of the evidence. The fact that the creationist doesn't "know better" is explained not by the individual's ignorance but by his or her motives; in the absence of those motives, the individual would accept the truth.
>
> (2020, 30)

However, the creationist can also more confidently maintain his ignorance if his social context provides him with convenient and readily available cognitive frameworks, hermeneutical resources, or pseudo-scholarship, and if he is immersed in a "trusted epistemic community" that affirms his worldview.[6] This brings us to collective and systematic forms of denial, that is, denialism.

2.1.2   *Denialism as a collective achievement*

Besides individual denial, there is *denialism* as a collective achievement that aims to build a "worldview that both derives from and supports the denial of some inconvenient truth" (Bardon 2020, 10). Some cases of denialism (and we can assume that genocide denialism belongs here) "will typically be linked to the believer's ideology, or ideological worldview" (ibid.). However, Bardon does not think that ideology is necessarily a bad thing. He defines ideology as "a set of factual beliefs – together with some evaluative attitudes pertaining to those facts – that give rise to some broader social, cultural, political, economic, or religious viewpoint" (ibid.). Denialism *can* cause an ideological position or be the product of an emotional connection to such a position, but it does not have to. One can support an ideology without necessarily being in denial. Nonetheless, Bardon maintains that

in practice, ideology is often tied up with denial, and denial is a primary reason for the intractability of ideological conflict: Someone in denial, by definition, is not receptive to disconfirming evidence or argument, and is highly resistant to change or compromise.

(10–11)

I do not centre my analysis of genocide denialism on the term "ideology". This is because, despite Bardon's "neutral" definition, ideology is commonly understood as a negative and problematic phenomenon. Moreover, deniers often dismiss struggles for genocide recognition as ideological but deny or obscure the ideological commitments underpinning those dismissals. Instead, I shall follow Karlsson in thinking of denialism as "the larger, orchestrated, ideological, political or cultural pattern of denial" (2015, 37). Denialism "tends to include an agenda not necessarily outspoken, a world view, argumentative traditions and structures, as well as similar motives and motivations" (38). In the case of Armenian genocide denialism, the worldview in question is Turkism and thus ethno-racial supremacism (see Section 1.2). The collective effort to maintain Turkism still permeates Turkish state institutions. Here, I am specifically concerned with genocide denialism as constituted by *epistemic practices* or *patterns of epistemic behaviour* rooted in social structures that authorize, justify, and impose a *pernicious* set of beliefs and interpretations. Ways in which this plays out include (a) maintaining historically entrenched prejudices against the former victim group, (b) misrepresenting social reality, and (c) distorting (social-)historical evidence for genocide and the moral and epistemic norms that should guide successful inquiry in this domain.

Given the above, the denier will consider denial and disputation rather than recognition of genocide to be the morally and epistemically right course of action. This is why genocide denialism is a problem of *misrecognition* rather than merely a lack of recognition. The rationalization inherent in denialism is a matter of socially acceptable and encouraged, but faulty, justificatory practices, practices that result from normative distortions promoted by the broader institutional context. This includes the production of distorted *self-conceptions* and distorted conceptions of *others*.

In what follows, I present my epistemological account of genocide denialism. To do so, I draw on (a) recent critical social epistemological conceptions of ignorance and (b) insights from vice epistemology.

2.2   Denialism: epistemology of ignorance and epistemic vices

2.2.1   *From doxastic state to substantive epistemic practice*

Before elaborating on the conception of ignorance employed for my analysis, I should clarify what makes ignorance so "special" from an epistemological

point of view. This will help to situate my approach within the epistemological study of ignorance. In what might be called standard individualistic epistemological theories, ignorance is taken to refer to a particular doxastic state: lacking a true belief or having a false belief. There can also be different doxastic attitudes. For example, someone can be (a) *disbelievingly* ignorant (p is true but S disbelieves that p), (b) *suspendingly* ignorant (p is true but S suspends belief on p), or (c) *deeply* ignorant (neither believing, disbelieving, or suspending belief that p). Someone who is *disbelievingly* ignorant might disbelieve that the primary cause of climate change is human activity, despite the empirical evidence. Someone who is *suspendingly* ignorant might suspend belief on whether there is human-made climate change, despite the empirical evidence. Someone who is *deeply* ignorant does not have any beliefs on the issue; it does not occur to them that there is an issue in the first place.

Note that the reference point for ignorance remains whether an agent *lacks a true belief about p*. However, questions about how an agent comes to have any doxastic attitudes towards "a true proposition p" are considered to be contingent or accidental. It, therefore, does not concern the epistemology of ignorance (see Peels 2014, 485, 2019). The problem is that this provides us with an impoverished understanding of our epistemic lives. As with questions about how we come to know what we know and the standards that should guide inquiry, the notion of ignorance should centre *epistemic agency* and its social and political conditions. According to Goldberg

> to speak of an epistemic agent is to speak of an epistemic subject, albeit in a way that highlights the role(s) played by the subject in the process(es) by which knowledge is acquired, stored, processed, transmitted or assessed.
>
> (2017, 5)

This definition should, however, be complemented by a substantially *social* aspect to epistemic agency. As Code (2006) points out, our epistemic lives are shaped and structured by "ecologies", that is, dynamic material-social-epistemic spaces that affect the objects, practices, and structures of knowing (or, for our purposes, structures of *ignoring*).

Arguably, the standard conception of ignorance as referring to a doxastic state gives rise to the claim that denial should be attributed to motivated cognition rather than ignorance. Surely, denial requires the presence of a belief, albeit a false belief, and moreover one that cannot be resolved by providing the denier with accurate information or evidence (which they are purportedly lacking). This is because the formation of a belief that evokes denial vis-à-vis counter-evidence is not based on epistemic reasons in the first place. As such, it cannot be outwardly challenged on epistemic grounds. Nonetheless, the denier will rationalize and seek to substantiate

the belief on epistemic grounds. He will do so by referring to epistemic reasons, thereby demonstrating (however dysfunctional or irresponsible) epistemic agency. So, in a way, denialism brings *wilful ignorance* to the fore. Denialism denotes an *unwillingness* to know or comprehend and yet maintain an epistemically responsible self-conception. This kind of wilful ignorance appears to be indirectly wilful. It does not imply that we can change our beliefs at will. Rather, the focus is on practices of belief formation. Specific attitudes, self-serving motives, and emotional needs might guide our evidential policies (i.e., which evidence or how much evidence we seek out to substantiate our beliefs). Such belief-forming practices can become defective or disadvantageous under certain conditions. This is what structural conceptions of ignorance aim to accommodate.

Agential and structural conceptions of ignorance can help to make sense of ignorance's role and intricate connection to motivated cognition and rationalization in cases of denial. On such conceptions, an agent's attitudes and structural social conditions might not only cause ignorance but also *constitute ignorant agents*. Acknowledging that an agent's attitudes are constitutive of (states of) ignorance rather than merely causes of ignorance enables us to "understand how an agent may be culpable in *being ignorant* and not just … how she came into that state of ignorance" (El Kassar 2018, 306, my emphasis).[7] This is important because we are not just interested in identifying whether a person is ignorant. We are rather interested in *how* that person is ignorant. For example, whether the person is closed-mindedly or open-mindedly ignorant. Someone who is open-mindedly ignorant is not a problem from the point of view of denialism. However, those who are closed-mindedly (or arrogantly) ignorant will be in denial, hence "actively ignorant". I shall return to these epistemic attitudes shortly. I shall argue that epistemic vices play an explanatory role in genocide denial.

An important upshot of agential and structural conceptions of ignorance for my analysis of genocide denialism is that ignorance is not merely cognitivist and impersonal. It is not detached from a developed sense of dominant groups' underlying material interests. Drawing on structural accounts of ignorance should help me to illuminate how (from an epistemological perspective) denialism does not equate to epistemic neglect. Rather, it is a substantive epistemic practice in itself. It is manifested in and maintained by social and institutional structures and mechanisms that produce epistemically disadvantageous or defective identities, social locations and modes of belief formation (Alcoff 2007, 40). This does not mean that social locations come with general epistemic advantages or disadvantages (i.e., that one is positioned better or worse than another with regard to general knowing). It relates only to "locations as they exist *in relation to* specific kinds of inquiry" (43). This conception of ignorance underscores the constitutive role of *situatedness* in reaching conclusions about some

object of inquiry. Situatedness can relate to location, experience, motives, perceptual abilities, in short, *subjectivity*.[8]

A well-known example of ignorance as a substantive epistemic practice is what Mills (2007) came to call "white ignorance". White ignorance is an effect produced by systems of racist oppression. It relates to socially dominant groups' specific acquired knowledge practices. Such a group might develop a positive interest in an inadequate understanding of the world (or certain aspects thereof) while systematically reaffirming that their inaccurate assessments are appropriate. Mills writes about racism's impact on cognition:

> [O]n matters related to race, the Racial Contract prescribes for its signatories an inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made.
>
> (1997, 18, emphasis removed)

Mills attributes these cognitive dysfunctions and the resulting hermeneutical disablement to the political construct of "whiteness". This construct goes hand in hand with a

> "cognitive model that precludes self-transparency and genuine understanding of all social realities," that it ensures that whites will live in a "racial fantasyland, [or] a 'consensual hallucination,'" and that the root of all this is the "cognitive and moral economy psychically required for conquest, colonization, and enslavement".
>
> (Alcoff 2007, 49, citing Mills 1997, 18–19)

For Mills, systemic racism and the political construct of "whiteness" (i.e., white supremacist ideology) that maintains it result in the hermeneutical disablement of whites. Whites are rendered *unable* to accurately grasp social reality. Mills' account has been developed in the context of the United States' history of white supremacy and racism. I nonetheless believe that Mills' theoretical insights on "white ignorance" can help shed light on (a) structurally relevant features of genocide denialism generally and (b) Turkish denialism of the Armenian genocide specifically. As far as the structural features of such ignorance are concerned, we can draw a parallel between "Turkishness" and "whiteness". However, my analysis of genocide denialism will differ from Mills' with regard to a central aspect pertaining to the epistemic agency of those in positions of dominant privilege: I will not argue for an "inability thesis", but will consider genocide denial as a matter

of *unwillingness* rather than inability to comprehend. To support this view, I will be drawing on José Medina's analysis of active ignorance and insights from vice epistemology.

Beliefs about Turkish supremacy and misconceptions (or prejudices) about inferiorized groups cannot be eliminated by providing more accurate information about those groups. This is because a lack of (accurate) information is only one aspect of a more fundamental system of power, privilege, domination, and oppression. This system produces (a) epistemically disadvantageous identities and social locations and (b) defective modes of belief formation. Specifically, a racist epistemology of ignorance affects epistemic practices and epistemological systems by leading to what Fricker describes as a

> kind of collective *interested* or *motivated cognitive bias* in what social interpretations and/or evidence for such interpretations a racially dominant group attends to and integrates into the rest of their beliefs and deliberations.
>
> (2016, 170)

Against this backdrop, a potential loss of dominant privilege can become a strong motive for maintaining ignorance.

The above brings a specific kind of ignorance into view. This is what Medina calls "active ignorance" and, in particular, "privileged ignorance" (2013, 27–40). In what follows, I argue that active ignorance (and the epistemic vices constituting it) provide a robust explanation for genocide denial's persistence and systematicity at the individual level. The dominant privileges I am concerned with include (a) material benefits gained from genocide (e.g., territory and other assets), (b) hermeneutical domination related to certain aspects of social reality, and (c) the positive self-esteem systematically conveyed to members of the dominant group.[9]

Genocide denial obscures complicity in the perpetuation of social injustice. It can also serve to maintain presumed moral integrity. Importantly, dominant privilege can encourage the development of *epistemic vices*. It can, therefore, be constitutive of *actively ignorant* agents. I now turn to the epistemic disadvantages that potentially accompany dominant situatedness. The goal is to shed light on the constitutive relationship between structural social conditions and individual epistemic agency.

2.2.2   *Active ignorance, epistemic arrogance, and closed-mindedness*

> It is easier for you to "know nothing" if your society claims that "things like that could not have happened here". Organized denial works best when people prefer "not to have an inquiring mind".
>
> (Cohen 2001, 133)

Both Mills and Medina are concerned with the epistemically problematic socialization or socially acquired dysfunctional cognitive processes and epistemic behaviours those with dominant privilege exhibit.[10] However, Medina's account of active ignorance is better suited to identify the epistemological problems around genocide denialism, that is, the constitutive relation between structural social conditions and individual epistemic agency. Medina's account does not assume a *cognitive inability*. Rather, it assumes that those in positions of dominant privilege are more likely to exhibit an *unwillingness* to know and understand. As noted in the previous section, this does not imply that we can change our beliefs at will. That said, it does acknowledge that ignorance can occur

> with the active participation of the subject and with a battery of defense mechanisms, an ignorance that is not easy to undo and correct, for this requires retraining – the reconfiguration of epistemic attitudes and habits – as well as social change.
>
> (Medina 2013, 39)

Medina's account points to an ignorance generated and maintained by epistemic agents' socially inculcated attitudes and dispositions. He considers arrogance, closed-mindedness, and laziness to be typical "epistemic vices of the privileged". He argues that occupying a position of dominant privilege within a given social order goes along with a specific socialization, one that *likely* contributes to the cultivation of epistemic vices.[11]

I have argued that the underlying function of genocide denialism is to maintain domination. If so, then dominant privilege and the cultivation of epistemic vices can to some extent explain the nature of genocide denial and its persistence at the societal level. This is evident in Medina's definition of the epistemic vice of *closed-mindedness*. Closed-mindedness is characterized by

> an active effort not to see, no matter what the evidence may be; as a result of constant distortion and redescription that leads the subject to be open only to the denial of the phenomenon in question.
>
> (Medina 2013, 35)

The closed-mindedly ignorant *needs not to know*. This creates a specific kind of ignorance, involving

> not just areas of epistemic neglect, but of an intense but negative cognitive attention, areas of epistemic hiding – experiences, perspectives, aspects of social life that require an enormous amount of effort to be hidden and ignored.[12]
>
> (34)

This becomes especially salient when someone's mind is closed off to evidence of practices of social violence; practices related to identity, privilege, and oppression. Medina writes:

> The blindness to practices of social violence … can in some cases be produced out of epistemic laziness, but it can also be produced out of closed-mindedness: as a result of an *active effort not to see*, no matter what the evidence may be; as a result of constant *distortion and redescription* that leads the subject to be open only to the denial of the phenomenon in question.
>
> <div align="right">(35, my emphasis)</div>

By being closed-mindedly ignorant, agents protect their privilege and hide their complicity with oppression. Besides motivated rejections of evidence and interpretations, closed-mindedness and denial also involve a constant and active effort to *spread distortions and misconceptions* about the subject matter. This points to a kind of ignorance that is markedly different from ignorance as absence or neglect.[13] An illustrative example (that I shall discuss more fully below) is when some researchers produce evidence for "Armenian rebellions" or "revolutionary activities" without appropriately interpreting the evidence to a context of resistance against historical oppression.[14] Instead, research on these topics is conducted with the sole aim of exaggerating the Armenian threat (of promoting the "provocation thesis"). Such scholarship illustrates both (a) misguided selections of evidence (cherry-picking) and (b) interpretations of evidence informed by closed-minded methodology. Closed-minded inquiry is, then, not a matter of inherent inability, but rather a wilful act (see also Pohlhaus Jr 2012, 729).

Internal cognitive features and external social conditions also play a role in the generation of the epistemic vice of *epistemic arrogance*. I consider this to be another especially relevant epistemic vice in relation to genocide denialism. In terms of its cognitive features, epistemic arrogance consists in faulty attitudes towards or self-evaluations of one's own intellectual strengths and weaknesses. Epistemic arrogance sustains ignorance and incompetence because it causes epistemic agents to underestimate their intellectual limitations or overestimate their intellectual strengths. It produces "misplaced confidence in one's beliefs and intellectual abilities" (Battaly 2021, 59). Those who are epistemically arrogant think that they are entitled to "make assertions without being answerable to questions or challenges" (60). It is, then, no surprise that arrogance is an *epistemically irresponsible* attitude. But how and why does such an attitude develop?

Being a vice of superiority, epistemic arrogance is a vice of "defensive or hubristic pride and evaluation of one's intellectual strengths" (Tanesini

2021, 98). Epistemic arrogance can be identified with (excessively) high defensive self-esteem. According to Tanesini, it is

> an attitude of complete self-reliance which leads one to distrust other epistemic agents; and an implicit conviction that one is the measure of epistemic value so that the mere fact that they belong to one would confer additional epistemic value to one's beliefs and cognitive faculties.
>
> (2021, 107)

Importantly, epistemic arrogance can have a collective dimension and become a trait that is predominantly developed by people *belonging to a specific group*. As Medina suggests, dominant privilege and the socialization that goes along with it play an important explanatory role in the development of epistemic arrogance.

Privileged individuals tend to be "spoiled". They are consistently treated as competent owing to their membership in a privileged social group. They can come to overestimate their intellectual competence and/or underestimate their intellectual limitations. Of course, we generally depend on others' recognition of our epistemic achievements to develop the intellectual self-confidence and self-trust required for responsible epistemic agency. However, this recognition (or acknowledgment of competence) can become dysfunctional when the relevant assessments are not based on actual epistemic achievements. Being persistently spoiled in this sense can be detrimental to the development of an epistemically responsible character. It can even foster the development of an epistemically irresponsible character. Medina writes:

> Those who grow used to carrying with them the presumption of knowing, of speaking authoritatively, of not being cognitively suspect, have but rare opportunities to find out their own limitations. Those who are epistemically spoiled have a hard time learning their mistakes, their biases, and the constraints and presuppositions of their position in the world and their perspective.
>
> (2013, 30)

Intellectual self-indulgence or "superiority complex" is characteristic of epistemic arrogance. Those with dominant privilege are consequently more at risk of developing this trait (even if epistemic arrogance does not automatically accompany a socially privileged position). There is a sense in which the epistemically arrogant person becomes immune to contestation. This is especially problematic in the case of inherited prejudices and pernicious ignorance, that is, ignorance that "in a given context, harms another person (or set of persons)" (Dotson 2011, 238).

To illustrate how epistemic arrogance can play out, consider Turkish intellectuals who occupy themselves with the Armenian genocide. Gürsel discusses how Turkish intellectuals sometimes feel entitled to "control the narrative, guide the dynamics of the interaction, determine and time the terms, and guard discursive boundaries" (2015, 794). Gürsel mentions several examples of Turkish intellectuals discursively monopolizing and misappropriating Armenian intellectual thought. The frequent misappropriation of Marc Nichanian's work is a striking case in point. His work is sometimes even misappropriated for the purpose of genocide denial. Gürsel mentions the launch of Cengiz Aktar's book, *L'Appel au pardon* at the French Institute of Istanbul, which featured Marc Nichanian as a respondent. The event

> culminated in an altercation that, along with other such misappropriations of his thought, prompted Nichanian to clarify in *Edebiyat ve Felaket* that he never intended the use of *aghed*, or catastrophe, as a political substitute – or even an alternative – for "genocide".
>
> (794)

Thus, Turkish intellectuals sometimes instrumentalize the Armenian genocide for the purpose of self-aggrandizement and thereby maintain historically unjust power imbalances. This is intricately related to the "excessive credibility" that accompanies dominant privilege ("Turkishness") and the epistemic arrogance it can cultivate.

The above points to the requirement for social support and collective effort in developing forms of epistemically irresponsible active ignorance, such as arrogant ignorance. It enables certain individuals to go on with their lives without their perspectives (in certain epistemic domains) being questioned and revised. Certain presuppositions and prejudicial stereotypes are not sufficiently challenged and corrected. The social support and collective effort in question usually involves what Medina calls "socially designated authorities for expert ignorance in particular epistemic domains" (2013, 146). I shall argue in the next section that genocide and nation-state building typically involve this kind of expert ignorance.

Educational institutions carry a special responsibility in both (a) the formation of epistemic character and the development of epistemic vices and (b) the social production of knowledge or ignorance. I shall illustrate this responsibility through a discussion of the vice of epistemic arrogance, Turkish national education policy, and that policy's relation to Armenian genocide denialism. In so doing, I echo Kidd's (2016, 190) call for "sensitivity to the *aetiology of epistemic vices*", especially with regard to identifying agential responsibility for epistemic vices. According to Kidd, attending to the causal

history of agential epistemic vices is essential to the "diagnostic task of identifying social and psychological structures that are *epistemically corrupting* – that is, conducive to the cultivation and exercise of vices" (ibid.). Relatedly, my proceeding discussion of Turkish national education points to a specific "institutional ethos". Fricker refers to this as "the collective motivational dispositions and evaluative attitudes within the institutional body, of which the various good or bad ends orientate the institution's activities" (2020, 91). I contend that bad ends – racism or Turkish supremacy – are integral to Turkish educational institution's ethos. In such cases, the institution is epistemically unjust by design (Carel and Kidd 2021, 478).

2.2.3   *Nationalist education and the cultivation of epistemic vices*

To understand why Turkish educational institutions are epistemically unjust by design, we must consider the ideological-theoretical foundation and justification for the genocide and for subsequent nation-state building, i.e., *Turkism*, put forth by what we might call "experts of racial ignorance". As Oranlı notes, Turkism is a "racial ideology that resembles white supremacy in its attitude of bestowing credibility excessively and exclusively to members of a specific race, Turks" (2021, 125). One of its central claims is that of "Turkish superiority against non-Muslim and non-Turkish nations of the empire" (ibid.). This claim is partly inspired by social Darwinist principles, which is evident in the "struggle for survival" motif often expressed in journals, memoirs, and publications by the Young Turk elite and loyal intellectuals. The Turkist mindset that accompanied the Armenian genocide during the late Ottoman Empire is maintained in the Turkish republic through its education system.[15] This is also attributable to Mustafa Kemal, the "founding father" of the Turkish Republic. Inspired by Turkist ideologues, he sought to dissociate what he considered to be a backward and shameful Ottoman past from Turkish history. He implemented several Turkification policies and reforms aimed at creating a new national identity and instilling a renewed sense of Turkish national pride.[16] All citizens had to pledge loyalty to "Turkishness", carry Turkish names and learn the newly introduced Turkish language and alphabet (which replaced Ottoman Turkish and Perso-Arabic script). Kemal also supported the "Turkish historical thesis" presented at the first congress of the Society for the Study of Turkish History in 1932.[17]

   Given his authority (or rather, authoritarianism), Kemal has significantly shaped official Turkish national history and Turkish identity. This makes his depiction of Armenians and Armenian–Turkish relations especially relevant for the ongoing state denial of the Armenian genocide (reproduced through the education system). Importantly, Kemal's

charismatic leadership helped to consolidate both the myth of "murder-
ous Armenians" and that of the Turks as an "oppressed nation",
[thereby] monumentalizing both in official Turkish historiography.

(Ulgen 2010, 371)

Kemal has facilitated a victim–perpetrator reversal and chronological con-
fusions that are used to retrospectively justify the Armenian genocide. This
is done through (a) detaching Turkey from Ottoman history, (b) rhetori-
cally emphasizing the suffering and innocence of Turks, and (c) highlight-
ing instances of Armenians murdering Turks during Kemal's war of
national independence. Kemal does not consider what happened to
Armenians before his military leadership to be important. This is even
though many CUP members continued their political careers in Kemal's
Republican People's Party (Turkish: *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP).[18] For
Kemal, the new "Armenian issue" relates to returning Armenians reclaim-
ing their property and their attempts at realizing their national indepen-
dence in the aftermath of the First World War (as was foreseen in the
Treaty of Sèvres). The Sivas Congress (4–11 September 1919) signalled
Kemal's first attempt to unite regional resistance into a common national
front. In his opening speech, he "mentioned the Armenians only to say: 'in
the East the Armenians are preparing to expand their borders up to
Kızılırmak and have already initiated a policy of massacre…'" (transl. and
cited in Ulgen 2010, 372). Kemal's narrative was that Muslims and Turks
have become an oppressed nation that he had come to liberate from Allied
occupation.

Atrocities committed against Muslims "eventually provided Kemal's
nationalist forces with a pretext for the invasion and obliteration of Armenia
in 1920" (Ulgen 2010, 268). Crucially, these atrocities are still at "the cen-
tre of Turkish denialist theses, and they continue to be employed as retro-
spective justification of the genocide" (376). Kemalist Turkish historiography
reshapes the history of Armenian–Turkish relations by alluding to a Russian
and Western imperialist conspiracy. This supposedly led to mutual conflicts
and massacres between Turks and Armenians. However, special rhetorical
emphasis is given to the Turcophobia, Islamophobia, and murderous char-
acter of the latter. (382) These ideas continue to be propagated in the
Turkish collective imagination. This illustrates how Armenians are not sim-
ply forgotten in Turkish national historiography and collective memory, but
rather ongoingly demonized. It involves the wilful occlusion and distortion
of historical facts and processes owing to the detachment of the history of
Armenian–Turkish relations from its Ottoman past. This serves to justify
the national war of independence and continued Turkification and persecu-
tion. In sum, Turkism continued to be a governing principle through the late
Ottoman CUP and the Kemalist Republican period.

Today, Kemal still functions as an epistemic authority in the Turkish educational system. This claim is supported by findings from a comprehensive research project called "Promoting Human Rights in Textbooks" (Çayır 2014). In their 2014 report, the researchers examined 245 textbooks used in the school year 2012–13. They focused on the theme "Who Are We? Identity, Citizenship and Rights in Turkey's Textbooks". Most relevant to the question of how the education system contributes to the development of epistemic arrogance are (1) ideas about Turkish superiority and (2) the concretization of Turkish identity through exclusion, threats, and perceived enemies (which, in turn, cultivates a generally anxious and defensive national character). According to the report,

> textbooks in Turkey are written using statements claiming that positive qualities "belong only to us," while elements of national identity are presented with an approach that may give rise to contempt for other identities and cultures. Authors constantly take an approach that claims that the Turkish language is superior to other languages and that the Turkish culture is superior to other cultures.
>
> (41)

The authors of the report identify this as an "ethnocentric perspective", one that opens the door to an isolationist and "self-interested perception of the world". This is evident in a student exercise found in the eighth-grade Turkish Language Teacher's Manual. The student is asked the following question:

> Do you get on better with people who speak the same language as you and therefore share the same culture, or with people who speak different languages and have different cultural values? Explain your answer using examples.
>
> (42)

This does more than just convey ethnocentrism and isolationism. It obscures – or rather, conceives as threatening – the reality of a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Turkish citizenry; the existence, among others, of Arabs, Kurds, Armenians and Assyrians (and therefore Arabic, Kurdish, Armenian, and Assyrian languages). Thus, along with high (hubristic) national self-esteem, textbooks also convey an attitude of *defensiveness*. Turkish culture and identity are portrayed as being constantly under threat.

Textbooks also take an essentialist approach to national identity, one that "develops clichés and stereotypes, whether about Turks or other nations" (Çayır 2014, 103). The authors of the report also note how textbooks primarily convey a definition of identity by referencing exclusion,

threats, and perceived enemies: "'Being on guard against enemies' is therefore presented as one of the responsibilities of modern citizenship" (47). For example, a seventh-grade Social Studies Teacher's Manual makes the following request: "Point out that certain states is not wanted for [sic] our country to grow stronger. Point out that there are domestic and foreign threats against our country" (20). We can see that the Turkish education system both (a) conveys a contrived and unique self-image and (b) determines relationships towards *different others*, specifically *hostile others*. This is partly due to Kemal's poems and speeches, which are referenced in textbooks from first grade onwards. They promote ideals of national identity and patriotism alongside depictions of enemies, war, and occupation. Differences are usually mentioned in relation to threats and enemies or rendered inconsequential. Textbooks are "full of statements that marginalize, ignore or make invisible that which is different" (29). The latter contributes to an impoverished understanding of social reality. Alternative cultural identities (and the social histories constituting them) are either ignored or rendered unacceptable owing to their putatively subversive nature. The textbooks present pluralism as a problem and difference (from "Turkishness") as a threat.

These examples are indicative of what Tanesini argues characterizes the vices of superiority (i.e., high *defensive* self-esteem). More specifically, she argues that such vices are "related to high self-esteem that is insecure because defensive" (Tanesini 2021, 98). If this applies to the vice of epistemic arrogance, then it is likely to prompt discrediting responses to what is perceived as information that threatens one's self-esteem, a self-esteem that is intricately connected to national identity and the reconstructed history it derives from. In light of this, epistemic arrogance is especially effective at sustaining practices of denial. This highlights how closed-mindedness and arrogance are mutually reinforcing. The motivational core of denial is a self-protective one. Individuals or groups seek to protect their self-conceptions and worldviews when confronted with information they perceive as threatening to their self-esteem. Perceptions of threat are, in turn, influenced by at least two factors: (1) a distorted conception of oneself and others and (2) a distorted interpretation of relevant information. Defensive reactions can become extreme when one is taught to mistrust designated others, to rely solely on one's own group, and to be constantly vigilant against enemies and threats. This is particularly the case when "socially designated authorities for expert ignorance" frame certain information as an existential threat. Here, the concern with Armenians and the Armenian genocide comes into play. As the report states, the so-called "Armenian issue" holds a "special place". Let us connect these considerations to perceptions of the Armenian genocide and Armenians more generally.

Various textbooks discuss what is referred to as the "Armenian matter" in depth, though in a way that promotes the state's official position on the matter. In teachers' manuals, teachers are requested to cover the topic of "Armenian claims in line with the principle of current relevance and should explain that these claims do not correspond to historical facts" (Çayır 2014, 32). Generally, teachers are expected to pass the state's defensive discourse on to their students. According to Akçam (2014), Turkish education portrays Armenians as people "who are incited by foreigners, who aim to break apart the state and the country, and who murdered Turks and Muslims". The Armenian genocide is described as a lie perpetrated to break apart the state and the country, and this "lie" is portrayed as the greatest threat to Turkish national security. It is, then, unsurprising that calls for genocide recognition and remembrance evoke intense reactions and widespread denial, at both institutional and individual levels. Both arrogance *and* closed-mindedness are relevant here. Armenian genocide denialism is not only a matter of protecting "national honour" and select self-conceptions. It also protects material privileges and the consolidation of gains made through genocide more generally.

Note that the above points are not exclusive to the Turkish national context. Many national education systems (a) deny or obscure collective and state violence and (b) instil isolationist, ethnocentric, and hubristic national pride. My discussion aimed to illustrate how national education policy can contribute to the formation of epistemically arrogant and closed-minded subjects. In the Turkish context, this sustains Armenian genocide denialism, especially among dominant group members. I also hope to have demonstrated how genocide denialism eventually disadvantages everyone. It leads people to underestimate or overestimate their cognitive capacities and is "the breeding ground for all kinds of biases and prejudices that distort perception, judgment, and reasoning" (Medina 2013, 27). It produces not only ignorance about others, but also self-ignorant individuals and communities. As noted, this can be employed as a deliberate educational policy forming part of a network of "socially designated authorities for expert ignorance".[19]

Before I move to my analysis of the epistemic perniciousness of such ignorance for genocide survivors and descendants, I should discuss another important arena where pernicious ignorance about genocide is produced, namely academia. So far, I have focused on the institutional production of ignorance related to specific social identities and social relations. The examples of genocide denial I now discuss underscore a related, but different, kind of ignorance. It involves factual and interpretive distortions of the Armenian genocide itself. It attests to the fact that genocide denialism is not a matter of non-recognition, but of systematic misrecognition.

2.2.4 *Genocide denialism: not non-recognition, but misrecognition*

The scholarly genocide denial industry has been in operation for several decades. Some (national and international) institutions and scholars make increased efforts to sow doubt and portray genocide denialism as legitimate scholarship. The University of Utah, for example, hosts Hakan Yavuz, a professor of political science and supporter of the claim that "there are two sides to the 'genocide question'". The University of Utah has thereby become a platform for promoting such scholarship. It hosts a project funded by the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA) (established in 2007) and (since 2009) financially supports the Yavuz-directed Utah Turkish Studies.[20] Another example is the Centre for Eurasian Studies (AVIM), "an independent, non-profit think tank based in Ankara". This "think tank" is directed by a former Turkish diplomat and they publish, for example, the *Review of Armenian Studies* (since 2002). Contributors to the journal are asked to submit papers related to the following topics (among others): "The Armenian revolts in the 19th and 20th century era of the Ottoman Empire", "Historical, political, and social dimensions of the 1915 events", and "Various aspects of the dispute over the 1915 events". A glance at the journal's recent issues indicates that the primary aim is to tell the "other side of a legitimate scholarly debate". Article contributions discuss topics such as Armenian revolutionary activities, Armenian nationalism, Armenian–Russian military cooperation, and international terrorism by Armenian militants.

Denial strategies found in such academic scholarship correspond to what Maria Karlsson calls "soft denial". Soft denial contrasts with "hard denial", which is "often easily recognized, often unpolished, blatant" (2015, 115). Hard or blatant denial refutes the reality of genocide altogether by claiming that nothing happened. It essentially stands on its own: if nothing happened, then there is no need to provide additional context, argument, or evidence for why something did not happen. A less absolutist pattern of denial, which Karlsson calls the denialist version of *synecdoche*, involves "attempts to reject vital parts and details of the… Armenian genocide as a means of rejecting the reality of the entire historical event" (117). An example is where evidence of Armenian deportations is rejected or re-interpreted. Indeed, challenging the purpose or intention behind the deportations is seen as an attractive method for "disproving, clouding, and striking at one detail in order to reveal the 'genocide story' as myth and legend" (120). This usually entails more sophisticated argumentation and historical detail. Two scholarly "soft denial" strategies are prominent in ignoring or misinterpreting evidence to deny or interpret genocidal intent away. These are (1) *myths of the peaceful relocation, resettlement, and protection of Armenian properties* and (2) *the*

provocation thesis and the exaggeration of Armenian threat. These two strategies are crucially entwined even while they deal with different aspects of the genocidal policies and their implementation.[21]

Some scholars argue that the intention behind the deportations was not the destruction of Armenians. It was only a measure of "temporary relocation" from certain regions for reasons of military security. This encourages scholars to explain or reinterpret evidence of massacres and further violations that preceded, occurred during or after the deportations. This is usually done by claiming that these events were unintended, unforeseeable, or unavoidable consequences of a chaotic time of war. Alternatively, some claim that the Ottoman government wanted to arrange an orderly relocation process but did not have the means to do so. This obscures the general ideological-theoretical justifications behind the deportation policies, confiscations, massacres, and the official appointment of "special units" to help the gendarmerie implement the deportations. These units played a central role in the massacres, plunder, rape and trafficking of Armenian men, women, and children (Kieser 2018, 244–258).

It is sometimes claimed that atrocities were not officially ordered. They were rather the acts of "irregulars" whom the authorities could not control. This narrative is used to abrogate responsibility for the Ottoman authorities. However, as Kieser notes, "in the end, national, regional, and local levels worked together willingly in a destruction whose main architect was Talaat" (247). The alleged protection of Armenian property is another example of misguided selection of evidence at work. One must deliberately select the Ottoman Parliament's official documents, specifically the "Relocation and Resettlement Law" and the law on so-called "Abandoned Properties". As discussed in the previous chapter, these legal documents had a fictional character. In reality, Armenian properties, houses, and territories were confiscated, meticulously listed, and distributed among the Muslim population in accordance with official orders (Akçam and Kurt 2015).

The "provocation thesis" is closely related to the military security argument. Some scholars argue that measures taken against the Armenians were justified reactions to their provocations and rebellions. According to proponents of this view, they presented an existential threat to the empire. It is common for genocide perpetrators to justify their actions by exaggerating the threat posed by the target group. This is often done by linking the group to a more powerful enemy. As mentioned, this involves portraying the Armenians in association with hostile Western or Russian imperialist powers. It allows Turkish officials and subsequent genocide apologists to present the genocide as a symmetrical struggle for national survival.

2.3   Against the argument from "forgetting" and "amnesia" or: acknowledging different kinds of silence

Denialism justifies a set of beliefs and cultivates epistemic attitudes and dispositions that constitute epistemically substantive ignorance. By normalizing the rejection of Armenian agency and experiences, it also ignores the injustice of the status quo. This ignorance is pervasive because it plays into traditional anti-Armenian tropes. Genocide deniers can claim epistemic authority and power because their arguments accord with the broader institutional, socio-political, and cultural context. Their views are (a) rendered reasonable by misperceptions of credibility and trust and (b) corroborated by a racist epistemology of ignorance's broader institutional context.

The above conception of *ignorance-qua-denialism* presents a problem of *misrecognition* rather than mere absence of recognition. Here, the relevant epistemological, social, political, psychological, and physiological dimensions are intricately connected. A consequence of this is that deniers take their denial to be righteous. It is akin to standing up for oneself, for morality, and for truth. As mentioned, this is often facilitated by a national education policy that inculcates false moral self-conceptions and misplaced epistemic self-confidence. *Ignorance-qua-denialism* places members of the target groups in an epistemically vulnerable position. I shall explicate this motif throughout the remainder of the book. Before doing so, I shall conclude this chapter by briefly distinguishing my conception of genocide denialism from other concepts related to ignorance around the Armenian genocide.

In scholarship and public discourse, one encounters characterizations of Turkey's "collective memory ignorance" about the Armenian genocide in terms of "organized forgetting" or "collective amnesia". These purportedly explain the "silence" of Turkish society on the matter. I hope that this chapter helps to clarify how the terms "amnesia" and "forgetting" are misleading. They obscure the normatively salient fact that we are dealing with genocide *denialism* that distorts history and memory in a way that is harmful to those who do not and will not forget the injustice (first and foremost, genocide survivors and descendants). I have argued elsewhere (Altanian 2022) that these notions are imprecise because they fail to account for the fact that denialism is a reactive and proactive practice of contesting and reinterpreting existing and resisting (counter-)memories and understandings. Here, institutional practices and processes do not merely neglect, but wilfully occlude and misrepresent, the historical evidence and testimonies that individual and collective memory are based on. On this account, Armenians and the Armenian genocide are not forgotten (not even in Turkish society, given that Armenians continue to live there).

Instead, they are remembered and at the same time *misrecognized*. Given that struggles for recognition and remembrance are ongoing, the rhetoric of forgetting or amnesia seems exaggerated and misplaced. The problem with genocide denialism is, then, not that it leads to some general "collective forgetting" of a genocide's occurrence or who Armenians are. Rather, the problem is that it encourages collective misapprehension in ways that sustain injustice and threats of further violence.

Given the above, I contend that we should invoke the notion of *silence* rather than forgetting (which marks a cognitive absence). Two types of silence are relevant to the case in question: *deliberate silence* and *coerced silencing*.[22] To illustrate deliberate silence, let us consider the memoir of Armenian-American author Leon Surmelian. Surmelian was born in 1905 in a city on the Black Sea coast of northeast Turkey. After a childhood fractured by the 1915 genocide, Surmelian, his brother, and two sisters were reunited in 1916. But they never saw their parents again. Surmelian writes:

> Neither my brother nor sisters spoke about their most painful inner experiences, which, like mine, could not be told. In fact I could not tell them anything about myself, nor did they question me. They knew I had escaped from Jevizlik, and that was enough. By a sort of silent agreement we took care not to mention our parents, and other relatives whom we dearly loved. Their names, or anything to remind us directly of them, were barred from conversation. If one of us, for instance, had said "Mother" inadvertently, we would have bawled, all four of us. Our deepest sorrows lay buried in our hearts, wounds that would never heal, and we tried to forget them in the joy of our reunion. Onnik and I were resuming our interrupted schooling, and we looked hopefully to the future.
>
> (1946, 63)

Surmelian finishes his memoir as a successful man acclimatized to the so-called American way of life. Reflecting on his lost Armenian childhood, he writes: "There are millions like me, tonight, in free happy America, haunted by their early years, which are always, everywhere, the happiest."

Surmelian's story shows how deliberate silence does not necessarily mean forgetting. The emphasis is on "tried" to forget. Understood in its context, this implies repression rather than actual forgetting. It suggests a repression of memories, that is, the burying of sorrows as a coping strategy. It is not like the silence that usually follows a traumatic experience, either because one cannot find the words to articulate it, or because external social conditions are not yet conducive to processing it. Surmelian's silence seems more like *resistant silence*, a silence that strategically focuses on survival rather than victimhood.

This is not the pernicious silence that is specifically generated by genocide denialism, which is a matter of coerced silence or silencing. This latter kind of silencing involves discrediting the epistemic contributions of genocide survivors and their descendants. This is performed through (a) preemptively depriving survivors and descendants of opportunities to contribute to the pool of knowledge and collective understanding or (b) unjustly coercing them to silence themselves concerning their experiences of injustice. This shifts our attention to epistemic oppression; to the pernicious processes and practices that actively shape how counter-memories and rememberers are misrecognized and silenced.

These brief, concluding remarks lead us to my analysis of epistemic injustice in the proceeding chapters. There, I develop an account of genocide denialism as constituting epistemic oppression of members of groups formerly targeted by genocide. I do so while recognizing them as resistant epistemic agents. This avoids further entrenching or reaffirming the oppressor's superiority. As Hoagland notes: One can be both subordinated and resistant. One can be both silenced and speaking. (2007, 106, emphasis removed). This enables us to identify ways in which epistemic agency might be illegitimately constrained or unjustly challenged without conferring an object-like status on the relevant agent. Putting members of the target groups at the centre of my analysis highlights the fact that genocide denialism presents *disrespectful challenges* to genocide survivors' and descendants' memory and testimony (i.e., expressions of their epistemic agency). This, in turn, has implications for how they understand and express themselves and how they navigate a socially unjust society.

Notes

1 See, for example, important work by psychologist and genocide scholar Israel Charny (Charny and Fromer 1998; Charny 2000, 2006). See Cohen (2001, 21–50) for an insightful review of denial, from its (alleged) origins in psychoanalysis (Freud) to its appearance in theories of self-deception (Sartre) and most recently the cognitive sciences. I rely on Bardon's definitions of denial and denialism for my analysis. These definitions offer a promising framework for discussing the epistemology of denialism in terms of (a) individual cognitive errors or dysfunctions and (b) their relation to our emotional lives, self-conceptions, and the relevant social and political conditions.

2 Lying does not always or only aim at deception. Someone who lies can also merely perform "contempt for truth" for the sake of some other practical advantage. This is the case, for example, with what Lynch (2021) calls bald-faced lies. On "tyrannic lies", see also Miller (2018). As "obvious" untruths, they do not intend to deceive. Note, however, that we should not assume that truth is "easy" to see. Indeed, there will always be people who will believe in these allegedly "obvious untruths" and end up being in denial when confronted with counter-evidence.

3 Disinformation is the deliberate spreading of false information with the intent to deceive. It contrasts with misinformation (which can be unintentional). Both disinformation and misinformation can occur in the context of genocide denialism.

4 Much more can and should be said about the lived reality of human physiology and emotions as they relate to denial and epistemic habits more generally. Sullivan (2015) provides a comprehensive and illuminating discussion of "physiological habits" and especially the physiological operations of racist oppression. Focusing on the US context, Sullivan discusses both the physiology of white ignorance and the (transgenerational) physiological effects of racist oppression on people of colour.

5 This refers to a statement by Recep T. Erdogan about the Darfur genocide, but it can also apply to someone denying the Armenian genocide. In the latter case, we witness an entanglement of "Muslim" and "Turkish" identities (see Section 2.2.3).

6 See Bardon (2020) and Harker (2015) for discussions of how these mechanisms relate to science and science denial.

7 I shall focus on questions of individual culpability in Section 5.5.

8 Alcoff discusses this account of ignorance in reference to Lorraine Code's (1993) work on our general situatedness as knowers.

9 Theriault points out that "the preservation of national self-image is a significant motivation [for denial] – not simply to erase memory of the victims but to rehabilitate the image of the perpetrators and the perpetrator group's identity" (2017, 55).

10 Fricker (2007, 82–85) also discusses such epistemic character traits as active products of processes of "epistemic socialization". Her focus is, though, primarily on the epistemic virtue of testimonial sensibility.

11 See also Fricker (2007). She discusses how a person holding a consistently privileged position of social power tends to receive "credibility excess". This can "cumulatively" lead to epistemic arrogance; "a range of epistemic virtues are put out of his reach, rendering him closed-minded, dogmatic, blithely impervious to criticism, and so on" (20).

12 The notion of "epistemic neglect" is related to the vice of epistemic laziness. This refers to a different type of privileged ignorance, a "habitual lack of epistemic curiosity", or "ignorance out of luxury" (in which those possessing dominant privilege *do not need to know* or concern themselves with certain things). According to Medina, the vice of epistemic laziness (like epistemic arrogance) "damages the objectivity of one's perspective and limits one's epistemic agency" (2013, 33–34).

13 Medina (2013, 35) considers the Armenian genocide, systematic practices of torture under the Bush administration, and the exploitation of illegal immigrants along the US southern border to be examples of ignorance maintained by denial and hence closed-mindedness.

14 Such as, for example, prior to the *Hamidian massacres* (see Section 1.2.1), when Armenians organized resistance against oppressive Kurdish tribes, "many of them officially courted by the government" (Kaiser 1998, 5).

15 It was also further bolstered by "race science". Maksudyan (2023) demonstrates as much in her analysis of the perpetuation of German race science in the Turkish context and the development of anthropology as a scientific discipline in Turkey.

16 See Zürcher (2004, 186–195) for a discussion of these reforms.

17 "This theory… held that the Turks were descendants of white (Aryan) inhabitants of Central Asia, who had been forced by drought and hunger to migrate to other areas, such as China, Europe and the Near East. In doing so, they had created the world's great civilizations. In the Near East, the Sumerians and the Hittites were really proto-Turks. […] Attila and Genghis Khan were described as executing civilizing missions. The theory aimed to give Turks a sense of pride in their history and national identity, separate from the immediate past, that is to say the Ottoman era. Declaring the Hittites (and the Trojans) proto-Turks had the added advantage of proving that Anatolia had been a Turkish country since time immemorial, thus extending the roots of the citizens of the republic in the soil they inhabited." (Zürcher 2004, 190–191)

18 In the previous chapter, I discussed how perpetrators and members of the CUP were granted amnesty if they joined the rising nationalist movement led by Kemal.

19 See also Medina (2013, 144), who discusses Arizona's legislation banning ethnic studies in high school curricula.

20 See Mamigonian (2015) and Erbal (2015) for more on the US involvement in sustaining scholarly genocide denialism.

21 There is extensive research on the denial and rationalization strategies related to the Armenian genocide. It is not my aim to add another attempt at identifying and categorizing them (see, e.g., Hovannisian 1978, 1986, 1999a; Dadrian 1992; Karlsson 2015). Karlsson draws on Hovannisian's (1986) distinction between (a) absolute denial and (b) rationalization, relativization, and trivialization (which are forms of denial "intended to create doubts and cloak disinformation" [Hovannisian 1999b, 201]). I adhere to Karlsson's broader notion of "patterns of denial". These include both (a) intentional or "insincere" denial and (b) the distorted self-images and self-delusions characteristic of those who are also *in denial*. Karlsson considers these "patterns" to be "a matter of structure, dealing with the rhetoric, the content and the style of both Holocaust and Armenian genocide denialism. These patterns are often concerned with form rather than content, and they are therefore a suiting way to discuss one of the basic theses of the study, namely while the content within each culture of denial may shift and differ, the form stays more or less the same" (2015, 10).

22 Silence can also be a form of resistance. For more on this view, see Keating's (2013) distinction between three kinds of engaged and oppositional silences: silent refusal, silent witness, and deliberative silence.

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Part II

The epistemic injustice of genocide denialism

3 The wrong of discriminatory epistemic injustice

So far, I have argued that genocide denialism generates actively ignorant subjects. It also generates factual and interpretive distortions of the subject of genocide itself. From this chapter onwards, I shall argue that genocide denialism generates reliable ignorance that is *epistemically pernicious*: it constitutes epistemic injustice.

In this chapter, I situate my approach in the field of epistemic injustice scholarship. I also motivate my choice of the concept of *epistemic oppression* to identify the epistemic wrong of genocide denialism. The idea is that thinking about the epistemic harms of genocide denialism forces us to widen or shift our perspective from the individual knower to (a) *knowers in relation* and *epistemic communities* and (b) *relationships of epistemic authority, recognition, and power*. In the first three sections of this chapter, I provide a brief outline of Fricker's (2007) account of epistemic injustice, including the basic forms of systematic discriminatory epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. I also discuss some of the objections and proposed amendments to Fricker's central cases of epistemic injustice. These are particularly relevant against the backdrop of social injustice. I then motivate my account of the epistemic wrong of genocide denialism in terms of epistemic domination/oppression. Epistemic domination/oppression acknowledges the institutional and structural conditions within which our epistemic agency is embedded and so highlights sustained patterns and practices of denial.

3.1 Introducing epistemic injustice

The idea that members of specific socio-politically marginalized groups can be harmed and *wronged in their status as epistemic subjects* has been analysed by invoking notions such as *epistemic violence* and *(interpretive)*

silencing, most notably by feminist, critical race and decolonial theorists. Epistemic injustices are often identified by those experiencing them as part of their struggle of epistemic resistance. Pohlhaus Jr writes as follows:

> [A]s Vivian May notes, Anna Julia Cooper, writing in 1892, highlighted the suppression of Black women's ideas through epistemic violence and interpretive silencing (May 2014, 97). Sojourner Truth, speaking in 1867, highlighted the denial of Black women as knowers via asymmetries in cognitive authority and via men's habitually constrained imaginations (98). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, writing within a (post-) colonial context, identifies what she calls 'epistemic violence' in claims to know the interests of subaltern persons that preclude the subaltern from formulating knowledge claims concerning their interests and speaking for themselves (Spivak 1988).
>
> (Pohlhaus Jr 2017, 13)

Fricker's notion of *epistemic injustice* belongs to the feminist intellectual tradition of epistemic resistance. She delineates a distinctive class of wrongs "in which someone is ingenuously downgraded and/or disadvantaged in respect of their status as an epistemic subject" (Fricker 2017, 53). Her starting point for theorizing the relationship between knowledge and social power are the everyday lived experiences of marginalization, specifically when it comes to how others receive a person's beliefs, reasons, and social interpretations (56). Fricker approaches the issue by investigating *epistemically dysfunctional* cases from the point of view of those "at the receiving end" of epistemic injustice. She is concerned with cases of discriminatory treatment related to expression, knowledge, understanding, and participation in communicative practices. (Kidd et al. 2017, 1)

Fricker's account of epistemic injustice is a response to an alleged gap in "traditional analytic epistemology". It provides a theoretical framework that is conducive to revealing the ethical and political aspects of our epistemic agency (Fricker 2007, 2). The gap has obscured (a) discriminatory mechanisms at play in epistemic practices and (b) distinctly epistemic injustices participants in these practices thereby suffer.[1] A central aim of Fricker's research programme (one already formulated in her 1998 paper) is to have epistemic injustice registered in mainstream epistemology. This has undoubtedly been achieved.

Epistemic injustice is first and foremost concerned with how social power can unduly influence our ability to use or develop our reasoning capacities, specifically our ability to generate and share knowledge and understanding. This is what Fricker (2015) has recently called the central human *capability of epistemic contribution*. She defines it as a

social epistemic capability on the part of the individual to *contribute to the pool of shared epistemic materials* – materials for knowledge, understanding, and very often for practical deliberation.

(76)

Social power refers to a "socially situated capacity to [actively or passively] control others' actions" (Fricker 2007, 4). There is a certain power that comes with being a teacher, a police officer, or an expert with socially designated authority in some field. The way in which power operates here depends on the institutional context within which individuals occupy social roles or positions.

Identity power is a form of social power related to membership in a social group. The operation of identity power depends to some degree on "shared imaginative conceptions of social identity" (14). Such conceptions govern what it is or means to be a woman or a man, black or white, gay or straight, and so on. Identity power is especially relevant for Fricker's central cases of epistemic injustice:

1 *Testimonial injustice*, concerned with how social identity can unduly influence perceptions of credibility.
2 *Hermeneutical injustice*, concerned with how social identity can unduly influence (a) which aspects of the social world one attends to or deems to be relevant and (b) whether one can render them intelligible to oneself and others.

The core concern is with persistent and systematic cases of these injustices (i.e., their occurrence under general conditions of social injustice).

In what follows, I briefly introduce what Fricker considers to be central cases of epistemic injustice. These concern our everyday, socially situated (i.e., cooperative) epistemic practices. These are:

1 Practices conveying knowledge or other kinds of epistemic inputs (e.g., evidence, doubts, and critical ideas conducive to knowledge) through testimony (broadly conceived).
2 Interpretive or hermeneutical practices related to making sense of our social world (including our own social experiences).

The general idea is that participants in these practices are operating as social types embedded in specific relations of power. This renders them vulnerable to both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice.[2] I then discuss new conceptualizations of epistemic injustice, namely ones that are particularly relevant for an analysis of the epistemic wrong of genocide denialism.

In fact, a consideration of genocide denialism reveals forms of epistemic injustice that diverge significantly from Fricker's "central cases".

3.2   Testimonial injustice

Fricker defines her central case of testimonial injustice as one in which a *negative identity prejudice* persistently and systematically causes hearers to grant a speaker a diminished level of credibility. More specifically, the speaker is given a *credibility deficit*. Unwarranted disbelief is not necessary. An instance of testimonial injustice can obtain when a speaker is given less credibility than they are owed. This means that a prejudice must *work against the speaker* for it to count as a testimonial injustice. A speaker can, for instance, be held to disproportionally high standards of evidence owing to prejudice. Here, there is no immediate disbelief. However, the hearer exhibits sufficient unwarranted (because identity prejudicial) suspicion to place the speaker in an epistemically disadvantaged position. This unjustly constrains her ability to testify. Testimony is, thus, an inherently social epistemic practice. Its success depends on social uptake, conditioned upon proper calibrations of epistemic trust. As such, testimonial injustice wrongs someone as a knower by wronging them as a *giver of knowledge*.

On Fricker's account, credibility deficits occur when there is a *distorted perception* of a speaker, that is, when the speaker is treated as being epistemically untrustworthy. Such a perception is "laden with a social-epistemic 'theory' about what types of speakers are to be believed about which kinds of subject matter in which kinds of context" (Fricker 2010, 173). Negative (epistemic) identity prejudice denies or deflates the *competence* and/or *sincerity* of the testifier (Fricker 2007, 45). Competence and sincerity are the two components of *epistemic trustworthiness*:

1 Competence refers roughly to the testifier's epistemic reliability, for instance, knowing that p if p is the case.
2 Sincerity refers to the testifier's disposition to say p if they believe p to be true (or at least not false); it relates to a disinclination to deceive the hearer.

Prejudice functions in testimonial exchange by attacking at least one of these components of epistemic trustworthiness. It thereby excludes a speaker from the relevant community of epistemic trust.

As mentioned, for testimonial injustice to exist in Fricker's sense, there must be a *negative* identity-prejudicial stereotype. She defines a negative identity-prejudicial stereotype as a

widely held disparaging association between a social group and one or more attributes, where this association embodies a generalisation that displays some (typically, epistemically culpable) resistance to counter-evidence owing to an ethically bad affective investment.

<div align="right">(Fricker 2007, 35, emphasis removed)</div>

An identity-prejudicial stereotype is a *perceptual distortion*. It is not a probabilistically accurate and reasonable heuristic that would allow us to spontaneously assess someone's trustworthiness.[3] Fricker writes:

> [I]n those everyday testimonial exchanges in which the hearer does not deliberate about how far to trust the speaker, the hearer *perceives* the speaker as trustworthy to this or that degree in what he is telling her. [I]dentity prejudice can distort the hearer's credibility judgment.

<div align="right">(36)</div>

Fricker thus maintains a perceptual, rather than a deliberative, model of credibility judgement (at least with regard to everyday testimonial exchanges). Prejudicial stereotypes are difficult to detect and correct because (a) they constitute a problem of cognitively and affectively distorted social imaginations and (b) prejudicial images can subsist alongside conflicting beliefs.[4] Fricker agrees that both positive *and* negative identity prejudices can influence the degree of accorded credibility. However, she maintains that only those suffering persistent and negative prejudicial credibility deficits are wronged in the discriminatory sense at issue here.

To illustrate her central case of testimonial injustice, Fricker invokes a historically informed fictional example from Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. There, an innocent black man named Tom Robinson is charged with raping a white girl. During the trial, an all-white jury refuses to believe the black defendant's testimony. They enact

> what is in one sense a straightforward struggle between the power of evidence and the power of racial prejudice, with the all-white jury's judgment ultimately succumbing to the latter.

<div align="right">(23)</div>

The identity power operating in this court case is apparent: "There are those on the jury for whom the idea that the black man is to be epistemically trusted and the white girl distrusted is virtually a psychological impossibility." (25) The jurors' gross *epistemic* failure is their non-performance of their *epistemic duty* to believe the defendant, that is, to do the proper epistemic work given the evidence. That said, this does not only point to an

epistemic failure. It also points to an ethical failure, one that has grave practical consequences when it comes to the man's wrongful conviction.

On the one hand, there are *resultant epistemic and practical harms* when negative prejudice distorts credibility judgements. Knowledge that could have been passed on is not received and speakers are prevented from successfully placing knowledge in the public domain. This has implications for society, the polity, and its institutions. It can come with a range of follow-on disadvantages to the testifier, including epistemic or material losses (46–54).

On the other hand, an *immediate* or *intrinsic epistemic wrong* is done to the speaker. Testimonial injustice is intrinsically unjust, because the "capacity to give knowledge to others is one side of that many-sided capacity so significant in human beings: namely, the capacity for reason" (44). This is why testimonial injustice can be understood as a form of *dehumanization*. The moral core of testimonial injustice rests on the assumption that the social type in question is somehow less human, that is, *less than a full epistemic subject*. In Fricker's words,

> the epistemic wrong bears a social *meaning* to the effect that the subject is less than fully human. When someone suffers a testimonial injustice, they are degraded qua knower, and they are symbolically degraded *qua* human.
> (Ibid.)

I shall elaborate on the nature of this type of wrong in Section 3.5.

3.3   Hermeneutical injustice

Hermeneutical injustice is a kind of epistemic injustice related to our capability to interpret the social world (or relevant aspects thereof), especially social experiences. It is

> the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collectively shared understanding owing to a *structural identity prejudice* in the collective hermeneutical resource.
> (Fricker 2007, 155, my emphasis)

This condition is attributable to *hermeneutical marginalization*. Here, members of a specific group

> do not get to participate fully in those social processes of meaning-making through which shared concepts and modes of interpretation are formed for us to draw on the interpreting social world.
> (Dieleman 2012, 257)

Fricker relates hermeneutical injustice to the lack of a certain *concept* in the shared hermeneutical resource. This conceptual gap renders all members of society *conceptually impoverished*. Notably, there is no identifiable epistemic culprit responsible for this (Fricker 2013, 49).

Fricker's central case relates to women's experiences of sexual harassment before the concept "sexual harassment" existed. The experience remained obscure owing to the absence of the concept. This is because patriarchal institutions and structures prevented women from engaging in the social practices that could have generated the concepts and shared understandings of their experiences. They were *hermeneutically marginalized*. The lack of a proper concept to interpret and name the experience need not result in an inability to interpret the experience as harmful or unjust. However, it can do so if those in dominant positions disguise the wrongful behaviour through positive interpretations. This happens when experiences of sexual harassment are downplayed or positively disguised as harmless complimenting or "flirting" (Fricker 2007, 153). This can seriously distort how one interprets the experience (e.g., being unable to acknowledge it as wrongdoing). It can also lead to harmful confusion and doubts about one's sense of self (e.g., thinking that one has provoked it).[5] Fricker's point is that those coping with sexual harassment will be in a prolonged state of powerlessness as long as "sexual harassment" is not a socially shared concept of wrongdoing.[6]

On Fricker's account, both the harasser and the target of harassment fail to validate the experience of sexual harassment in a way that truly acknowledges the wrong. That said, this condition mostly carries *practical advantages* for the harasser and *practical and moral disadvantages* for the harassed. From an epistemic point of view, those in a dominant position can naturally suffer conceptual impoverishment. However, the *injustice* falls on those who are hermeneutically marginalized in the first place. This is because hermeneutical injustice is owed to background social conditions where women are socially powerless. Their social position is one of unequal hermeneutical participation. They cannot make their experiences heard and understood, which, in turn, results in a lack of adequate shared conceptual resources. The moral core of hermeneutical injustice, thus, rests on the condition that the "subject is rendered unable to make communicatively intelligible something which it is particularly in his or her interest to be able to render intelligible" (Fricker 2007, 162). This is especially relevant to harmful experiences.[7]

As with testimonial injustice, the primary wrong in hermeneutical injustice consists in an impediment to a capacity of essential human value. Testimonial and hermeneutical injustice present two ways in which the central human capability of epistemic contribution is undermined. They undermine our contributions of *informational* and/or *interpretive materials*

(Fricker 2015, 76). Hermeneutical injustice also brings secondary epistemic disadvantages. One can be made to feel a

> dissonance between received understanding and your own intimated sense of a given experience, it tends to knock your faith in your own ability to make sense of the world, or at least a relevant region of the world.
> (Fricker 2007, 163)

As with testimonial injustice, hermeneutical injustice can affect the very constitution of the subject and hinder personal development (Fricker 2007, 53–59, 168). Both hermeneutical and testimonial injustices constrain a legitimate human interest in making sense of social experiences and effectively communicating them to achieve various goals. These goals include self-determination, justice, and social change.

3.4   New concepts and conceptualizations of epistemic injustice(s)

Both of Fricker's central cases of epistemic injustice point to discriminatory, identity-prejudicial exclusions from participating in the generation and distribution of knowledge and understanding.

- In testimonial injustice, the prejudicial exclusion directly relates to the speaker. The speaker's communicative attempt is thwarted because she is perceived as epistemically inferior qua social type.
- In hermeneutical injustice, the prejudicial exclusion is "in relation to *what* they are trying to say and/or how they are saying it" (i.e., the content and manner of speech) (Fricker 2007, 162). It results from structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource.

For Fricker, there is a worst-case scenario in which a speaker is doubly epistemically wronged. They are wronged "once by the structural prejudice in the shared hermeneutical resource, and once by the hearer in making an identity-prejudiced credibility judgement" (159). There is also the possibility of a mutually reinforcing loop between testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. If people of the speaker's social type are systematically excluded from the practices through which shared meanings and understandings are generated, then they will be repeatedly misunderstood or misinterpreted. This provides further evidence for the speaker's perceived unreliability, that is, it nourishes epistemic prejudices against that social type. Under conditions of hermeneutical injustice, hermeneutically marginalized speakers' testimonies will seem *implausible* to a dominantly situated hearer. In cases where the hearer holds a prejudice against the speaker, *perceived implausibility* will further substantiate epistemic

distrust, resulting in a mutually reinforcing loop. Karen Jones (2002) points to this kind of mutual reinforcement. She argues that prejudicial distrust

> puts in place a suspicious cognitive set that colors how we will interpret the words of another. It leads us to look for signs of deception, irrationality, or incompetence and thus leads us to seek out evidence of inconsistencies, to magnify those we suppose ourselves to have found, and to focus on them in our assessment of the story as a whole.
>
> (159)

Hermeneutical injustice affects what one says and how one says it (e.g., whether one to speaks about a certain experience and how one interprets and narrates that experience). However, not all kinds of testimony (or testimonial content) trigger a perception of diminished credibility in a hearer (see Pohlhaus Jr 2014, 111). This suggests a slight departure from Fricker's conception of hermeneutical injustice, one that will become relevant when I return to the epistemic injustice of genocide denialism. It connects directly to my discussion of agential and structural ignorance from the previous chapter.

In a patriarchal system, men enjoy exclusive or primary access to the means of interpretation and communication. They enjoy hermeneutical dominance. In such a system, those who are hermeneutically marginalized (i.e., women) will suffer hermeneutical injustice if they cannot empower themselves or become empowered to influence dominant understandings of relevant aspects of the social world. They will suffer hermeneutical injustice if they cannot bring their perspectives and interpretations to the fore and thereby contribute to the critical discursive practice of a society. However, it is not by accident that "sexual harassment" was (and, in some contexts, still is) not a shared hermeneutical resource. That is, women were not accidentally attributed a subordinate social role. They have been wilfully excluded from certain practices, including those we often consider essential to a flourishing human life. These concern practices related to our capacity of reason.

Hermeneutical marginalization, or exclusion, has been legitimized and structurally sustained based on sexist beliefs and a value system that generates and sustains various identity prejudices (including denying women reason and knowledge). As such, generating conceptual resources such as "sexual harassment" will not suffice. An additional struggle is to have such concepts developed from the marginally experienced world acknowledged in dominant discourse. This is why Pohlhaus Jr suggests a further form of epistemic injustice: *wilful hermeneutical ignorance*. Recall that Fricker's conception of hermeneutical injustice is

epistemically non-culpable. It is rooted in hermeneutical marginalization and manifested by a marginalized person's experience of "hermeneutical darkness", particularly when they are confronted with social phenomena or practices that cause distress or harm. The concept of wilful hermeneutical ignorance shifts the focus to contexts where marginalized persons attempt to resist and/or contribute to dominant social meanings but are then met with *epistemically culpable resistance* by those who are dominantly situated. Wilful hermeneutical injustice is, then, both an agential and a structural epistemic injustice.

The above is especially relevant in the case of genocide denialism. This is because it both (a) acknowledges powerful and epistemically culpable agents who maintain self-serving ignorance and (b) does not imply that those experiencing injustice are unable to comprehend their own experiences. Thus, the hermeneutical injustice that applies to genocide denialism does not involve a conceptual gap. We do have a (presumably) shared concept of *genocide*. Yet, there seems to be either (a) no shared understanding of the conditions under which it should apply or (b) a situation where social reality is distorted in ways that make its application appear unreasonable. In such cases, we can state the following:

> Affected groups are hermeneutically marginalized insofar as institutionalized disabling constraints hamper their attempts to make use of the accessible, presumably known, and shared concept of genocide to adequately interpret and communicate their experiences of genocide and its continued legacy.

Here, wilful ignorance by agents with dominant privilege is the driving force behind hermeneutical injustice. It involves the silencing of marginalized groups "relative to dominant discourses without [necessarily] being prevented from understanding or expressing their own social experiences" (Mason 2011, 301). What matters here is *to whom* they try to express or communicate their understandings. Shifting the focus in this way makes us aware of marginalized subjects' repeated attempts at *epistemic resistance*. It also helps us to identify different ways in which their resistant epistemic agency is undermined through wilful hermeneutical ignorance. Mason refers to these as

> defective knowledge practices among members of more powerful groups [that] can produce and maintain distorted understandings of the social experiences of marginalised groups despite contrary, and arguably better, interpretations that fail (through systematic hermeneutical marginalisation) to gain voice in dominant discourses.

(300)

As argued in the previous chapter, such distortions are caused by misinterpretations on the part of those with socially designated epistemic authority. Distortions are "exerted in order to preserve the existing social order that was, in part, dependent on those misinterpretations" (304). In the case of Turkey, the maintenance of the social order imposed under Turkism and Turkish nationalism is dependent on long-term genocide denialism. From the perspective of those in power, acknowledging the Armenian genocide would ostensibly (a) jeopardize the legitimacy of the state and its institutions and (b) uncover unjust power imbalances.

Genocide denialism misinterprets and conceals genocide survivors' and descendants' experiences to perpetuate domination. However, it does not necessarily prevent *them* from comprehending their experiences. Marginalized persons often find their own ways to express their suffering and speak out against their oppression. As feminist standpoint theorists would put it, oppressed situatedness even comes with a potential epistemic advantage, one that can engender a more accurate understanding of social relations. The oppressed are uniquely situated to gain and share insights into social dysfunctionalities and asymmetries on account of the specific social relations they experience, and the harms thereby suffered. Their position in the social hierarchy means that they suffer social, political, and material disadvantages (rather than privileges). The oppressed therefore have an interest in adequately knowing and understanding (rather than ignoring) the social conditions and practices responsible for their disadvantages. In contrast, those with dominant privilege tend to have an interest in ignoring or obscuring those parts of the world that would put their sense of self and their social standing in danger (Wylie 2003, 32; see also Harding 1991, 125–126).

These considerations are also important for the following reason: In denialist contexts, victims of injustice are often described as "too subjective" and "self-interested" to be recognized as credible knowers. The paradoxical claim is that experiencing injustice oneself could not make one a privileged communicator of said experience and its meaning in the broader social context (see also Section 4.3.3). To this, one must add, as several standpoint epistemologists have worked to clarify, that a standpoint is an *achieved stance*. It acknowledges that

> many of the socially underprivileged may experience internalised oppression, and may fail to achieve the dual vision that can give them epistemic insight into the structure of oppressive social relations.
> (Grasswick 2014, 225, fn. 10)

There can be cases where members of an oppressed group cannot accurately understand their experiences and the conditions that cause them.

Some might accept dominant interpretations of the relevant social experiences and end up with distorted self-conceptions.

As mentioned in my discussion of nationalist education, Armenians in Turkey are taught the official Turkish state position and "military security" narrative. The narrative is that the Armenians sided with the Russians during the First World War to break apart the Ottoman Empire. Armenians purportedly massacred Turks and Muslims, thereby provoking their own demise. Further, they are portrayed as subversive elements who can never fully belong as moral, social, and political equals in the Turkish nation. Such misconceptions of their social-historical role in Ottoman and then Turkish society normalize and reinforce their societal inferiorization and cultural destruction. They also may prevent Armenians from using the concept of genocide to describe and interpret their historical experience and its legacy. This is exaggerated by the spread of misconceptions about genocide.

Even if a concept exists "in the collective hermeneutical resource", there can be conceptual myths that keep or seek to prevent individuals or groups from using it. I shall discuss conceptual distortions related to genocide denialism and their constitutive role in hermeneutical oppression in Chapter 4. With that said, the more serious problem seems to relate to constraints on oppressed agents' capabilities of epistemic contribution, and hence their attempts to affect an appropriate response from dominantly situated epistemic agents (including institutions more broadly). This shifts the focus from identity prejudicial credibility assessments to the epistemic and discursive conditions that inhibit their capability of epistemic contribution. I shall elaborate on the obstacles and pressures relevant to their capability of epistemic contribution in the next two chapters.

In line with my epistemological account of denialism from the previous chapter, the above shows how identity power also matters when it comes to *wilful hermeneutical ignorance*. Those in positions of dominant privilege refrain from or are resistant to acquiring epistemic resources developed from the marginally experienced world. This is because "doing so moves epistemic power away from dominant situatedness and can make clearer the injustices that maintain dominant privilege" (Pohlhaus Jr 2012, 721). Such epistemic contributions might be disorienting. They can make them aware of their "own situatedness with which it is not easy to contend (for example, one's unearned privilege that cannot simply be disowned)" (ibid.). Wilful hermeneutical ignorance, then, points to an *unwillingness* – not necessarily an *inability* – to comprehend what is said. Ignoring marginalized persons' concepts and interpretations requires an act of will. Their words then become distorted and misconstrued, which, in turn, sustains privileged ignorance.

The account of genocide denialism I presented in the previous chapter also stresses an important re-conceptualization of testimonial injustice. I argued that genocide denialism contributes to the development of various epistemic vices. These vices partly explain sustained practices of genocide denial. They, therefore, partly explain practices where counter-evidence is ignored, discredited, rejected, or reinterpreted. However, especially in the case of epistemic arrogance, such refusals to accept counter-evidence are based not only (or not primarily) on negative identity prejudice and its implicit *credibility deficits*. Rather, they are also based on positive prejudice and its implicit *credibility excess* (see Medina 2011). When assessing testimonial injustice, we must consider both (a) the social position of those at the receiving end and (b) how their position is related to privileged situatedness, levels of credibility excess, and/or associated unquestioned epistemic authority.

The above points to the epistemic disadvantages of credibility excess discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the cultivation of epistemic vices. This relates to the idea that socialization under dominant privilege likely contributes to the development of epistemic vices that foster resistances to know and active, privileged ignorance. What Medina calls *internal resistances to know* is an integral part of active ignorance. Here, a subject actively avoids external epistemic friction by

> trying to eliminate or hide alternative perspectives, protecting her or his own perspective against any epistemic powers or authorities that do not conform with it, either by destroying them or by becoming insensitive to them.
>
> (2013, 56)

Active ignorance "protects itself" and comes with a range of psychological and political defence mechanisms. Most importantly, it is also the breeding ground for testimonial injustice. By including *positionality and relationality* in an analysis of testimonial injustice, Medina shifts the focus from individual instances of testimonial exchange among "isolated" subjects to the structural social conditions that enable this kind of injustice (i.e., "the social trends that affect may affect in direct or indirect ways what happens in the particular interaction" [59]). Such a re-conceptualization acknowledges that (identity) prejudice is but one of many epistemic attitudes and dispositions potentially facilitating testimonial injustice.

Riggs (2012) has formulated a similar challenge. He maintains that negative epistemic identity prejudice can be owed to both (a) an *ethically bad* affective investment (as suggested by Fricker's definition) and (b) *morally benign* or *positive* affective investments, especially towards oneself. An

example of an affective investment that blocks the uptake of relevant counter-evidence is one's desire to think of oneself as a good person. Riggs writes:

> Treating Tom Robinson's testimony and the case for his defense with the seriousness it actually deserved would create some powerful cognitive dissonance that might lead them to believe that they had been acting shamefully all their lives, which would be emotionally devastating. Alternately, the affective investment might be their desire for community solidarity, where the community is that of the whites of Maycomb County (the setting of the story). For some it might be loyalty to family and friends who have always treated blacks this way, and to begin to doubt that this way of treating blacks is appropriate is akin to betrayal of that loyalty.
>
> (158)

I agree that a proper understanding of the mechanisms that constitute or give rise to testimonial injustice must include a range of affects and motives (I discuss this in the context of genocide denial in Section 5.5). However, if we combine this insight with Medina's inclusion of *positionality and relationality* in analyses of testimonial injustice, then it seems that one cannot neatly detach positive self-delusion or self-deception from negative affective investments directed against others. This is because one does, after all, place one's self-righteousness or self-worth above others. One does not regard others as worthy of epistemic and moral concern. Moreover, being motivated by a desire to remain in control of one's self-conception and to see oneself in a positive light might just be a display of active or privileged ignorance.[8]

   I have introduced three relevant forms of epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice, hermeneutical injustice, and wilful hermeneutical ignorance. I now shed further light on the wrong of epistemic injustice by embedding it in the broader injustice literature. The kind of epistemic injustice I am concerned with is systematic and discriminatory epistemic injustice. As such, it should be accommodated in the theoretical framework of social injustice, specifically as it relates to domination and oppression.

3.5   On epistemic domination and oppression

> [T]he dominated live in a world structured by others for their purposes – purposes that at the very least are not our own and that are in various degrees inimical to our development and even existence.
>
> (Hartsock 1998, 241)

Inspired by feminist epistemology, Fricker's endeavour was to make *epistemic oppression* register in mainstream epistemology. She focuses on an "epistemological reading" of how the powerful constitute or structure the world for their purposes. The powerful, she says, "have some sort of unfair advantage in 'structuring' our *understandings* of the social world" (1999, 191). The notions of testimonial injustice, hermeneutical injustice, and wilful hermeneutical ignorance attempt to give an account of how the powerful can have an epistemic advantage, one that, in turn, renders the powerless epistemically oppressed. My concern is, then, with relational epistemic goods: epistemic recognition, esteem, authority, and power. The denial or deprivation of these goods requires a process-oriented and relational conception of harm rather than a distributive one.[9]

Consider identity power, which is not something individuals possess as individuals. It is a relation mediated by the larger institutional structure enabling the exercise of identity power. Likewise, recognition denotes a specific way in which people should relate to one another to ensure goods such as *self-confidence*, *self-respect*, and *self-esteem*. These morally relevant goods can also be applied to the epistemic dimension of our agency and selfhood (McConkey 2004). In particular, the idea of epistemic recognition

> may indicate, first, basic epistemic self-confidence; second, our status as epistemically responsible; and third, a certain epistemic self-esteem that reflects the epistemic esteem we receive from others.
>
> (Fricker 2018, 2)

We need these recognitional epistemic goods to flourish as knowers or epistemic agents more generally. To acquire them, we must stand in relationships of mutual epistemic recognition, that is, cultivate what Fricker calls an "ethos" or "spirit of epistemic cooperation" (4).[10] To get to the core of discriminatory epistemic injustice, we must look at institutional conditions and various processes that structure epistemic relations. These conditions introduce norms, concepts, and beliefs about who is recognised as credible (or epistemically authoritative) and whose social experiences are distorted and obscured. Hence the relevance of *institutional context*, which can shape patterns of epistemic recognition in ways that constitute epistemic domination and oppression.

Domination and oppression are forms of social injustice because social groups inflict them onto other social groups (via relevant institutions, practices, and norms). They are forms of injustice sharing the characteristics of being *social, structural, and systematic*. Put differently,

[they are] a matter of *social relationships* between people or groups that have a particularly stable and permanent character and that are supported and sustained by social or institutional mechanisms.

(Stahl 2017, 275)

Institutional context is crucial to determining social injustice. As Young argues, institutional context generally conditions "people's ability to participate in determining their actions and their ability to develop and exercise their capacities" (1990, 22). As such, social injustice is determined by "the degree to which a society contains and supports the institutional conditions necessary for the realization of [general universalist] values" (37). These are values that constitute a good life. Young identifies two: *self-development* and *self-determination*. (Ibid.) She then formulates two corresponding forms of institutionalized disabling constraints. These are institutional conditions that determine social injustice, namely oppression and domination.

Young describes c*onstraints to self-development* as follows:

Oppression consists in systematic institutional processes which prevent some people from learning and using satisfying and expansive skills in socially recognised settings, or institutionalised social processes which inhibit people's ability to play and communicate with others or to express their feelings and perspective on social life in contexts where others can listen.

(38)

Young describes *constraints to self-determination* as follows:

Domination consists in institutional conditions which inhibit or prevent people from participating in determining their actions or the conditions of their actions. Persons live within structures of domination if other persons or groups can determine without reciprocation the conditions of their action, either directly or by virtue of the structural consequences of their actions.

(Ibid.)

Accordingly, domination and oppression refer to an immobilizing or diminishing treatment. This treatment constrains some people's ability to realize values constituting a good life. This includes our flourishing as *epistemic agents*. We can, then, apply these values to the epistemic domain. *Epistemic self-development* might refer to the exercise of one's capability of epistemic contribution (whereby one develops, e.g., epistemic self-confidence and

intellectual self-trust). *Epistemic self-determination* might refer to participating in determining who is recognized as epistemic authority in particular epistemic domains and the conditions of epistemic practices that generate (self-)knowledge and understanding of relevant aspects of the world.[11]

Despite Young's distinction between domination and oppression (and the corresponding inhibitions to the realization of these values), the two are crucially interrelated.[12] After all, conditions of oppression place disadvantaged group members in a position where they will experience significant difficulties in challenging and changing the conditions of their actions, (i.e., constraints on their agency). We can, then, say that oppression is sustained by, among other things, the *costs of resistance* for disadvantaged groups, which is exacerbated by conditions of domination. The dominated are prevented from engaging as equals in the epistemic practices of their community. They can do so only at a substantially higher risk, which, in turn, can reinforce their oppression. Such costs usually consist of further harms incurred by those resisting their oppression, including violent coercion or even death.

It is fair to say that, under conditions of oppression, the oppressed are usually dominated insofar as they are *coerced into acting* in ways that further their own oppression owing to an *unjust sanctioning system*. Cudd refers to such a system as one of "direct and indirect material and psychological forces that violate justice" (2006, 26). More specifically, Cudd provides an empirically informed definition of oppression as

> institutionally structured harm perpetrated on groups by other groups using direct and indirect material and psychological forces that violate justice. … These forces work in part by coercing the oppressed to act in ways that further their own oppression. Direct forces externally affect the choices of individuals, while indirect forces shape the background social beliefs and desires with which we perceive and behave toward others.[13]

Epistemic oppression occurs when there are institutionalized disabling constraints on epistemic agency. Epistemic agency includes, for example,

> the ability to utilise persuasively shared epistemic resources within a given community of knowers in order to participate in knowledge production and, if required, the revision of those same resources.
>
> (Dotson 2014, 115)

A state of epistemic oppression is characterized by some group dominating the realm of communication and meaning-making. They dominate the

practices that generate epistemic goods and resources, including knowledge, arguments, (interpretive) concepts, experiences, epistemic authority, and recognition. Other groups are unjustly excluded or placed in a position of disproportional disadvantage from participating in these practices. This prevents them from developing and exercising their epistemic agency. As mentioned, this ultimately coerces them to act in ways that further their own oppression.[14]

In line with the above considerations, I contend that genocide denialism constitutes epistemic oppression insofar as it fulfils the following necessary and sufficient conditions for oppression (suggested by Cudd 2006, 25):

1 *The harm condition: Harm that originates in an institutional practice.* – For example, testimonies about genocide are silenced or otherwise sanctioned because institutional practices of genocide denial and rationalization produce distorted interpretations of such testimonies. They are perceived as a threat to national security, rendering testimony risky and unsafe.

2 *The social group condition: Harm is perpetrated through a social institution or practice on a social group, whose identity exists apart from the oppressive harm in (1).* – For example, the group formerly targeted by genocide (e.g., Armenians) exists apart from experiences of harm in (1). Their testimony is silenced due to the pernicious ignorance produced by social institutions and practices of denial.

3 *The privilege condition: There is another social group that benefits from the institutional practice in (1).* – For example, institutions representing the dominant or privileged group (e.g., "Turks") benefit *relatively* from the institutional practice in (1). To sustain a materially unjust status quo, they can abrogate responsibility for dealing with a genocidal legacy and offering reparations. They thereby consolidate economic and other benefits gained through genocide (e.g., a sense of unity and higher self-esteem, relative to those harmed by this institutional practice of genocide denialism). This can, however, come with potential *epistemic* disadvantages on their part (as discussed in Chapter 2).

4 *The coercion condition: There is unjustified coercion or force that brings about the harm.* – For example, the harms in (1) are unjustly inflicted insofar as they are rooted in cultural and institutional racialized discrimination. They, therefore, stand in opposition to human rights. This makes it dangerous for those who have been harmed to exit their subordinate position (e.g., by being socially or legally sanctioned – or even murdered – when speaking publicly about the genocide).

I shall elaborate on these conditions in proceeding chapters. For now, it is important to note that they lead to deeper epistemological questions about (a) how beliefs about genocide can be wrong and (b) how they *can wrong*.

Regarding the latter, I do not intend to argue that merely having false beliefs wrongs others. Rather, I am interested in their impact – combined with other factors such as epistemic attitudes – on patterns of epistemic behaviour in social epistemic practices.

In the next two chapters, I focus on (a) the hermeneutical practice of personal and collective genocide remembrance and (b) the social-epistemic practice of testimony. Both these practices depend on accurate intelligibility and social uptake. I shall first explicate the idea of (a) genocide denialism as *hermeneutical oppression*. I will defend the view that genocide denialism constitutes disabling constraints on epistemic agency by way of inhibiting the participation in relevant social processes and practices of meaning-making, namely the personal and collective endeavour of giving meaning to the past. This analysis will also shed light on how hermeneutical oppression and testimonial oppression can be crucially interrelated. I then move on to my analysis of (b) genocide denialism as *testimonial oppression*. This involves unjustified disabling constraints on epistemic agency insofar as it gives rise to *practices of silencing*.

Notes

1 Feminist epistemologists and philosophers of science have also raised this concern in relation to the discipline of philosophy itself.

2 This view of the knowing subject as being socially situated contrasts with the classical epistemological "atomistic view". On the atomistic view, individual knowers are characterized as epistemically generic, interchangeable, and self-sufficient (Grasswick 2004, 85).

3 Examples of accurate stereotypes as reasonable heuristics might include stereotypes referring to people occupying certain professional roles (e.g., medical doctors and expectations about their medical expertise).

4 One could, for instance, hold the belief that unemployment is mostly a matter of unjust opportunity structures and yet still perceive unemployed people as lazy. Or one could believe that women can and should be politicians yet never vote for a woman politician because one perceives her as less competent (Fricker 2007, 37–38). Here, prejudices operate as negative *implicit biases*.

5 Here we can actually detect the roots of *wilful hermeneutical ignorance*. The harasser has an interest in maintaining distorted positive interpretations of sexual harassment, thereby denying wrongdoing.

6 There can, nonetheless, still be mechanisms that prevent someone from making use of a concept even while it exists in the shared hermeneutical resource. A faulty *operative* concept of sexual harassment might prevent survivors from making use of the manifest, formal definition of the concept. Jenkins (2017) discusses this type of hermeneutical injustice in relation to the problem of *rape myths* and *domestic abuse myths*.

7 Note the tension and shift here from (a) an inability to make a specific social experience intelligible to oneself and (b) an inability to intelligibly (i.e., effectively) *communicate* it to relevant others. See Medina (2013, 96–109) for a critical discussion of this topic. I shall make this shift clearer in Section 3.4,

where I motivate my employment of the concept of *wilful hermeneutical ignorance*.

8 It might be far-fetched to argue that any conviction in one's moral goodness entails a conviction in one's moral superiority. Nonetheless, it is not clear how these two can be neatly separated in practice when it comes to their roles in cases of persistent and systematic testimonial injustice.

9 This does not exclude the possibility that epistemic oppression and distributive epistemic injustice can be mutually reinforcing. As Fricker notes, "[n]ot getting your fair share of a good will often be the cause and/or the result of discrimination of some kind" (2017, 59, fn. 1). Or, as Young puts it: "While the social conditions of oppression often include material deprivation or maldistribution, they also involve issues beyond distribution" (1990, 38).

10 These ideas about the relationship between recognition theory and epistemic injustice have mostly been developed along the lines of Honneth's account of recognition. For my account of both hermeneutical oppression and testimonial oppression in proceeding chapters, I shall instead use the terms respect/disrespect and the two kinds of respect that Darwall distinguishes, namely recognition respect and appraisal respect.

11 The notion of "epistemic self-determination" has recently been discussed in relation to indigenous or local knowledges and their resistance to epistemicide in the Anthropocene (see, e.g., Werkheiser 2017).

12 Young acknowledges that they can overlap: "Oppression usually includes or entails domination, that is, constraints upon oppressed people to follow rules set by others. But each face of oppression … also involves inhibitions not directly produced by relations of domination. […M]oreover, not everyone subject to domination is also oppressed. Hierarchical decisionmaking structures subject most people in our society to domination in some important aspect of their lives. Many of those people nevertheless enjoy significant institutionalized support for the development and exercise of their capacities and their ability to express themselves and be heard" (1990, 38).

13 Contra Young, Cudd maintains that all cases of oppression share a set of features, although "there are great differences in the origins of oppression of and its effects on different groups" (Cudd 2006, 26).

14 Young has called a related type of oppression "cultural imperialism", a notion she borrows from Lugones and Spelman's 1983 paper "Have we got a Theory for you! Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for 'the Woman's Voice'". McConkey (2004) argues that thinking of epistemic injustice in terms of "cultural imperialism" underscores the idea that epistemic injustice is a problem of *recognition*. On cultural imperialism, Young writes: "Cultural imperialism involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm. Some groups have exclusive or primary access to what Nancy Fraser (1987) calls the means of interpretation and communication in a society. As a consequence, the dominant cultural products of the society, that is, those most widely disseminated, express the experience, values, goals, and achievements of these groups. Often without noticing they do so, the dominant groups project their own experience as representative of humanity as such. Cultural products also express the dominant group's perspective on and interpretation of events and elements in the society, including other groups in the society, insofar as they attain cultural status at all" (1990, 95). In terms of epistemic injustice, this comes close to the notions of wilful hermeneutical ignorance and hermeneutical oppression that I shall elaborate in Chapter 4.

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4 Genocide denialism, misremembrance, and hermeneutical oppression

When human beings experience traumatizing events such as genocide, they have a legitimate interest in understanding what happened to them. They want to render it intelligible to themselves and others. Remembering and understanding traumatizing experiences has psychological importance in, for example, enabling psychological closure and the processing of trauma.[1] Remembering is also a source of identification. It helps us, as individuals or groups, understand who we are, who we choose to be, or who we are forced to become. Moreover, it is important for assessing political responsibilities, the moral education of society, and the re-integration of victims into a moral, social, and political community. Remembering genocide is thus important for self-constitution, social criticism, justice, and the fostering of democracy as a way of life.[2]

If we value truth – if we consider it crucial for both (a) our integrity and projects of self-constitution and (b) the very possibility of establishing democratic forms of governance – then our social environment must provide accurate and meaningful epistemic resources for remembering. A society lacking such resources should provide a space where those affected can share salient social experiences and generate shared interpretations of those experiences. But what happens when this process is disrupted by genocide denialism? How does genocide denialism constitute an *epistemic wrong* against those who seek to truthfully remember their historical experiences of genocide and its legacy?

I aim to develop an account of the epistemic wrong of institutionalized disabling constraints on genocide remembrance, and hence hermeneutical oppression. I shall begin by laying out some of the relevant functions and values of collective memory, specifically genocide remembrance. I draw on Sue Campbell's (2003) account of reconstructive memory to argue for its epistemic value. Genocide remembrance can then be identified as a complex ethical/epistemological achievement. Besides an account of genocide remembrance as an ethico-epistemic practice, I also give an account of genocide denialism as wilful hermeneutical ignorance.

Denialism confronts rememberers with disrespectful challenge. It distorts hermeneutical resources and thereby constitutes hermeneutical oppression. Drawing on the case of the Armenian genocide, I distinguish three ways in which this happens: (1) introducing a problematic definition of the concept of genocide, (2) introducing the notion of "just memory", and (3) promoting misconceptions about historiographical research. The capacity to testify to the past constitutes us as "rememberers"[3]. I, therefore, end the chapter by discussing how hermeneutical oppression relates to, and is reinforced by, testimonial oppression. I shall argue that memory depends not only on available hermeneutical resources. It also depends on whether rememberers can successfully articulate their memory, that is, whether they can testify to the past and count on an audience's appropriate uptake. In other words, remembering – as a practice involving self-constitution – depends on how others respond to our expressions of self-knowledge and self-understanding. As I shall argue, this renders rememberers vulnerable to a variety of harms, including psychological harms.

4.1   The functions and values of (collective) genocide remembrance

A common view of the function of collective memory is that it fosters intergenerational, communal cohesion. It is thought to establish and maintain relationships. It does so by providing reasons for belonging in and identifying with a group, for example by constituting common interests. The notion that a coherent and meaningful narrative about the past provides intergenerational communal cohesion is mainly derived from accounts of individual memory and its potential to be a source of personal historical or narrative identity.[4] Like individual memory, collective memory requires both accurate recollection and *meaningful interpretation* or *reconstruction*. Unlike individual memory, however, collective memory usually takes on an institutionalized form and can serve different social or political functions.

Consider Assmann's three main functions of collective memory. These can help identify potentially pernicious memory politics in the context of genocide denialism. Collective memory can serve the purpose of *legitimation* of the in-group or political power and *distinction* from other groups. When official political memory processes are unjust or oppressive, this can give rise to unofficial and resistant counter-memories. Such counter-memories serve as *de-legitimation* of oppressive structures and processes (i.e., the collective memory that sustains oppression). Collective memory, thus, becomes inherently political when it is concerned with the legitimation (and de-legitimation) of power relations. The function of *distinction* is not necessarily political in this sense. Here, collective memory is a symbolic

expression serving to profile a collective identity. It can include any cultural practices, traditions, and rituals that maintain a sense of community (e.g., religious holiday celebrations and rituals). This need not entail an evaluation of *the other*. It need not entail a denigration of those the group distinguishes itself from.[5] These three collective memory functions can be applied and discussed in relation to collective genocide remembrance. Doing so highlights genocide remembrance's moral and epistemic value.

4.1.1 Genocide remembrance as resistance

Regarding *legitimation* (in the sense outlined above), consider the role of the Armenian genocide in Turkish nation-state and identity formation. There is evidence that the Turkish state's unwillingness to acknowledge the genocide, accept responsibility for, and deal with the genocide is attributable to the genocide's (often tacit) centrality in the formation of the Turkish nation-state. In the first two chapters, I discussed how the systematic dispossession of Armenians fuelled the establishment of the Turkish nation-state (i.e., the Turkish national economy). The underlying Turkish supremacist (Turkist) ideology continues into the Republican era and permeates various state institutions. It is important to acknowledge this whenever discussing Armenian–Turkish relations. Specifically, the issue of genocide recognition and remembrance is not merely a matter of "memory conflict", one that could be resolved only through mutual negotiation and dialogue. Rather, as Theriault pointed out, the

> contemporary Armenian–Turkish relationship is a very asymmetrical power relation in which a mutual negotiative process is impossible: negotiation and dialogue would take place within a context of inequality and the results of an apparently equal process will preserve that inequality, that domination.

> (2009, 92)

This inequality is further manifested in and maintained by institutionalized genocide *mis*remembrance. There are ongoing *disrespectful* challenges to Armenians' testimony, memory, and self-understanding. Armenians are also marginalized from certain institutional and societal practices. In order for genocide survivors and descendants to understand their current experiences of injustice, they must examine presiding narratives and the distortions and misinterpretations that try to naturalize or normalize the injustice.

Remembering genocide, thus, takes on both an explanatory and a justificatory function for survivors and descendants. It helps them *explain and understand present experiences of injustice*, thereby contributing to

individual and collective self-knowledge and self-understanding. Collective genocide remembrance can also serve purposes of *distinction*. Re-creating a reparative community that was once destroyed and that continues to be challenged in official political memory prompts the need for distinction. Remembering genocide can, likewise, *justify epistemic, social, and political resistance*. It does so by revealing the continuities between a past injustice (genocide) and an ongoing injustice (epistemic oppression). In other words, remembering genocide reveals an "unproblematized problematic present" (Marsoobian 2015, 32). It functions as a legitimate counter-memory. It constitutes a *de-legitimizing* collective memory, one that resists the unjust imposition of official collective memory and hence, unjust impositions of identity and nationhood.

Official memory obscures, legitimizes, and maintains the current system of domination. In light of this, collective genocide remembrance becomes both (a) an issue of social cohesion, identity repair, or honouring the dead and (b) an act of resistance to ongoing epistemic oppression and state-imposed identities. Remembering genocide, thus, has socio-political, moral, and epistemic value. More specifically, it functions to re-assert the equal moral and epistemic status of members of the target group. I shall say a bit more about the *moral value* of genocide remembrance in the next section. I shall then put forward an account of its *epistemic value* in Section 4.2.

4.1.2   The moral value of genocide remembrance

Genocide entails what Tirrell has called *serious recognition harms*, that is, the moral and socio-political *misrecognition* of the victims. This makes genocide "world-shattering" for its victims. It "undermines an agent's sense of having a legitimate claim to moral status" (Tirrell 2013, 167), unsettling her sense of self and place not only in the social or political community, but in the world more generally. Its aftermath requires adequate responses, ones that re-assert their moral status through recognition of their personhood:

> The world-shattering wrongs of genocide cast the person out of the realm of norms and values that define his/her community. To bring her back requires recognition of her personhood, *through the exercise of typically human functions, with language primary among these.*
>
> (165, my emphasis)

Tirrell goes on to argue that apologies, understood as speech acts, play a crucial role in the recognition and repair of victims' moral status after genocide.

I contend that genocide remembrance is also a recognitive and reparative practice in, at least, two senses:

1 It can be of *instrumental* moral value. It can assign responsibility for past wrongdoings. This can prevent recurrences of those wrongdoings and help to strengthen democratic values and the rule of law (Blustein 2014, 182).
2 Thinking of the value of genocide remembrance in terms of recognition also accords it *intrinsic* moral value. The very practice of genocide remembrance can repair moral relationships. This is because it is an expression of a morally valuable attitude, namely (self-) respect (186; see also de Greiff 2004, 6).

Note that *respect* here is meant in the sense of second-personal, "moral recognition respect" (Darwall 1977, 40). This kind of respect is owed to everyone equally because of the second-personal nature of a person's dignity or authority. Darwall writes as follows:

> The dignity of persons, I contend, is the second-personal authority of an equal: the standing to make claims and demands of one another as equal free and rational agents, including as a member of a community of mutually accountable equals. And respect for this dignity is an acknowledgment of this authority that is also second-personal.
>
> (2006, 121)

This is different to *appraisal respect*, which is a positive appraisal of a person's estimable qualities, dispositions, or achievements. For Darwall, "[a]ppraisal respect for someone as a person is moral esteem: approbation for her as a moral agent" (122).

The above suggests that genocide remembrance re-asserts moral self-respect and esteem for members of the victim group. It also expresses moral recognition and appraisal respect from society. Without a memory culture and under aggravated conditions of genocide denialism or misremembrance, members of the victim group have continued reason to consider themselves *morally disrespected*. Persistent moral disrespect of this sort continues to be a threat even to the moral status of future members of the victim group. It can present an "ongoing source of threat, insult, anger, fear, and grief" (Walker 2006, 383).[6] It seems to me that Darwall's (1977, 2006) two kinds of respect, (a) recognition and (b) appraisal, also play a central role regarding the *epistemic value* of genocide remembrance and the epistemic wrong of genocide denialism.

In the proceeding sections, I develop my account of genocide denialism as a case of *epistemic disrespect*, thus wronging survivors and descendants

in their equal epistemic standing and their status as epistemic agents. In Section 4.2, I argue that genocide remembrance is a complex ethical/ epistemological achievement. This makes it a struggle for both moral and *epistemic recognition*. In Section 4.3, I argue that genocide denialism presents *disrespectful* challenges to rememberers. This involves both kinds of disrespect that constitute hermeneutical oppression: (a) *epistemic misrecognition* as a violation of equal epistemic standing and (b) *epistemic disesteem* as devaluations of epistemic achievements.

4.2   Reconstructive memory as complex ethical/epistemological achievement

I have pointed out the functions and values of genocide remembrance, especially against the backdrop of genocide denialism. But could there be value in forgetting? Some might claim that the passage of time will heal all wounds and that remembering the past should be side-lined in favour of dealing with more pressing contemporary issues. Closely related is the claim that it is "better to forgive and forget". Insisting on historical genocide's recognition and remembrance might encourage social, ethnic, religious, racial, or national divisions. It might fuel further hatred and possibly lead to continued violence, or so the argument goes. Is it then better to ignore histories of social violence and focus on the present and the future?

Charny and Fromer (1998) have identified such claims as a denial strategy, one that is also employed by scholarly genocide deniers. The claim is that digging up problems from the past will not bring "peace to the world in which we live today" (47). This obscures that the "past" has a legacy that shapes unjust social realities in the present. Some scholars are wilfully ignorant of such social realities. They employ "distorted linkages and temporal confusions" to justify the denial of certain facts. In the case of the Armenian genocide, this includes claims such as: "Turkish national responsibility for the Armenian genocide would provoke acts of 'retribution' against the innocent *future* grandchildren and great-grandchildren of *past* perpetrators" (ibid.). It is, however, important to switch the causalities here. If claims for historical genocide recognition and remembrance lead to social divisions and conflict, then that is a sign of failure to deal with the past in the first place.

Violent reactions (whether physical or epistemic) prompted by requests for Armenian genocide recognition and remembrance reveal Turkey's historically entrenched genocide denialism. We must, then, think of demands for genocide recognition and remembrance as acts of legitimate resistance. They are acts of legitimate resistance to ongoing oppression and not merely instances of irresponsibly "digging up the past".[7] Those occupying themselves with the Armenian genocide are not simply dwelling on a distant

past. They are responsibly trying to make sense of both the legacy of historical injustice and present-day injustices. They are, thereby, engaging in reconstructive memory practices involving self-constitution.

In what follows, I briefly elaborate on what it means to say that genocide remembrance involves self-constitutive practices. I also discuss how we should assess the role of genocide in Armenian collective memory and identity.

4.2.1 Genocide and/as heritage

If the Turkish state recognized Armenians as equal citizens (including granting them equal cultural, professional, and political rights) while still denying the genocide, could we say that Armenians have been recognized? I think that the answer is "no". The reason relates to the *right to know the truth* of a people's history of oppression. As noted in Chapter 1, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (2005, 7–8) stipulates that victims have an inalienable right to the truth, and this points to a state duty to preserve memory. The right to the truth implies that

> [e]very people has the inalienable right to know the truth about past events concerning the perpetration of heinous crimes and about the circumstances and reasons that led, through massive or systematic violations, to the perpetration of those crimes. Full and effective exercise of the right to the truth provides a vital safeguard against the recurrence of violations.
>
> (7)

This is also a collective right that gives rise to a state duty to preserve memory, for

> [a] people's knowledge of the history of its oppression is part of its heritage and, as such, must be ensured by appropriate measures in fulfilment of the State's duty to preserve archives and other evidence concerning violations of human rights and humanitarian law and to facilitate knowledge of those violations. Such measures shall be aimed at preserving the collective memory from extinction and, in particular, at guarding against the development of revisionist and negationist arguments.
>
> (Ibid.)

The case of the Armenian genocide underscores the importance of these rights. The impunity that characterizes the Armenian genocide's aftermath results in recurrent collective and state violence against Armenians (and

other groups). It also provided a foundation or justification for long-term revisionist and negationist arguments. This sustains the violations of the right to know.

What, then, does such a heritage consist in? Primarily, it is a heritage of loss, trauma, grief, and shame. More positively, it is, though, also a heritage of survival, perseverance, and resilience. To deny the genocide is to deny such a heritage and hence the very basis of a complex extant (individual and collective) identity. The loss of *heritage sites* and the *homeland* is an example of a heritage of loss especially relevant to reconstructive memory practices involving self-constitution. Genocide uproots victims from their homeland, either by deportation or by forced migration. It can also lead to long-term destruction and "reconstruction" of their inhabited places. This ensures that such places no longer serve as loci of memory and identity for their former (or surviving) residents.

Genocidal destruction can continue for decades as it attempts to erase all traces of the target groups from their lands. A case in point is the world heritage site Sur, which is the Turkish city of Diyarbakır's central district. Large parts were demolished during Turkish military operations against alleged Kurdish PKK members in 2015.[8] In an article for *Middle East Report*, Hakyemez recounts her visit to Sur while it was under reconstruction. She recorded former residents' frustrations:

> While walking along the commercial street of Sur past its renovated shops, a former resident who accompanied me commented with frustration: "They could have at least used Diyarbakır's basalt for renovation instead of white paint and wooden frames. Are we in Diyarbakır or in Bodrum [a touristic Mediterranean coastal town]?" Sur may not become another Bodrum, but it no longer feels like Diyarbakır.
>
> (2018, 47–48)

After the genocidal targeting of its Armenian and other non-Muslim residents, Diyarbakır became the largest Kurdish-majority city in Turkey.[9] According to Hakyemez, Sur served as a space for juxtaposed political imaginations: (1) Sur "as the city of multiculturalism" and (2) Sur "as the fortress of liberation". The Kurdish middle class preferred the former. They acknowledged that Sur bore the traces of various civilizations and thereby presented an ideal space to foster multiculturalism. There were even attempts to recognize, remember, and process the city's genocidal past. The armed youth preferred the latter. For them, Sur symbolized "a mytho-historical fortress from which they would oust Turkish security forces and proclaim autonomy" (45). We can still see the complex intricacies and tensions of this place that continues to be both the homeland of

destroyed Armenian and other non-Muslim communities, as well as the focal point of Kurdish struggles for autonomy. In any case, the state's continued demographic and urban engineering is intended to bring about further estrangement. The goal is to remove all reference points for remembrance and identification with what genocide survivors and descendants did and often still do consider a homeland.[10] That said, there is continued resistance in the face of these ongoing attempts at destruction and re-engineering.[11]

The notion of resistance introduces a specific complication regarding an exclusive focus on the status of victimhood for collective memory and identity. Narrow identity narratives of victimhood can neglect a range of other features of identification, thus hindering recovery and re-assertion of the relevant group's culture and dignity. By neglecting what constituted or distinguished the group in the first place, it may even feed into the legacy of genocide. For example, while people might become aware of the Armenian genocide, they might not realize (a) who Armenians are, (b) that they have their own cultural traditions, language, and script deserving protection, and, most importantly, (c) that they continue to exist in their historic homeland. A public discourse that does not acknowledge this reality will likely fail to recognize Armenians' right to exist and resist ongoing oppression.

As mentioned, memory plays (or can play) a crucial role in identity formation. It is, then, not surprising that there is a diversity of memory narratives about the Armenian genocide, narratives that are influenced by and also influence intergenerational transmission. An example is the desire to refrain from identifying with victimization in favour of survival and perseverance. Doing so highlights different aspects of a person's history and heritage, those one considers to be especially empowering.

I now turn to the relatively straightforward epistemological considerations related to reconstructive memory as a complex ethical/epistemological achievement.

4.2.2 Remembering responsibly

Memory, both personal and collective, is a *reconstructive* practice through which we give meaning to the past. Information is selected according to certain criteria (concepts, understandings, and previous knowledge). It is retained in memory depending on its purpose and can be regularly re-interpreted depending on changing conditions. Its reconstructive nature highlights that "memory change over time and occasion is a normal feature of remembering" (Campbell 2006, 363). Note that such a reconstructive account of memory does not automatically imply

memory arbitrariness. Reconstructive memory – whether personal or social/collective memory – is not a threat to truth per se. Rather, it urges us to reflect on the criteria, presumptions, and normative commitments of reconstruction. As such, reconstructive memory does not obscure normative commitments, instead emphasizing (a) the fact that we ought to remember responsibly and (b) that we can and should be held accountable for normatively flawed or pernicious memory practices. If we want to distinguish *good remembering* from *distorted memory*, we must assume that memory only becomes meaningful to individuals and groups when it is accurate and truthful.

This is significant with regard to remembering historical injustice, specifically genocide. Genocide is a moral phenomenon. Remembering it depends on the availability of adequate hermeneutical resources (e.g., moral concepts provided by our social environment). This is why we cannot ignore or downplay the value of the concept of genocide in practices of truthful and responsible reconstructive remembrance.

According to Campbell, "good remembering" can be distinguished from distorted memory by arguing that the former aims at truth and is guided by virtues of *accuracy* and *integrity*.[12] An *accurate* recollection involves a concern with recalling the facts but also getting "their significance right" (Campbell et al. 2014, xvii). *Integrity* represents

> a trait in virtue of which self-consciously fallible rememberers take a stand for their own account of the past, often in the face of compelling dominant narratives that circulate in communities with which they identify […]; but any concern with integrity is also a concern with selves and their identities.
>
> (Ibid.)

As Campbell points out, truth should be crucial to our integrity and to projects of self-constitution. We cannot credit individuals with caring about self-knowledge or integrity unless we acknowledge that responsible rememberers care about truth (66–67). The case of genocide denialism highlights a failure of such credit. Here, the target group cares about truth, but their capacity to remember with accuracy and integrity is systematically called into question. Genocide denialism thus raises questions about our ethical responsibility

> to share memory in ways that are respectful, reflective, and appropriately challenging […] to distinguish respectful from disrespectful challenge, and that we make ourselves accountable for doing so.
>
> (167)

How, then, does genocide denialism violate this 'ethico-epistemic' responsibility regarding remembrance practices in ways that constitute hermeneutical oppression?

4.3   Genocide misremembrance: wilful hermeneutical ignorance and hermeneutical oppression

As discussed in Chapter 2, genocide denialism has real constructive power and material implications. It is not merely a problem of "proper labelling" or conceptual disagreement. Rather, it seeks to replace "genocide" with alternative, inaccurate, and misleading labels.[13] It simultaneously denies the target group's epistemic authority to apply the concept of genocide to their social-historical experience and its legacy. Thus, genocide denialism misremembers genocide in a way that produces pernicious ignorance about genocide and affected groups. It thereby constrains a capability that is crucial for self-determination and personhood (i.e., the capability to generate and contribute to social meanings and interpretations). This renders groups affected by genocide susceptible to hermeneutical oppression. As I now argue, it can specifically wrong them in their status as *rememberers*.

Let us first consider constraints on *public* commemoration under conditions of genocide denialism. There have been annual Armenian genocide commemorations in Turkey since 2010, notably in Istanbul. They are officially sponsored by the Platform for the Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide (*Ermeni Soykirimini Anma Platformu*) led by DurDe! Platform – Say Stop to Racism and Nationalism. They are co-sponsored by Nor Zartonk,[14] the European Grassroots Antiracist Movement (EGAM), and the Human Rights Association (IHD), which strongly demands genocide recognition. Until recently, the Turkish authorities mostly tolerated these annual public commemorations (including speeches and placards using the term "genocide"). However, commemorative activities are operating in an increasingly hostile and restrictive environment since the Turkish Parliament's constitutional committee passed a bill banning the use of the term "Armenian genocide" on 21 July 2017.[15]

In 2018, a disproportionate police presence, searches, and restrictions severely hindered commemorations.[16] Three activists were detained for carrying placards that read, "Recognize the Armenian Genocide, Apologize and Compensate". The police also barred the IHD from making a press statement containing the terms "genocide" and "massacres".[17] Turkish prosecutors declined to charge the activists, noting the European Court of Human Rights' stipulation that free speech protections apply to "offensive, shocking and discomforting information and opinions". Moreover, they noted that

[e]ven though it is of an unacceptable and disagreeable nature, the different interpretations of the subject, which essentially involves historians, when assessed as a whole does not amount to intentionally insulting the Turkish people.[18]

The problem is that this decision is not only compatible with, but also supportive of, genocide denialism. Prosecutors considered only whether activists, by mentioning genocide, intended to insult the Turkish people. Simultaneously, they reiterated the term's status as unacceptable and offensive.

Conditions for commemorations have grown worse in subsequent years.[19] The Turkish government has established "a new autonomous and civil institution... to respond to the accusations of genocide and to develop a strategy [to counter them]" (Akçam 2020). Hence, public commemorations take place in a once again increasingly hostile and oppressive institutional context that constrains the use of the term "genocide", making them acts of resistance that remain risky.

What about more *private* or *communal* practices of remembrance? Oral and written testimonies shared by family members, relatives, and friends (including biographies, memoirs, and photographs) are crucial resources for remembering genocide.[20] A way to challenge the memory of genocide is to systematically and pervasively call such victim reports into question. In what sense are these *disrespectful* challenges? For one, they are based on identity prejudice. The victim group is portrayed as treacherous and easily suggestible because they naively adopt putatively inadequate hermeneutical resources to interpret the past. Their experiences and memories are distorted through "a myth of genocide", supposedly promoted by Western imperialists to legitimize and instrumentalize Armenian nationalism for their own interests. Later generations are then said to have bought into this myth owing to continued Turcophobia, Islamophobia and radical Armenian nationalism.

Thereby, genocide denialism discredits victims' *integrity*, including their capacity for epistemic and moral agency. Victims are portrayed as easily suggestible. They supposedly succumb to Western imperialist narratives because they have no sense of self; their interests seem to be dictated by others. It further discredits victims' *accuracy*, that is, their ability to recall the facts and get their significance right. Victims are portrayed as irresponsibly selective rememberers who adopt inadequate hermeneutical resources to interpret the past for ultimately flawed purposes. This suggests they would fail to get the significance of the past right. Instead of caring about truth and justice – or what the Turkish government calls "just memory" (discussed below) – victims primarily seek legitimation for

their nationalistic goals, a goal that would lead them to select historical facts in epistemically irresponsible, partial ways.

Following Campbell's account from the previous section, genocide denialism thereby confronts survivors and descendants with disrespectful challenges. It does so in the form of (a) epistemic misrecognition (constructions of epistemically inferior social identities) and (b) disesteem (devaluations of survivors' epistemic achievements). This is done by portraying them as lacking the two virtues of "good remembering" and moreover, as inherently *vicious rememberers*.

In what follows, I elaborate on what makes this a case of hermeneutical oppression rooted in *wilful hermeneutical ignorance*. I do so by focusing on three kinds of distortions of hermeneutical resources that are relevant to successful genocide remembrance: (1) the introduction of problematic definitions of the concept of genocide, (2) the notion of "just memory", and (3) misconceptions about historiographical research. As examples of wilful hermeneutical ignorance, these distortions present different ways in which rememberers are disrespected.

4.3.1   *Conceptual distortions of genocide*

The prejudicial distortions (or "pseudo-challenges") discussed previously suggest that deniers lack conceptual skill or know-how. They lack the skills to correctly employ the concept of genocide in appropriate situations. If conceptual know-how is a requirement for concept possession, then we can even say that they do not possess the concept at all. This could be a result of epistemic laziness or wilful hermeneutical ignorance (the motivated refusal to know the concept because of its potential implications for them). That said, there can, of course, be cases where deniers do possess the concept. This requires them to introduce various *conceptual myths* about genocide. They introduce a faulty operative concept of genocide to maintain their genocide denial.

I shall draw on Jenkins' (2007) analysis of rape myths, through which she shows how victims/survivors can be constrained in adequately interpreting their experiences because of widespread beliefs in these myths that lead to a definitional exclusion of certain situations from counting as rape. This gives rise to a distinct form of hermeneutical injustice; one owed to the fact that the collective hermeneutical resource of their society only provides victims/survivors with a partial and politically problematic conceptual definition of rape.

To get a hold of this distortion strategy in genocide denialism, we should keep in mind that there are official, formal definitions of genocide, such as provided by the Genocide Convention and then there are potentially faulty

conceptual definitions and usages operating in societal discourse.[21] Introducing misconceptions into the dominant societal discourse is a common tactic for silencing victims of injustice. It is a way to keep them from (a) conceptualizing and accurately understanding what they have experienced and (b) raising their voices in calls for recognition and justice. Put differently, the introduction of faulty operative concepts of genocide aims to exclude certain actions, experiences, and processes from counting as genocide. This constitutes unjust challenges to and distortions of memory. I shall focus on three conceptual myths or distortions that appear especially prevalent:

1 Misrepresentations of the historical context that gave rise to the development of the genocide concept.
2 Distortions regarding the definitional element of intent, that is, the intent to destroy (in whole or in part) a social group protected by the Genocide Convention.
3 A reductive understanding of genocide as massacre or mass killing.

First, the concept of genocide is commonly distorted through a misrepresentation of the historical context in which it was created, that is, by occlusions of relevant historical facts. Raphael Lemkin coined the term "genocide" to name a crime for which there was no proper legal instrument to help prevent and prosecute such crimes (1944, 79). Lemkin was deeply concerned about the impunity that characterized the crimes against the Ottoman Armenians and was convinced of the need for legislation that could hold states accountable for systematic human rights violations against their own dependents. After witnessing Soghomon Tehlirian's trial in Berlin,[22] he insisted that perpetrators of genocide should be prosecuted by courts and not individuals. He expressed this in a 1949 television interview on CBS. There, he referred to the Armenian experience as an example of genocide.[23] Considering that the Armenian genocide was one of the historical events that prompted Lemkin's initiative, the inaccuracy of the claim that the concept does not apply to the Armenian case becomes evident.

A second (and perhaps more sophisticated) way of denying the Armenian genocide is to argue that the definition does not apply specifically to the case of the destruction of the Armenian people. This is done by addressing the *question of intent*, which seems to be one of the definitional criteria most difficult to prove and, therefore, most open to interpretation. After all, perpetrators of genocide would hardly present an official written statement that their actions, policies, and laws *intend to destroy a specific group*. However, direct or explicit evidence of the intent to destroy is demonstrably not the only way to prove intent. For example, Section II, §

502 in the Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the UN Secretary-General recognizes that "[w]henever direct evidence of genocidal intent is lacking, as is mostly the case, this intent can be inferred from many acts and manifestations or factual circumstances".[24] Supposed *legal* challenges to proving intent are not relevant to my account. However, historians and scholars in other fields have adopted "softer" definitions of intent. Helen Fein, for example, defines the intent to destroy as

> "a sustained attack or continuity of attacks by the perpetrator", where it can be held beyond any doubt that "the deaths cannot be explained as accidental outcomes [and where] there is evidence of repetition of destruction by design or as a foreseeable outcome".
>
> (Fein 2001, 4–5, cited in Karlsson 2015, 123)

As discussed in Section 1.2.1, the official laws and policies enforced by the Ottoman government tried to obscure genocidal intent. They had a fictional character, one that gave genocidal deportations and confiscation policies a semblance of (retroactive) legality while non-accidentally destroying the Ottoman Armenian community.

A third common conceptual distortion relates to an impoverished understanding of genocide, one that reduces it to a massacre or mass killing. This usually involves a focus on "body counts" and demographic statistics. There is often an attempt to downplay the scope of the injustice or to frame what happened as a civil war with "mutual massacres". Such a reductive and partial understanding neglects the very purpose or meaning of genocide (i.e., the intended destruction of a group through various means). More importantly, it obscures the complexity and scope of the crime and so neglects the experience of survivors and descendants, which further fuels misunderstandings about their struggles for genocide recognition and remembrance.

As elaborated in the first chapter, various forms of violence are mobilized during group destruction. In the case of the Armenian genocide, these included (1) gender-based violence through rape and forced marriage, (2) material dispossession and the destruction of the group's economic foundation, (3) attempted intergenerational erasure through forced assimilation (e.g., the Turkification and Islamization of Armenian orphans), and (4) the destruction or appropriation of cultural assets. Any practice of genocide recognition and remembrance remains deficient without an awareness of these dimensions of genocidal destruction. A reductive notion of "massacre" considers the perspective of the murdered, but not the perspective of the survivors, who will have to live with the genocide's far-reaching consequences. Neglecting these forms of genocidal violence also renders survivors invisible. This is especially the case for those in positions

of heightened vulnerability, such as women (see, e.g., Altinay 2014). One must also take this into account when discussing international diasporic efforts for international genocide recognition. This is because a substantial part of the diaspora communities are descendants of genocide survivors.

I have elaborated on some of the conceptual distortions that genocide denialism promotes. However, the fact remains that there seems to be no general misconception about genocide (at least at the state level). Misconceptions are triggered only with regard to the Armenian genocide. It is, thus, important to note that Turkey is a signatory to the Genocide Convention. Indeed, Turkish authorities recognize other genocides like the Holocaust and the Srebrenica, Cambodian, and Rwandan genocides. A new website has even gone online under the current AKP government to communicate the state's commitment to the remembrance of (selectively chosen) genocides.[25] However, the website's handling of the origin, definition, and legal ramifications of genocide displays wilful ignorance.

The website exemplifies a denial strategy that aims to create confusion and doubts about processes of historical interpretation and the motives behind a certain interpretation. It allows the continued framing of the Armenian genocide as a flawed and insignificant interpretation of the past, an "Armenian view of history". These distortions are perpetuated by the way that the website treats "genocide" merely as a technical legal term. I have already pointed out that there is no reason to restrict the use of the concept of genocide to the legal domain. This can be further substantiated by arguing, with Campbell, that

> our capacity to reinterpret our pasts is essential to our developing responsible moral agency and cannot be thought of as a unilateral threat to it. The social practice of taking responsibility for our actions requires that we can become aware of them as now fitting certain normative descriptions that we may have been unaware of at the time we acted.
>
> (2003, 186)

It is, then, our responsibility as moral agents to reinterpret past actions in line with new and arguably better concepts, concepts that help determine adequate responses to past injustices. Arguments that attack the very possibility of interpreting past actions in light of new normative concepts fail to account for this. The fact that new normative descriptions or understandings are newly legitimized does not mean that they are, in fact, new. Rather, as Campbell notes, "the point of many new conceptualizations of harm is to make long-standing types of social interaction apparent, and this point is important for understanding oppressive harms" (187–188).

Clearly, then, genocide denialism seeks to prevent such understandings and further obscures or naturalizes them, thereby sustaining oppression.

From our present-day perspective, we can argue that moral judgements about the past stimulate moral learning. The process of creating or coining a new concept involves the use of existing meanings. As Fricker puts it, "[w]e exploit resources within our form of life to make a change in it, realizing a new meaning" (1999, 206). We can observe this in the coinage of the concept of genocide, which Lemkin first defined in 1944:

> By 'genocide' we mean the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group. This new word, coined by the author to denote an old practice in its modern development, is made from the ancient Greek word genos (race, tribe) and the Latin cide (killing), thus corresponding in its formation to such words as tyrannicide, homocide[sic!], infanticide, etc.
>
> (1944, 79)

The purpose of coining the concept of genocide was to prevent, punish, and redress a distinct human atrocity, a unique form of collective and state violence. As such, we have a social, moral, and epistemic responsibility to elaborate on and determine when a shared understanding of the past – one that obtains via a new conceptualization of harm – is legitimate. This relates to the two issues I am simultaneously discussing here: (1) the normative description of a historical injustice as "genocide" and (2) the ongoing injustice of genocide denialism and its normative description as "epistemic oppression". By using a new conceptualization of harm, we can uncover some of the oppressive harms constituted particularly by genocide *denialism*. This requires "considerable rethinking of the conceptual schemes through which such harms have been naturalized" (Campbell 2003, 187). Conceptual distortions such as the ones previously outlined aim at this kind of naturalization.[26]

4.3.2   The concept of "just memory"

Besides conceptual distortions of genocide, Armenian genocide denialism involves a naturalization strategy called "just memory". The concept was introduced by former Turkish minister of foreign affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu in his article, "Turkish–Armenian Relations in the Process of De-Ottomanization or 'Dehistoricization': Is a 'Just Memory' Possible?" Since then, officials have used it in statements of "condolence". In an April 2014 statement, (then Prime Minister) Erdogan had the following to say:

> It is indisputable that the last years of the Ottoman Empire were a difficult period, full of suffering for Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, Armenian and millions of other Ottoman citizens, regardless of their religion or ethnic

origin. Any conscientious, fair and humanistic approach to these issues
requires an understanding of all the sufferings endured in this period,
without discriminating as to religion or ethnicity. Certainly, neither
constructing hierarchies of pain nor comparing and contrasting suffer-
ing carries any meaning for those who experienced this pain themselves.
… The incidents of the First World War are our shared pain. To evaluate
this painful period of history through a perspective of just memory is a
humane and scholarly responsibility.

(Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2022a)

It is important to place Erdogan's statement in its proper context. It was
given one day before the official, annual commemoration of the Armenian
genocide. It also entrenches denialism and further discredits calls for geno-
cide recognition. It does so by framing calls for recognition in a negative,
threatening light. The following excerpt from the statement illustrates this
aptly:

In Turkey, expressing different opinions and thoughts freely on the
events of 1915 is the requirement of a pluralistic perspective as well as
of a culture of democracy and modernity. Some may perceive this cli-
mate of freedom in Turkey as an opportunity to express accusatory,
offensive and even provocative assertions and allegations.

(Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2022a)

Officially sanctioned polarization is reiterated on the Ministry of Foreign
Affairs website under the heading "The Events of 1915 and the Turkish–
Armenian Controversy Over History: An Overview". It states:

The Armenian view of history, however, selects the Armenian suffering,
embellishes it in several ways and presents it as a genocide – a crime
defined in international law – perpetrated by Turks against Armenians.
The acceptance of this version by others has become the national objec-
tive for Armenia and the radical groups within the Armenian Diaspora.
… During the 1970s and onwards, such nationalistic zeal led to a terror
campaign that took the lives of 31 Turkish diplomats and their family
members, as well as 43 people from Turkish and other nationalities, and
wounded many.

(Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2022b)

This presents the Armenian genocide as both an epistemically and ethically
flawed approach to historical scholarship. It also polarizes the issue along
various dimensions. Ultimately, it demonstrates a prime example of "mir-
ror propaganda". "The Armenian view" is characterized as being devoid

of a factual basis. It is portrayed as being guided by a closed-minded and "one-sided" nationalist political agenda (which is contrasted with legitimate challenges that are based on open scholarly research and valid evidence and personal histories). Because of this, Armenians' insistence on having their memory acknowledged rather than dissolved in some abstract, global memory of shared suffering is portrayed as being stubborn, exclusionary, and reactionary. Such distortions discredit struggles for genocide recognition and remembrance as a sign of radical Armenian nationalism and even terrorism, anti-Turkish provocation or an unwillingness to reside peacefully with Turks.

The above example makes evident the interplay between two kinds of distortions:

1 Distortions of facts about social reality that obscure a socially unjust status quo.
2 Distortions of normativity, including distortions of democratic values, academic freedom, and freedom of speech.

These distortions are evident when critical engagement with the Armenian genocide is presented as a requirement of democracy and modernity. This gives the impression that there is a legitimate state policy dedicated to democratic values and freedom of speech.

Turkish state officials and other advocates of genocide denial continuously call for *more* evidence and *more* historical research on the Armenian genocide. This displays a manipulative misuse of the scientific principle "that facts be proven before they are accepted" (Charny and Fromer 1998, 46). It is done

> to obfuscate facts that are indeed known and to confuse the minds of fair-minded people who do not want to fall prey to myths and propaganda. Thus, the very purpose of science, which is to *know*, is invoked in order to justify a form of *know-nothingness*, the postponement of drawing any conclusions.
>
> (Ibid.)

However, the real issue is that no matter how much evidence is provided, it is never considered as adequate evidence *for genocide*. By using supposedly "race-neutral" terms of "reasonableness", "truth", and "evidence", genocide deniers can obscure the underlying and essentially non-democratic conditions of Turkish domination and epistemic injustice. This, in turn, reinforces ignorance of the relevant social and political issues.

The call for a fair and humanistic approach to history presents a distortion strategy, one that makes flawed comparisons to avoid dealing with

intent and accountability. Analysed in context, this pseudo-humanistic approach to memory particularly neutralizes and equates the experiences of inferiorized Armenians during the late Ottoman period with the domi-nant, Muslim-Turkish citizens of the Empire "whose ideology was habitu-ally instated with the nationalist Union and Progress government" (Aybak 2016, 135). As Aybak notes, "[t]he banality of this non-apology is that it trivializes and normalizes the Armenian trauma as the inevitable outcome of a great geopolitical catastrophe" (134). This marks the policy of "just memory" as a further denial strategy. It serves to naturalize relations of domination by de-legitimizing genocide remembrance and misrecognizing rememberers, thus sustaining their oppression. Given the dependence of memory on historiographical scholarship, this distortion strategy is rein-forced by the claim of "scholarly humanism", which promotes misconcep-tions about historiographical research.

4.3.3   *"Scholarly Humanism": misconceptions about historiographical research*

According to some scholars, focusing on the suffering of one group exem-plifies a scientific methodology that succumbs to "political correctness". They argue that a historian's goal must be to show the suffering of all per-sons involved (Karlsson 2015, 131). Such arguments seem to "place indi-vidual accounts of suffering above political considerations or structural analysis" (132), which essentially renders the roles of victim and perpetra-tor non-existent. American historian Justin McCarthy demonstrates this when he maintains that

> the truly human thing to do would be to lay political considerations and controversial terms such as "genocide" aside, and view the event for what he claims it to have been, namely a civil war in which all people suffered.
>
> (cited in Karlsson 2015, 132)

The problem is that such historical interpretations are neither neutral nor objective. Employing an interpretive framework of "civil war" influences the selection and interpretation of archival evidence to refute the "geno-cide claim". Specifically, evidence is selected in a way that interprets away the fact that Armenians, Assyrian/Syriac/Chaldean Christians, and Pontic-Greeks were inferiorized groups who suffered at the hands of the dominant group identified as Turks.

To arrive at the "equal suffering" thesis, one must distort the pertinent social-historical realities, including the grossly asymmetrical power relation

between Ottoman Christians and the Ottoman-Muslim majority. It requires believing that all evidence pointing towards genocide rests on hearsay, forgery, bias, and false wartime propaganda. It requires distorting, omitting, and even falsifying the abundant evidence substantiating the occurrence of a genocide (Smith 1992, 6). Historians who describe themselves as "neutral seekers of fact" present themselves as disinterested humanists. In doing so, they are obscuring their own normative commitments, commitments that are supposed to guide their selection and interpretation of archival evidence. But insofar as historians are committed to humanism and fairness, they carry a responsibility towards society. They cannot remain blind to the meaningful concepts through which society has learned to responsibly interpret historical events and processes. I would assume that the concept of genocide is such a concept.

The epistemological impact of genocide denialism is especially relevant as regards the treatment of archival evidence. As Aybak points out, Turkish historiography "tends to [often selectively] privilege official archives over the lived experiences and suffering of the Armenian communities and is often told through the gaze of the perpetrators" (2016, 129). Until fairly recently, genocide scholarship had largely neglected personal records by victims/survivors owing to the privileging of official documents. Even in the immediate aftermath of the genocide, survivors' status as epistemically reliable witnesses was undermined. Alexandra Garbarini illustrates this discrediting of victim/survivor testimony with the example of Bryce and Toynbee's volume *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915–1916*. This volume was commissioned by the British Parliament and published in 1916. Based on over 100 sources, it aimed to report on the Armenian and Assyrian genocides. Victim's testimonies were included in the volume, and these served to inform, convince, and awaken sympathy among readers. Nonetheless, the editors assumed "that they would be unable to overcome their readers' doubt and mistrust, their refusal even, to accept this type of source as valid and believable documentation" (2015, 119). This was a result of the assumption that Armenian witnesses would lack the necessary neutrality to reliably report what happened. As Garbarini emphasizes, "the fact that they had experienced violence directly did not qualify them to be the privileged communicators of their experiences" (123). The belief that adding seemingly neutral sources can compensate for a perceived lack of credibility of victim testimony is hypocritical, as Garbarini points out. In their own eyewitness accounts, missionaries, doctors, nurses, teachers, and even consuls "detail their feelings of terror, sorrow, helplessness, and anger, including avowals of their disgust for Turks and for Muslims in general" (125). Apparently, the

suffering and emotional investments of so-called "neutral" eyewitnesses […] had no bearing and only their political/national/ethnic/religious group belonging informed the writing and the reading of their testimonies.

(Ibid.)

Historians have often hesitated to base their putatively objective analyses on sources that appear to be "tainted by the subjectivity of the victims and the experiences they lived through" (Garbarini and Adjemian 2015, 17). Aiming to present legalistic elements for a qualification of the facts as genocide has led them to focus on proving the intention of the perpetrators and the state-organized character of the killings.

The problem with this is that privileging official government archives and the perpetrators' perspective restricts analysis to the general nature of the political-military circumstances and conduct of the genocide. This can sometimes be taken as genocide apologism, insofar as it reiterates the perspectives and rationalizations of perpetrators. However, as Garbarini and Adjemian note,

[i]t is the study of victim testimony, ultimately, that has made an essential contribution to establishing concrete knowledge of the implementation of Turkish policies in specific localities.

(Garbarini and Adjemian 2015, 18)

And one may add that it also contributes to establishing concrete knowledge of the nature of the *injustice*. Categorically excluding victim testimony from the realm of credible epistemic sources results in a loss of crucial knowledge about, and understanding of, micro-level implementations and experiences related to the destruction of Ottoman Christians and Ottoman social history more generally. Moreover, in the epilogue to a collection of Armenian genocide survivor testimonies, Arzu Öztürkmen notes that "the real contribution of oral history is not merely the accuracy or falsity of the accumulated data, but how that data is recorded in memory" (Balancar 2013, 226). In other words, we must pay attention to the *meaning* attached to the data. This points to the mutually reinforcing relationship between testimonial oppression and hermeneutical oppression.

4.4   On the mutually reinforcing relationship between testimonial and hermeneutical oppression

Owing to the relational nature of personal and collective memory, memory success depends on (a) the social positions we can (or cannot) occupy as

rememberers and (b) the relevant relations of memory authority and power. Identity power and memory authority affect one's success and failure as a rememberer, making it necessary to identify the specific vulnerabilizations of rememberers *and* the fragility of specific memory narratives.

In the previous section, I argued that the purpose of genocide misremembrance is to ignite public scepticism towards the memories of the target group and to hinder them from truthfully remembering the past and its ongoing legacy. This is done by (a) introducing distorted and problematic hermeneutical resources, (b) exaggerating the suggestibility of members of the target group's memories, and (c) demonizing them anew by re-interpreting genocide remembrance as a nationalistically motivated expression of accusatory, offensive, and even provocative assertions and allegations. These challenges to memory present different forms of wilful hermeneutical ignorance. They amount to *epistemic disrespect*, as they are

> meant to undermine the credibility of those who testify to historic harms and thus disenfranchise their voices from participation in the collective endeavour of giving meaning to the past.
>
> (Campbell et al. 2014, 167)

This brings testimony to the fore. To consider the mutually reinforcing relationship between testimonial and hermeneutical oppression (and its resultant harms), we must highlight the relationship between personhood, memory authority, and testimony.

As a practice involving meaningful reconstructions of the past, memory constitutes a core ability for developing selfhood and personhood. Through memory, we reimagine or retrieve our past and thereby develop a sense of agency. This process renders past acts *ours* in a substantial sense. As Campbell argues,

> being and becoming responsible require that I can give articulate descriptions of past actions of which I recognize myself to be the agent. Therefore, to be responsible for my actions requires that I have the resources I need to develop articulate self-representational abilities.
>
> (2003, 41)

Self-narratives are crucial for developing and maintaining these abilities. On this account, we develop self-narratives through memory and hereby become persons and hence, responsible agents.[27] This is because memory makes it possible for us to learn by experience: "Because human memory is often self-representational, it is also a basis of self-reflection, self-knowledge, and identity formation" (51). This is not only relevant to our own actions. Engaging in activities involving self-narratives is especially

important in relation to self-repair after experiencing harm or abuse through the actions of others.

To engage in activities involving self-narratives aiming at *personal-historical truth* and *social-historical truth*, people need a social environment that provides adequate hermeneutical resources for them to interpret and articulate their stories. We need "an audience able and willing to hear us and to understand our words as we intend them" (Brison 1997, 21, as cited in Campbell 2003, 44). However, this dependency can render rememberers vulnerable, for their narrative positions can be communicatively or rhetorically controlled in a way that limits their potential as testifiers to the past.

With Campbell, we can say that genocide denialism places rememberers within "a context of maximal interpreter distrust" (Campbell 2003, 54). Members of the target group encounter unjust constraints on their ability to testify to the past (and thereby re-assert their identity in relation to the past) because they are assigned an epistemically inferior position. They are systematically portrayed as lacking accuracy and integrity in their attempts at remembrance. Note that while this constrains members of the group and hence undermines their personhood, they suffer these constraints *qua* membership in the stigmatized group. A further, *collective* epistemic effect of hermeneutical oppression is that it inhibits the formation of a receptive audience. It inhibits the formation of an epistemic community wherein members can develop and maintain epistemic confidence and intellectual self-trust vis-à-vis their accounts of the past. As El Kassar (2021) argues, such collective intellectual self-trust can be a vital shield against the obstructing effects of epistemic injustice. Thus, genocide denialism not only wrongs individual rememberers, but also a community of remembrance.

The above brings to light another type of harm, namely psychological harm. Indeed, empirical research shows that genocide denial impacts the psychological well-being of victims/survivors, and descendants. It both (a) obstructs the possibility of processing personal and collective trauma across generations and (b) prolongs first- and transgenerational trauma. A study by Kalayjian et al. (1996) investigated the impact of continuing Turkish genocide denial on survivors, their coping strategies and communication patterns. The researchers conducted interviews with 36 survivors from two nursing homes in the mid-Atlantic United States. Respondents spoke of various stressors that they experienced during the genocide. These included feelings of humiliation associated with loss of status, autonomy, property, and dignity. Many were orphaned; some were left with no family members at all. Deaths of their family members were "recalled as causing the most severe pain" (92). Responses "reflected feelings of helplessness, loss of control, resignation, uncontrollable re-experiencing of the traumatic events, and sadness", while "the value and emphasis the Armenian

culture places on togetherness served respondents as a coping style – sharing the pain and suffering by 'sticking together'" (ibid.). When it came to the topic of Turkish genocide denial, respondents expressed a range of negative emotions, including resentment, hatred, and anger/rage. Many respondents

> reasserted the evidence that they had witnessed the Genocide; typical statements included, "I saw with my own two eyes how hundreds of people were placed in a big hole in the ground and burned." "What then happened to my clan? Out of 90 relatives, only three have survived." "What of my sister who was raped by a group of Turkish soldiers and then set on fire in front of my eyes?"
>
> (93)

Reactions of anger, hatred, and rage can be interpreted as appropriate responses to "a perception that the moral order has been violated, with no recompense having followed this disruption" (Miller and Miller 1987).[28] However, denial does not only mean a lack of compensation. It also represents a mockery of painful memories (Des Pres 1987, 17). This constitutes a further humiliation that is likely to re-traumatize survivors and coerce them to silence themselves. Talking about traumatic experiences and having them validated are essential steps towards resolution and closure (Sullivan 1953; Herman 1992). Obstructions or the inability to do so can lead to prolonged trauma.

Coerced silencing has been a reality for genocide survivors in Turkey. A survivor testified as follows:

> We were scared to talk to anyone. The Turks wouldn't even let us talk Armenian with one another; so you think we were going to talk about what they [the Turks] did? They would have definitely finished us then! Do you know that Talaat said he was going to kill every Armenian except one to place in a museum?
>
> (Kalayjian et al. 1996, 93)

Kalayjian et al.'s study involved a relatively small selection of survivors. Nonetheless, their responses and their description of stressful and hurtful experiences are congruent with findings from research on Holocaust survivors and trauma research more generally.

In *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman argues that traumatic events are characterized by an experience of helplessness in the face of overwhelming force. Such events "overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection and meaning" (1992, 33). Thereby, the conviction in our agency and autonomy crucial for our

well-being is rendered futile. To recover from trauma thus requires "the restoration of a sense of efficacy and power" (43). This in turn requires traumatized persons to remember and become aware of what made them lose this conviction, which has its own difficulties, for it would bring back "all the pain, terror and rage" (46) of the atrocity. This can encourage some survivors to voluntarily suppress their thoughts, leading to constrictive behaviour: "In an attempt to create some sense of safety and to control their pervasive fear, traumatized people restrict their lives" (46). By avoiding situations that remind them of the past trauma, or initiatives that involve future planning and risks, "traumatized people deprive themselves of those new opportunities for successful coping that might mitigate the effect of the traumatic experience" (47). This includes isolating themselves or remaining silent about their traumatic experiences.

   Importantly, survivors' feelings of fear, distrust, and isolation are compounded when they are in an environment of incomprehension or hostility towards them and their testimonies. This creates a vicious cycle; the "shattered self can be rebuilt only as it was built initially, in connection with others" (61). A basic sense of safety must first be re-established (if the survivor has a supportive environment they ordinarily turn to for safety). The survivor then needs the help of others in rebuilding a positive view of self. This "includes not only a renewed sense of autonomy within connection but also renewed self-respect" (66). Herman notes that, when it comes to collective violence (such as genocide), the

> [r]estoration of the breach between the traumatized person and the community depends, first, upon public acknowledgment of the traumatic event and second, upon some form of community action.
>
> (1992, 70)

After public recognition of the harm,

> the community must take action to assign responsibility for the harm and to repair the injury. These two responses – recognition and restitution – are necessary to rebuild the survivor's sense of order and justice.
>
> (Ibid.)

A sense of order helps to restore control and trust in expectancies; justice is needed to restore trust in the normative order. These insights are also key to restorative justice measures, which focus on the restoration of relationships. In a restorative justice framework, restitution and compensation play instrumental and symbolic roles in repairing relationships. They add weight to expressive interpersonal gestures (Walker 2006, 384). *Taking responsibility, respectful acknowledgment* and *concern* are central to

restoring relationships and must accompany any efforts at material compensation. Relatedly, individual and societal recovery from traumatic events requires "testimony, narration and storytelling" (Lykes and Mersky 2006, 605). This enables survivors to locate themselves in a given historical context and then reconstruct their identities and roles in that context. Doing so requires an audience that is able and willing to hear, understand, and believe them. We can, then, see how genocide denialism prolongs trauma, encourages ongoing constrictive behaviour, and entrenches a range of negative affect, by inhibiting the practices required for successful trauma recovery.

Trauma does not affect only the direct victims/survivors of genocide. Empirical research indicates that trauma effects are transmitted intergenerationally (with epigenetic mechanisms possibly playing a role).[29] Genocide denial also means a denial of these traumatic experiences. It obstructs the recovery process and prolongs trauma across generations. As Janine Altounian notes, descendants experience re-traumatization when they must deal with "two-fold collective trauma". As a descendant of survivors of the Armenian genocide who escaped to France, she elaborates on this "two-fold collective trauma" from a psychoanalytical perspective as follows:

> [F]irst, the extermination of the descendants' families and the annihilation of their ancestors' native land and cultural referents; and second, the dispersion of their parents, escapees stripped of their territorial and linguistic roots and of any narcissistic foundation for their psychic survival, throughout the Western world, in countries where the denials and silences of Realpolitik hold sway.
>
> (1999, 339)

Altounian draws on her own experience receiving the transmission. The task, she says, requires being "equipped with the psychic and linguistic apparatus necessary" (Altounian 2017, 70). The "descendant bears witness not only to the turmoil experienced by past generations but equally to the devastation from the past that endures in the present" (ibid.). Regarding the possibility of testimony, Altounian elaborates that

> the transitional heir … brings together these two worlds of *receiving* (*accueil*): as legatee to a parent who was *hosted* (*accueilli*) in the country of his birth and who was once *exterminable* and deprived of speech, he identifies with him. At the same time, he is the *recipient* (*l'accueillant*), concerned about hosting him in the language of the *non-exterminables*. His testimony borrows from the language of the *host* culture (culture *d'accueil*) and thus benefits from a surrounding of political institutions

lending authority to that language. It is this duality that determines his position as a witness-translator: he is both someone who is *hosted* (*accueilli*), through his identification with his surviving parent, and someone who is *receiving* (*accueillant*), thanks to the privilege of his current status, which allows him to live in a time and under political conditions that tolerate his testimony.

(73)

These considerations are relevant to our analysis of the epistemic harms of genocide denialism. They result from a dependency on available shared concepts, meanings, and other epistemic resources descendants can authoritatively use to render their testimonies tolerated, credible, intelligible, and thereby effective.

The above also points to the importance of *social and political conditions* required for successful testimony. Thus, research findings on the intergenerational transmission of trauma provide an empirical basis for arguing that genocide denial both (a) concerns direct genocide victims/ survivors and (b) impacts transgenerational well-being. Besides processing transmitted trauma, the transitional heir also carries the burden of proving and defending the truthfulness of her parent's or grandparent's testimonies in the face of genocide denialism.

I would like to complement this discussion with an observation, one that suggests a further psychologically harmful effect of the hermeneutical oppression intrinsic to genocide denialism. This is that genocide denial creates an inhibitory anxiety around practices and processes of social-relational identity reconstruction. The gist of a rationalizing justification for genocide is to continuously find "proof" for the victims' alleged, innate hostility and moral corruption. Because of this, members of the target group are made to wrestle with an unrealistic (indeed inhuman) burden to be infallible and thereby "prove" their legitimacy and right to exist. After all, signs of human fallibility or moral complexity might be interpreted as support for the victim group's alleged illegitimacy. Thus, genocide denialism contributes to a climate that is unsafe for introspection by generating fear of repercussions and further endangerment of one's group. It can also promote conceptions of national identity characterized by exaggerated and defensive self-esteem and a "morally purified" self-image.

In this section, I have attempted to show that hermeneutical oppression and testimonial oppression are different, although intricately connected, mechanisms for silencing, de-authorizing, and dis-empowering epistemic agents. Hereby, I am not suggesting that hermeneutical oppression is reducible to testimonial oppression. The social implementation of partial or problematic conceptual resources is intended to silence members of the

target group by distorting their accounts of their own past. This can result in the internalization of victim-blaming narratives.

What about those who can resist the epistemic harms of hermeneutical oppression and maintain their truthful account of the past? I shall argue in the next chapter that genocide denialism instils circumstances that likely coerce them to silence themselves. Those who can resist the effects of hermeneutical oppression might still experience the effects of testimonial oppression and be subjected to an epistemic wrong at the level of epistemic contribution and communication. This brings us to testimonial vulnerabilities and their relation to conversational genocide denial.

Notes

1 I shall return to this point in the final section where I discuss secondary harms of hermeneutical oppression.
2 Marsoobian has pointed out that Dewey uncritically accepted the historical myths of Turkish nation-state building. This renders Dewey's proposals for democratic education blind to past and present Turkish social reality. Marsoobian, accordingly, argues that establishing a community committed to democratic values or the fostering of a "democratic way of life is conditioned upon how well it collectively remembers its past" (2015, 31).
3 I adopt this term from Campbell (2003, 36–43), where it refers to someone who engages in a range of memory activities, including self-narration or making sense of the past and performing acts of testimony.
4 See Schechtman (2005) for a "self-understanding view" of personal identity.
5 See Assmann (2006, 138–139) for more on these three functions of collective memory (legitimation, distinction, and de-legitimation) (own translations).
6 See also my discussion of psychological harms in Section 4.4.
7 One might think of the term "digging up the past" as a literal form of epistemic resistance. Semerdjian (2018), for example, describes Armenian descendants excavating, displaying, and exchanging the bones of their murdered ancestors during (formal and informal) ceremonies of remembrance in Dayr al-Zur, Syria (the place that turned into an Armenian graveyard resulting from their deportation into the desert). I thank Imge Oranlı for this suggestion.
8 See Burç and Tokatlı (2020, 168–172) for more on these so-called "cleansing operations" and their contextualization within deepening authoritarianism and continued ethnic and societal homogenization under AKP rule.
9 Although most Armenians in Turkey now live in Istanbul, there is still an Armenian community in Diyarbakır, though, given its genocidal history, it is assumed that there also exist many so-called "Crypto Armenians" or "Kurdified/Islamized" Armenians (genocide survivors and descendants who hide or are unaware of their Armenian ancestry).
10 See Bilal (2006, 2019) for more on these seemingly conflicting imaginaries of "home and belonging" and "displacement and loss" in the lived experiences of Armenians living in Turkey today.
11 A project that brings this resistance especially to the fore is *Houshamadyan*, an ongoing, digitized project to collaboratively reconstruct Ottoman Armenian town and village life: https://www.houshamadyan.org/home.html.

12 Campbell developed her account against the backdrop of the "false memory debates" during the 1980s and 1990s. Because of how these "debates" were framed, "thousands of women were thought to have misremembered or confabulated a history of child sexual abuse under the influence of their therapists – the view prevailed that the sociality of memory distorts and contaminates memories" (Campbell et al. 2014, xv).

13 These are, in the case of the Armenian genocide, most commonly: "Armenian question", "Armenian issue", "events of 1915", "Turkish–Armenian controversy", "Armenian events", "Armenian relocation", "Armenian problem", "Armenian losses", "Armenian incident", "Armenian conflict", "Armenian massacre", or "Armenian version (of history)".

14 Nor Zartonk is an Armenian leftist youth organization based in Istanbul.

15 On the new regulation, see "Turkish Parliament Committee Bans Mentioning of Armenian Genocide in Parliament", *The Armenian Weekly*, 24 July 2017, https://armenianweekly.com/2017/07/24/turkish-parliament-committee-bans-mentioning-of-armenian-genocide-in-parliament/

16 On this "backtracking" of Turkey's policy as regards the public commemoration of the Armenian genocide, see also "Ankara backtracks on freedom to commemorate Armenian murders", by Jasper Mortimer, *Al-Monitor*, 25 April 2018, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/04/turkey-low-participation-in-armenian-commemoration.html

17 See "Ermeni Soykırımı anmasına polis engeli: 'Katliam ve soykırım demeyin'", *Gazete Karinca*, 24 April 2018 (in Turkish), republished in *Yeryüzü Postası*, https://www.yeryuzupostasi.org/2018/04/24/ermeni-soykirimi-anmasina-polis-engeli-katliam-ve-soykirim-demeyin/

18 See "Turkish Prosecutor Declines to Charge Activists over Armenian Genocide Commemoration", *eurasianet*, 4 June 2018, https://eurasianet.org/turkish-prosecutor-declines-to-charge-activists-over-armenian-genocide-commemoration. This was likely "inspired" by a 2015 ECHR decision that Switzerland had violated Turkish politician Doğu Perinçek's right to free speech, when he denied the Armenian genocide during public speeches there. See Garibian (2016) and Belavusau (2016) for discussions of this case.

19 See "Turks commemorate Armenian genocide despite taboos", *eurasianet*, 24 April 2019, https://eurasianet.org/turks-commemorate-armenian-genocide-despite-taboos. See also "Istanbul Governorate bans Armenian genocide memorial", *Ahval*, 24 April 2022, https://ahvalnews.com/armenian-genocide/istanbul-governorate-bans-armenian-genocide-memorial

20 Note that direct genocide survivor testimony can also involve a struggle for words to describe and communicate genocidal experiences. Kusch (2017, 148–155) talks of the "linguistic despair" felt by many Holocaust witnesses. This is especially because the meaning of words to describe experiences of "ordinary" injustice are inadequate for describing the "extraordinary" experience of genocide. Genocide survivors must "report on a world in which many of our social-moral certainties had been destroyed using a language presupposing that these very certainties are in place" (161).

21 A gap between an officially defined concept and an operative concept (the shared use or working understanding of a concept) is not problematic per se. The concept of genocide is a case in point (Section 1.1.).

22 Tehlirian assassinated Talaat Pasha, the "architect of the Armenian genocide", in 1921 in Berlin. However, the German court found him not guilty, arguing that his mental health was severely affected by the Armenian genocide.

23 Asked to explain his motivation for wanting to include genocide in international law, Lemkin stated: "Later on, I became interested in genocide because it happened so many times. It happened to the Armenians and after the Armenians got a rough deal at the Versailles Conference because the criminals, who were guilty of genocide, were not punished. You know they organized a terroristic organization, which took justice in their own hands. … as a lawyer, I thought that a crime should not be punished by the victims, but should be punished by court, by international law." "U.N. Casebook" Documentary Series, CBS panel discussion with Raphael Lemkin on the Genocide Convention on 13 February 1949. The excerpt is available at https://vimeo.com/125514772.

24 Referring to the case of *Akayesu* (ICTR Trial Chamber, 2 September 1998, §§523–4), the report mentions several factors from which one can infer genocidal intent. See Totten (2009, 362) for an analysis of the report and the aforementioned reference.

25 See the website https://weremember.gov.tr/

26 As I have discussed in Chapter 1, there was already international condemnation of the crimes against Ottoman Armenians. It was called a "crime against humanity" long before the Nuremberg tribunal (even though attempts at international legal prosecution failed after the First World War).

27 On the importance of self-knowledge and self-understanding for responsible agency, see also Oshana (2010).

28 In contexts of genocide denialism and the systematic distortions of social reality that it produces, such expressions of anger are often taken to be "evidence" that the victim group is aggressive and hateful, thus reinforcing the denialist stance. Genocide deniers often portray such emotional expressions as hatred for *who they are* (e.g., as expressions of Turcophobia) and not *what they do* (i.e., denying genocide), genocide denialism thus also severely inhibits a form of expression that is crucial for victims/survivors to condemn and resist ongoing harm from their oppressors.

29 See Lehrner and Yehuda (2018) for a literature review. See also Bar-On (1989), Kupelian et al. (1998), Alayarian (2008), Moré (2021), and Wulfekühler and Moré (2021).

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5 Conversational genocide denial and testimonial oppression

Thus far, my focus in this book has been on the institutional and structural conditions of genocide denialism and its effects on interpretive practices, specifically interpretations and understandings of historical experiences and processes of genocide. I now investigate how these conditions affect interpersonal communication, that is, epistemically relevant linguistic exchanges such as testimony. This is in line with structural approaches to testimonial injustice (e.g., Alcoff 2010, 132–134; Anderson 2012; Bohman 2012; Ayala 2018).

The aim in this chapter is to show how the intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels of genocide denialism relate to and reinforce one another, thus constituting *testimonial oppression*. Whether or not individual instances of genocide denial perpetuate testimonial oppression depends on the institutional context and structural conditions within which the denial is embedded. Testimonial oppression is a matter of systematic coercion, that is, coercive power rooted in specific institutional and structural epistemic background conditions. Under such conditions, even non-racist, "naive" or everyday denial is part of a "practice of silencing" (Dotson 2011) and therefore perpetuates testimonial oppression.

In what follows, I briefly elaborate on the relevant notion of testimony and how it figures in my analysis of conversational genocide denial and testimonial oppression. I then introduce Dotson's account of *testimonial smothering*. In the context of genocide denialism, this is an especially salient practice of silencing, and hence form of testimonial oppression. Based on this, I discuss how Armenian testifiers to genocide are persistently invalidated as knowers or coerced to silence themselves. This is because genocide denialism engenders conditions of pervasive ignorance. I then explicate the effects of such testimonial oppression in terms of systematic failures of epistemic respect (or epistemic disrespect). This ultimately coerces testifiers to act in ways that further their own oppression.

5.1   Towards an ethico-epistemology of testimony

Testimony has specific epistemological vulnerability problems. On the one hand, what we come to know and understand is highly dependent on the cognitive labour and epistemic contributions of others. However, epistemologists of testimony have been disputing the conditions under which testimony-based beliefs are epistemically justified because a speaker is capable of lying, deception, or error. On the other hand, the ability to convey knowledge or other epistemic inputs (e.g., evidence, doubts, and critical ideas) conducive to knowledge and (I would add) understanding is dependent on "social uptake". Social uptake ensures what Fricker calls the capability of epistemic contribution. However, Fricker does not define "social uptake" in terms of "securing acceptance or agreement" (2015, 80). Rather, she defines it negatively. It is a matter of social arrangements that should "reliably ensure that these epistemic inputs are not rejected or underrated owing to […] epistemically irrelevant factors" (ibid.). Examples include the

> deliberate suppression of others' epistemic contributions, whether by way of coercion, legal prevention, or manipulation of local credibility relations…; a deficit of credibility resulting directly from some kind of prejudiced assessment; or a deficit of intelligibility that is caused by hermeneutical marginalisation.
>
> (Ibid.)

Thus, a speaker's epistemic contributions can be *wrongfully* excluded or rejected. This suggests a norm of epistemic equality and a right of speakers to due epistemic respect, the violation of which can constitute *epistemic harm*. This has been a subject of recent philosophical inquiry, and it is the entry point for overlaps between the ethics and epistemology of testimony.

Authors sometimes cite Anscombe's phrase, "[i]t is an insult and it may be an injury not to be believed" (1979, 150) to motivate inquiry into what we epistemically owe to speakers. This raises concerns about speakers' potential testimonial failures owing to constraining circumstances. Let us call this "testimonial wronging". As with other cases of wronging, testimonial wronging suggests that testifiers occupy a unique status, a status that is both epistemically and ethically relevant. This refers to a person's status as a *knower* or *epistemic agent* more generally, which can only be grasped in relation to an account of what it means to live a flourishing human life (Chapter 3).

Traditionally, analytic epistemology of testimony has focused on (a) how hearers may responsibly acquire knowledge through the words of others while maintaining their epistemic autonomy and (b) proposing accordant accounts of epistemic trust in testimony. However, scholars have recently paid more attention to the "giving side" of testimony and how speakers can be wronged in testimony. More specifically, the debate has turned on how a speaker's social identity, the testimonial content, and/or the context/circumstances of testimony might exacerbate a speaker's vulnerabilities. This is, in turn, supposed to modify a hearer's epistemic responsibilities and potential duties towards the speaker. These considerations suggest that we should not succumb to a purely ethical or purely epistemic notion of testimony. This is especially the case with testimony on matters of social violence and genocide. In such cases, we need to acknowledge the distinct moral stakes and political implications involved in being (or failing to be) heard, accurately understood, and believed.

Platt (2012) has analysed the (mis-)treatment of Holocaust survivor testimony in legal procedures to obtain Ghetto pensions. She urges us to critically assess our responsibilities to those remembering and testifying to extraordinary experiences of violence. Platt stresses that extremely traumatic experiences and the biographic testimony they give rise to require both acknowledgment of different forms of assertion/expression and complex ways to evaluate them. This is notable in court testimonies. Ultimately, we need to question (a) our definitions of, and success conditions for, "testimony" and (b) the degree to which it is hampered by dysfunctional institutional and social contexts.

How, then, shall we assess conversational genocide denial? As mentioned, agents of denial – institutions and individuals – rationalize a set of beliefs and understandings that constitute pervasive ignorance. They do so through normative distortions and the mistreatment of evidence. Denialism normalizes the rejection of victims' agency and experiences. It also (a) obscures the injustice of the status quo and (b) sustains and reinforces epistemic domination and oppression. The latter is possible because we depend on others in exchanging information through testimony or understanding our social experiences through hermeneutical activities. Both practices imply interdependence[1] and reciprocity between speakers and an audience. But an audience may (intentionally or unintentionally) fail to acknowledge a particular communicative attempt owing to pernicious ignorance (Dotson 2011, 238).

In light of this, institutional context has important implications for the failure or success of testimony. Individual deniers enjoy socially designated epistemic authority and power because their claims accord with the broader institutional, socio-political, and cultural context. They accord with the

dominant and *dominating* understanding of the subject matter. The institutional context renders deniers' views and misperceptions of credibility and distrust reasonable. Distrust, scepticism, and unacceptance become *legitimized and rational responses* to the testimonies of genocide survivors and descendants.

With the above considerations in mind, I now analyse unsuccessful genocide-related testimonial exchanges, exchanges that constitute a form of testimonial wronging.

5.2   Conversational genocide denial and testimonial smothering

Consider the following encounters narrated by the Armenian-Argentinian artist Silvina Der-Meguerditchian:

> Today I spoke to D., a Turkish student … I asked if she wanted to be in my collection of Turkish/Armenian encounters. … When I described the project, I told her where my grandparents came from and that they had survived the genocide. She looked a bit uncomfortable and said: "We don't know whether that happened or not." … I wanted to cry… This student had been so nice to me and so friendly and recent experiences had been so positive that I felt especially hurt when she said: "We don't know whether that happened or not." … How is one to bear the fact that someone so young and warm and friendly says she doesn't know if something that shaped and defines one's whole existence happened or not?
>
> (Der-Meguerditchian 2011, 24)

> As soon as we were introduced, I felt the need to tell T. that we came from the same place or had something in common. I didn't say that to provoke him. I think I was very naïve. I told him that my grandparents were also from Turkey and had had to leave, that they were survivors of the genocide. "Genocide?" He said, "What genocide?" THAT NEVER HAPPENED. The piece of bread I was chewing stuck in my throat. Without saying a word, I stood up and left. … I think this experience rather clearly marked a long pause in my attempt to re-establish some form of relationship with Turks.
>
> (8)

I take these to be typical examples of everyday denial Armenians experience in Turkey (and abroad). Both encounters left Der-Meguerditchian disappointed, even betrayed, hurt, and speechless. They present rather strange

kinds of conversations. We do not normally expect responses like this to the kind of information offered (especially in the student's case given their positive and friendly relationship). A possible explanation for why such testimony prompts such inadequate and hurtful responses is that the hearer takes the speaker's words to mean something that she did not intend to convey. This provokes a defensive sceptical response in the hearer. Indeed, as argued in previous chapters, the term "genocide" carries contextually determined associations (e.g., as conveying inaccurate, Turcophobic accusations). Societal discourse also frames the subject matter in a way that entails cues about *what someone is like* who testifies to genocide. It suggests that someone who testifies to genocide is accusatory, offensive, provocative, Islamophobic, or Turcophobic. We must take these into account if we want to understand how such testimony can prompt such inadequate responses.

In any case, it is not always clear whether testimonial wronging lies in an epistemic identity prejudice leading to diminished credibility judgements (as Fricker's central case from Chapter 3 suggests). It seems like something more complicated can go wrong in testimony. Pervasive ignorance produced by denialism can instantiate itself in interpersonal encounters and conversations in a variety of ways, leading to different obstacles for testimonial success. In what follows, I elaborate on practices of miscommunication rooted in pervasive ignorance and their normative implications for both speakers and hearers. I shall introduce the account of testimonial oppression employed in my analysis. I then discuss its application to the problem of genocide denial.

To see how conversational genocide denial constitutes testimonial oppression, I employ an account of testimony as an act of communication. Here, a speaker intends to convey specific information to an audience and expects a specific response from the hearer. Communication misfires when these expectations cannot be met. While testimony can render both hearers and speakers vulnerable, I am especially interested in the speaker's perspective. To determine how a speaker can be harmed in testimony, we must consider her relational vulnerabilities in testifying. These vulnerabilities relate to what the speaker trusts the hearer to do and what it means for this trust to be betrayed.

Speakers primarily trust hearers for what Dormandy calls "recognitional epistemic goods" (2020, 247). These consist in the right response to a person's epistemic agency or to their status as a knower. Testimonial oppression is, then, rooted in epistemic and discursive conditions that persistently and systematically deprive speakers of recognitional epistemic goods, thereby instituting "a harmful practice of silencing" (Dotson 2011, 241). As opposed to instances of silencing, Dotson maintains that a practice of silencing "concerns a repetitive, reliable occurrence of an audience failing

to meet the dependencies of a speaker that finds its origin in a more pervasive ignorance" (ibid.). Dotson identifies two such practices of silencing:

1 *Testimonial smothering*. Speakers are coerced to silence themselves owing to circumstances of pervasive ignorance and testimonial incompetence on some subject matter.
2 *Testimonial quieting*. The failure of an audience to identify a speaker as a knower owing to widespread "controlling images" (Collins 2000, 69). This renders certain social identities epistemically disadvantaged or inferior.[2]

Both practices are relevant to an analysis of testimonial oppression exemplified in genocide denialism. I shall, however, focus here on testimonial smothering. This is because it highlights an especially complex case of testimonial oppression brought about by circumstances of genocide denialism. Dotson identifies three (usually interrelated) circumstances that routinely give rise to testimonial smothering:

• The content of the relevant testimony is "unsafe and risky".
• The audience demonstrates "testimonial incompetence" to the speaker with respect to the content of the testimony.
• Testimonial incompetence follows or appears to follow from "pernicious ignorance", referring to reliable and situated ignorance that results in harm in a given context.

Regarding the first circumstance, the content of a testimony is unsafe and risky when it leads or contributes to the "formation of false beliefs that can cause social, political, and/or material harm" (244). To illustrate, Dotson refers to Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) analysis of women-of-colour silencing themselves when it comes to experiences of domestic violence at the hands of male African American community members. These women partake in self-silencing because speaking out might reinforce and corroborate the racist stereotype of the "violent" black male. Their societal context coerces women-of-colour to silence themselves on a matter imbued with racist stereotyping. This makes testimony of domestic violence risky. It can corroborate and reinforce misunderstandings and endanger the African American community even further (Dotson 2011, 244–245). Here, we see racist prejudice operating in a way that colours how we interpret or mistreat a speaker's words.

The above relates to the testimonial incompetence of an audience, that is, "the failure of an audience to demonstrate to the speaker that she/he will find proffered testimony accurately intelligible" (245). Testimony will be accurately intelligible to an audience if it is *clearly comprehensible* and

defeasibly intelligible. Testimonially competent hearers demonstrate to the speaker that they find testimony clearly comprehensible. If required, competent hearers would also "be able to detect possible inaccuracies in [their] comprehension" (245). They can thus rely on their ability to detect when they are not "getting it" (246). In general, this seems to refer to a hearer's duty to do what it takes to hear what the speaker intends to communicate (Dormandy 2020, 256). Accordingly, a "testimonially competent hearer is also open to the possibility that any failure to understand is his doing rather than the speaker's" (ibid.). This readiness might be encouraged if the audience recognizes and respects the emotional and practical risks that a speaker might be exposed to. This is, for example, the case when testifying to "experiences of marginalization to someone who is likely to have trouble relating, especially if their shared conceptual framework cannot easily bridge their disparate backgrounds" (257). In turn, an audience that demonstrates testimonial *incompetence* coerces potential speakers to silence themselves with respect to some domain of knowledge.

Importantly, the cultivation of such testimonial incompetence depends on how the relevant subject matter is framed in a society's public discourse. An example is the framing of "race talk" in US society. Cassandra Byers Harvin illustrates this when she notes how she has been made to "avoid speaking candidly about race with her colleagues as a result of the 'hurt feelings and surprise and defensiveness' that her audience may take on during such conversations" (1996, 16, cited in Dotson 2011, 247). Harvin describes one encounter with an "early-50s-looking" white woman in a public library. The woman asks Harvin what she is working on:

> Harvin responds by indicating she is researching "raising black sons in this society". The white woman promptly asks, "How is that any different from raising white sons?" Harvin notes that it is not only the question that is problematic, as it indicates a kind of *lack of awareness of racial struggles* in the United States, but also the *tone of the question* that indicated the white woman believed that Harvin was "making something out of nothing".
>
> (Dotson 2011, 247, my emphasis)

The immediate question, "How is that any different from raising white sons?" and the tone in which it was asked, indicate an unnecessarily sceptical question "that can operate to effectively negate the experiential reality of many people of color" (ibid.). It is a way of smothering testimony because it conveys that there is nothing special to talk about as regards raising black sons in the United States and that Harvin was making a problem out of nothing. This invalidates Harvin's claim to have anything important to say on the topic. It also questions whether her thoughts, feelings, and experiences matter. In short, it invalidates her as a knower.

Testimonial incompetence appears to follow from *pernicious situated ignorance*. In Chapter 2, I introduced the idea that different social positions can come with different experiences, knowledge, and understandings of the social world (or relevant aspects thereof). This can create gaps in shared hermeneutical resources, which are sometimes generated and maintained through *wilful hermeneutical ignorance* or *privileged ignorance*.[3] Returning to Harvin's example, the white woman's response could be the result of situated ignorance. She does not find the content of the testimony accurately intelligible because she has never raised black sons in the United States. She thus lacks the relevant socially situated experience. However, she also demonstrates ignorance of her own situated unawareness. This is likely attributable to further protective cognitive mechanisms or epistemic attitudes akin to privileged ignorance. She is, in that sense, actively ignorant of her own unawareness that she might learn something from her interlocutor. After all, she could demonstrate testimonial competence despite not sharing the same *experiences* or *lived reality*. She could remain open to a black woman's insights and thereby acknowledge the conversation as important. It is important because she might gain a *better understanding* of how racism operates in her society.

By failing to acknowledge her situated epistemic limits or cognitive gaps, the white woman fails to acknowledge the black speaker's experiential insights. She fails to acknowledge her situated epistemic authority on the subject of racial relations in American society. This is how a rhetorical or pseudo-sceptical response can invalidate someone as a knower and epistemic agent more generally.[4] This once again highlights the mutually reinforcing loop (Section 3.4) between hermeneutical oppression (or wilful hermeneutical ignorance) and testimonial oppression. Under conditions of hermeneutical oppression, which contributes to and/or maintains situated ignorance, the testimony of those hermeneutically marginalized might appear *implausible* to the dominantly situated hearer. If the hearer holds a prejudice against the speaker, then perceived implausibility will further engender prejudicial distrust.

How are the above insights applicable to the problem of genocide denial? Under conditions of genocide denialism, genocide testimony is indeed unsafe and risky. Armenian claims to genocide recognition and remembrance are represented as accusatory, baseless expressions of radical Armenian nationalism, Turcophobia, or Islamophobia, or as an attack on Turkish identity. Hearers might then interpret genocide testimony as evidence for their prejudiced perceptions of Armenians as aggressors or subversive and treacherous provocateurs. This traditional prejudice is widespread, readily available, and powerful.[5] This likely coerces Armenians to silence themselves to avoid further endangerment of their community, as their claims are interpreted as insults and threats to Turkish national identity and security. Speaking about genocide can risk

reinforcing negative prejudice, inhibit dialogue, and encourage testimonial smothering. This prevents members of the target group from (a) having a conversation that is required for social justice and (b) asserting their personhood (Sections 4.4 and 5.4).

We can also observe the fulfilment of the second circumstance (demonstrating testimonial incompetence) in Der-Meguerditchian's encounters with genocide denial. There, too, Meguerditchian's personal reports provoked unnecessarily sceptical or pseudo-sceptical invalidating responses on the part of hearers. Recall especially this part:

> When I described the project, I told her where my grandparents came from and that they had survived the genocide. She looked a bit uncomfortable and said: "We don't know whether that happened or not".
>
> (2011, 24)

The *content* of testimony deserves special attention here. It is not only risky and unsafe, but also morally relevant and inherently related to the speaker's social location. To speak about one's family background and history of oppression (which is risky and unsafe in many contexts) puts higher moral and (as I shall argue) epistemic demands on both speakers and hearers:

- Speakers must weigh the risk of testimony reproducing the hostilities and prejudices towards their community that perpetuate their oppression.
- Hearers must demonstrate testimonial competence to would-be speakers to avoid subjecting them to testimonial smothering.

What about those who refuse to be smothered and resist testimonial oppression despite acknowledging the risks? They might suffer the ultimate act of "silencing", namely murder. A case in point is the murder of prominent Armenian journalist Hrant Dink. Dink was the editor-in-chief of the bilingual (Armenian and Turkish) newspaper *Agos*. He was assassinated in front of his office building on 19 January 2007 in Istanbul, shortly after being prosecuted on charges of "insulting Turkishness", a crime under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code. In the next section, I discuss Dink's murder in the broader context of the Turkish legal system and Turkish solidarity. Doing so further shines a light on the fragile status and mistreatment of genocide testimony.

5.3   Consequences of resisting testimonial smothering

Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, "Degrading Turkish Nation, State of Turkish Republic, the Organs and Institutions of the State", is especially

relevant to the Armenian genocide. The article declares penalties for anyone

> who publicly degrades [sic] Turkish Nation, State of the Turkish Republic, Turkish Grand National Assembly, the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the judicial bodies of the State or who publicly degrades the military or security organizations.[6]

It should come as no surprise that this affects public speech about the Armenian genocide. As mentioned, and as is generally acknowledged by historians and social scientists, the genocides committed under *Ittihadist* rule represent the Turkish nation-state's foundational crimes.[7]

Various public intellectuals (mostly journalists and writers) have been prosecuted under Article 301 for writing and talking about the Armenian genocide.[8] In a 2007 ruling, a Turkish court passed suspended prison sentences on two Turkish-Armenian journalists – Arat Dink and Sarkis Seropyan – for talking about genocide. The ruling stated the following:

> Talk about genocide, both in Turkey and in other countries, unfavourably affects national security and the national interest. The claim of genocide …has become part of and the means of special plans aiming to change the geographic political boundaries of Turkey … and a campaign to demolish its physical and legal structure." The ruling further stated that the Republic of Turkey is under "a hostile diplomatic siege consisting of genocide resolutions… The acceptance of this claim may lead in future centuries to a questioning of the sovereignty rights of the Republic of Turkey over the lands on which it is claimed these events occurred." Due to these national security concerns, the court declared that the claim of genocide in 1915 is not protected speech, and that "the use of these freedoms can be limited in accordance with aims such as the protection of national security, of public order, of public security."
>
> <div align="right">(translated and cited in Akçam 2009)</div>

Although sentences are often suspended or delayed, Article 301 belongs to a set of intimidation tactics. It signals that any public mention of the Armenian genocide could be seen as a threat to national interests and national security. Despite what should have been an obvious attempt to misrepresent testimony and thereby demonize those providing the testimony, Turkish citizens only took to the streets after Hrant Dink's assassination. However, acts of condemnation and solidarity, even if well-intended, had the potential to render Dink's Armenian identity further invisible.

Some genocide denial narratives create an "undesirable difference" to justify societal exclusion; others tend to ignore, obscure, or deny difference. For example, statements such as "We are all Turks!" might be expressed

with the intent of showing solidarity. Yet, they can contribute to a special kind of ignorance, namely denial of *difference*. This brings us to more or less subtle forms of ignorance. These can be especially problematic when expressed by persons with dominant privilege. Such persons might thereby further obscure dominating relations and render marginalized concerns and resistance struggles invisible. This is also relevant in relation to the aftermath of Dink's assassination. Thousands of people marched in Dink's funeral procession. Some protested with slogans like "We are all Hrant, we are all Armenians!" Stated from a position of dominant privilege, such statements can run the risk of promoting *denial of difference* and obscuring that non-Armenians can *learn* from Armenians. They can obscure difference and hence experiences of vulnerabilization that go along with specific social locations, thus inhibiting such learning processes.[9]

Expressions of solidarity might serve as a starting point with a very narrowly conceived aim. However, for them to have genuine value, they must be accompanied by or give rise to further actions, actions that demonstrate sincere commitment to social justice. This requires attending to *the real differences* of the Armenian experience. Michael Rothberg (2019) has referred to this as *differentiated solidarity*, suggesting that because we occupy different positions in a power structure, it is our political responsibility to reflect that asymmetry in our expression or acts of solidarity instead of proceeding directly to identification. Members of the dominant group should comprehend their position in current asymmetries of power. They must understand their historical responsibility and avoid appropriating others' experiences.

Of course, denial or obscuring of difference can also be intentionally deployed. By saying that one does not see colour, race, or gender, one is being actively (and often proudly) ignorant of social positionality. Such statements entail the arrogant assumption that "there is nothing to see, that those aspects of identity can play no role or have no significance, no matter what others see" (Medina 2013, 38). As Medina points out, such "blindness to difference" does not only entail a moral failure, but also a double epistemic failure: "a failure in self-knowledge and a failure in the knowledge of others with whom one is intimately related" (37). We find this, for example, in the Turkish government's and official Turkish media outlets' reaction to Dink's murder. While the government condemned the murder as an abhorrent crime, the largest Turkish newspapers saw the murderer as a traitor to the Turkish nation. With headlines like "Hrant Dink is Turkey", or "We're all Hrant Dink", the newspapers repeatedly emphasized Dink's Turkish citizenship, stating that his murder was a crime against the Turkish nation. These tropes conceal the core issue of the state's complicity in this anti-Armenian hate crime. As mentioned, Dink had already received an (albeit suspended) sentence for "insulting Turkishness" under Article 301, "Degrading Turkish Nation, State of Turkish Republic,

the Organs and Institutions of the State". Thus, he was already being portrayed as a "threat to national security". Turkish officials had to take a stance that accorded with Turkish nationalist state policy. They, thereby, actively erased difference or rendered it inconsequential. Ultimately, this (explicitly or implicitly) affirmed the murder.[10] At the same time, it allowed the state to conceal its complicity therein.

Of course, physical extermination could be seen as the most extreme form of silencing, though it is not testimonial smothering. However, physical harm or murder contributes to a coercive environment, an environment where certain testimonies are rendered risky and unsafe, thus coercing potential testifiers to silence themselves.

I have explicated how genocide denialism constitutes testimonial oppression. In doing so, I have emphasized the notion of testimonial smothering. I now elaborate on testimonial oppression's epistemic harms.

5.4   The epistemic harms of testimonial oppression

Under conditions of genocide denialism, testifying genocide survivors and descendants of survivors are in positions of exacerbated testimonial vulnerability along two dimensions:

1 As speakers belonging to a specific inferiorized social group.
2 As speakers testifying to a specific fragile subject matter.

On the first dimension, genocide denialism discredits the group by attributing it negative essential characteristics and by engendering images suggestive of a lack of credibility or trustworthiness. It is not incidental that the denigration, or general moral and social misrecognition of a particular group, gives rise to a whole set of accompanying prejudices, including misrecognition of their epistemic standing. On this dimension, misrecognized epistemic agents are ignored or silenced. This might occur when they are prevented from speaking or are being misheard because of identity prejudice.

On the second dimension, genocide denialism misapprehends and promotes ignorance about the subject matter of genocide. It aims at preventing certain epistemic contributions from gaining uptake. These epistemic contributions are rejected or misheard owing to the dominant and dominating understanding of the subject matter. Such understandings are sustained by (a) a general belief system and (b) pertinent social, political, and material conditions. Conversations about genocide are inhibited because the hearer is unable or unwilling to understand the subject matter and what is at stake.[11] Thus, beyond misrecognizing social identities, genocide denialism misapprehends and targets particular information.[12]

Such differentiation might be useful to decipher a denier's motives and rationalization strategies. However, having a certain understanding of genocide is usually intricately connected to having certain beliefs about or conceptions of both the victim group and perpetrator group. Nevertheless, they represent different forms of silencing and therefore epistemic harm. At the same time, both belong to the same category of injustice: testimonial oppression.

In Chapter 3, I argued that persistent failures of epistemic recognition inhibit the realization of epistemic self-development and epistemic self-determination. In what follows, I elaborate on these different forms of epistemic harm by drawing on Darwall's distinction between two kinds of respect (recognition and appraisal) introduced in Chapter 4. I argue that (1) epistemic disrespect directed towards the giver of testimony is a case of *epistemic misrecognition* and (2) disrespect directed towards the content of testimony is a case of *epistemic disesteem*; it constitutes a failure to credit distinct epistemic qualities and achievements.

The two forms of disrespect are also mirrored in Congdon's (2018) attempt at bringing recognition theory into conversation with epistemic injustice. Although his account is based on Honneth's threefold typology of recognition (love, respect, and esteem) it seems to me that his definitions of epistemic respect/disrespect and epistemic esteem/disesteem concord with the terminological distinction I employ from Darwall (between *moral recognition respect* and *appraisal respect*):

- Moral recognition respect is "the kind of respect owed to everyone equally due to the second-personal nature of the dignity or authority of persons" (Darwall 2006, 121–122)
- Appraisal respect is "a positive appraisal of a person's estimable qualities, dispositions or achievements"; it is an "approbation of someone as a moral agent" (ibid.)

Applied to the epistemic domain, by *epistemic respect* (or *epistemic recognition respect*), Congdon considers "those egalitarian forms of recognition owed to any knower whatsoever" (2018, 13). It involves "respect[ing] someone qua knower *irrespective* of the differential strengths and weaknesses by which we typically judge knowers" (ibid.). It means to regard one another as equals in the space of reasons, to acknowledge mutual answerability and hold each other responsible in the give and take of reasons – in short, engaging in a "cooperative ethos of mutual epistemic recognition" (Fricker 2018, 4). By *epistemic disrespect* (or *epistemic misrecognition*) Congdon means "a violation of the implicit normative promise that all knowers be subjected to the same basic standards of criticism within the space of reasons" (Congdon 2018, 15). Misrecognition rooted

in negative epistemic identity prejudice distorts these standards to the speaker's disadvantage. The hearer also refuses to reason with the speaker, thereby not relating to the speaker in her capacity as a potential guide to truth. Such is the case in genocide denialism, where the identity of the victim group is construed as inherently epistemically untrustworthy, such that testifiers are not given equal epistemic standing in the practice of mutual reasoning.

There is also a sense in which speakers will experience *epistemic disesteem*, a misrecognition of their *epistemic achievements*. Congdon introduces the notion of epistemic esteem as referring to

> those forms of epistemic recognition that do take into account individual knowers' unique strengths, epistemic accomplishments, and contributions to epistemic practice that serve to distinguish them from others. Hard-won expertise in a field, practical knowledge from a lifetime of experience, or the cultivation of a trustworthy epistemic character may be grounds for epistemic esteem.
>
> (14)

This enables the development of "epistemic self-esteem, one's regarding oneself as having distinct and valuable contributions to make to collective epistemic practices" (ibid.) In contrast, *epistemic disesteem* "can refer to acts that convey the notion that one's distinctive contributions to cooperative epistemic practice are undervalued or viewed as worthless" (15). Surely, remembering and testifying to genocide are indicative of an *epistemic achievement* of some sort, one that relates to the reconstructive nature of memory (Chapter 4). It involves both (a) knowledge about some historical state of affairs and (b) that state of affairs' interpretation, moral evaluation, and determination of social and political implications. Following standpoint epistemology and the situated knowledge thesis (Section 3.4), genocide survivors and descendants potentially have an epistemic advantage, one that stems from their social location and their lived experiences accompanying it. This grants them a kind of epistemic authority on a matter they are uniquely positioned to know and understand. This is not to say that a social location yields knowledge in and of itself. It does, however, provide resources for generating knowledge through critical and theoretical reflection.

To consider an epistemic standpoint an achieved stance requiring cognitive labour owing to individual, estimable epistemic qualities and accomplishments supports my claim here that epistemic disesteem is among the epistemic harms perpetrated by testimonial oppression. Note, however, that while Congdon focuses on epistemic strengths and accomplishments of *individual* knowers, epistemic "standpoints" are rather

collective achievements. Especially given the threat of "false consciousness" or internalized oppression, it is in critical cooperative exchange with others, for example through what the feminist movement referred to as consciousness-raising groups, that one is likely to achieve a "standpoint" and thus avail of one's situated epistemic advantage and expertise on the relevant subject matter.[13]

What, then, are the *resultant* epistemic harms incurred by persistent and systematic epistemic misrecognition and disesteem? Crucially, it can lead to a loss of confidence in one's beliefs and one's justification for them. This, in turn, can lead to a loss of knowledge (Fricker 2007, 49–50). Loss of epistemic confidence can also inhibit the development of certain intellectual virtues. An example is "intellectual courage, the virtue of not backing down in one's convictions too quickly in response to challenge" (49). *Epistemic confidence* refers to a condition whereby epistemic agents learn to rely on their cognitive capacities. This can occur when agents' testimonies are taken up well (i.e., are recognized as valuable contributions to testimonial exchange).

Intellectual self-trust is a more general positive attitude towards ourselves. According to Karen Jones, it is

> a stance that an agent takes towards her own cognitive methods and mechanisms, comprising both cognitive and affective elements, and revealed in the agent's perception of reasons to withhold or defer in her judgment on the basis of their deliverances.
>
> (2012, 238)

Jones goes on to say that intellectual self-trust

> manifests itself in feelings of confidence, in dispositions willingly to rely on the deliverances of one's methods and to assert what is believed on their basis, and in modulating self-reflection.
>
> (245)

Zagzebski has more generally argued that self-trust is necessary for *autonomy*. She states that

> a being without self-trust is not autonomous because the basic norm of self-management is conscientious reflection, and a being without self-trust cannot trust conscientious reflection.
>
> (2012, 238)

Oshana refers to this as "epistemic competence" (2006, 76), which she argues is a crucial condition for autonomy, entailing both *self-awareness*

and *self-reflection*. This is why epistemic misrecognition and epistemic disesteem can be said to stymie epistemic self-development *and* epistemic self-determination.

This is not to say that everyone experiences these epistemic harms. In the context of genocide denialism at hand, members of the target group can often maintain their intellectual self-trust and epistemic confidence through sufficient epistemic recognition amongst themselves. Third-party genocide recognition can also help, such as by the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS), other governments and international institutions, or human rights and civil society organizations. However, such international efforts of genocide recognition can also aggravate conditions in a national context imbued by genocide denialism.

Indeed, the Turkish state's denial efforts have become more global and sophisticated, largely in response to international attempts at genocide recognition and remembrance. International efforts (and, for example, resolutions and legislations such as the recent ones in Germany and France) can exacerbate the social and political vulnerability of the Armenian citizens of Turkey because the Turkish government and nationalist groups target them in response. This can further coerce them to silence themselves. Thus, while international recognition supports epistemic resistance struggles, it can also increase the pernicious effects of genocide denialism.

Other members of society will also suffer epistemic harms, as I argued in Chapter 2. Those with dominant privilege will have their capacity for critical thinking, including critical self-reflection, inhibited (see also Çayır 2014, 100–113). They may inadvertently become complicit in oppression and be prevented from developing a good moral and epistemic character. However, as elaborated in Chapter 3, they overall incur *practical advantages* from these conditions, whereas there are a range of practical disadvantages for genocide survivors and descendants.

The resultant practical harms of genocide denial crucially depend on the role of knowledge of genocide for survivors and descendants and, accordingly, the stakes involved in potentially losing or having impeded access to such knowledge. Being unable to understand (a) the distress that goes with being a member of a target group and (b) constant threats from oppressive institutions and structures can lead to mental and physical harms. They can also result in an inability to process unconsciously acquired intergenerational trauma from parents, relatives, and fellow group members. Moreover, being unable to participate in cooperative epistemic practices prevents these persons from actively resisting oppression and seeking social change. This is how loss of knowledge can lead to continued powerlessness and material deprivation.

On Dotson's account, testimonial oppression and the practices of silencing that constitute it do not depend on whether the underlying ignorance

is culpable. Speakers are wronged by testimonial oppression regardless of whether a hearer is culpable for the ignorance constituting her testimonial incompetence. The focus is on the resultant silencing, while the question of culpability for such silencing is a different and more complex issue.

So far, I have not dealt with the question of whether deniers are culpable for their denial and/or the harms they thereby perpetuate and sustain. Nonetheless, my discussion of epistemic vices and privileged ignorance in Chapter 2 suggests that understanding culpability will involve identifying *how* an agent is ignorant. In the remainder of this chapter, I explore individual culpability for denial and testimonial incompetence under conditions aggravated by genocide denialism and social injustice.

5.5   Individual culpability and responsibility for genocide denial

Why insist on the epistemic culpability of genocide deniers? While working on this book, I have frequently encountered the claim that members of Turkish society are exculpated insofar as "they cannot help but be brainwashed under such circumstances". Certainly, the primary culpability rests with the state and its institutions that produce and maintain ignorance. It makes sense to accord individual deniers at least diminished culpability under these circumstances. However, this does not mean that members of society are entirely exculpated. This would not only be patronizing but also portray members of society as passive objects without agency (which is tantamount to epistemic disrespect). It would also render epistemic resistance within society and the moral solidarity of those who question the dominating understandings invisible. As such, assessing the culpability of deniers requires their recognition as agents who are responsive to reasons (hence *responsible agents*) and an assessment of the extent to which we can reasonably expect them to question the dominant (mis)understandings instead of endorsing them. In doing so, we refrain from analyses involving the further essentialization and pathologization of "Turks".

I argued in Chapter 2 that denial can be an expression of active ignorance, insofar it is rooted in an epistemic agent's attitudes and dispositions, specifically those of a closed-minded or epistemically arrogant agent.[14] The development of such vices is largely dependent on social conditions and relations of power. Thus, one can ask to what extent ignorant agents are indeed culpably ignorant.

Recalling Bardon's account, denial is based on motivated reasoning. Arguably, agents adopt or form a belief largely *unconsciously*, based on an emotional need rather than epistemic reasons. If denial is based on an *unconscious* human tendency of motivated cognition, then how can deniers be responsible, or even culpable for it? Things become even more complicated when there is a community that facilitates the adoption,

rationalization, and maintenance of false beliefs. This facilitation occurs through the systematic spread of partial or problematic hermeneutical resources or concepts, misleading information or evidence, social and political incentives, and the like. This supports the denier's conception of themselves as someone who believes on epistemic grounds, that is, someone who behaves in an epistemically responsible and open-minded way. They might regard themselves as sceptics and critical thinkers and draw confidence from the idea that they dare to question "the establishment" (however selectively, since they do not seem to question the nationalist establishment). They, then, seem to deceive themselves about both their moral and epistemic self-conceptions.

Hence, the degree of what some have called an "epistemically polluted" environment (e.g., Levy 2021) can encourage the adoption and maintenance of false beliefs and the development of epistemic vices. That said, we should not let such cognizers off the hook too easily. Bardon's argument for epistemic responsibility acknowledges that, even if some cognitive processes are unconscious at the time of belief acquisition, a person can still become aware of them. Judging whether a denier is *epistemically irresponsible* hinges on whether or not he "is intellectually capable of avoiding bias in acquiring beliefs, and/or getting at the root causes of his or her existing beliefs, but doesn't really want to" (Bardon 2020, 30). The denier is, then, *unwilling* to reflect on or question his beliefs in the face of counter-information or evidence. Instead, he rationalizes them further. This can also take the shape of wilful *hermeneutical* ignorance, where a person is unwilling to adopt hermeneutical resources offered by those who are marginally situated, which would allow them to better comprehend a particular aspect of the social world (Chapter 4). Thus, a denier is epistemically responsible for his denial to the degree that we understand the latter as a *practice of false belief maintenance*. The denier is epistemically irresponsible because he actively maintains his belief system for bad practical reasons (and not because it is truth-conducive). Bad personal, practical reasons for denial, and hence maintenance of false beliefs, may be trumped by other practical reasons, such as the fact that it perpetuates oppression or may have other significantly harmful consequences for others. The type of rationality involved in maintaining a false belief is practical reason and the concern is with how "bad" it would be for the denier to change his mind. Insofar as deniers can rationalize, defend, and maintain their false beliefs, they also have the reason abilities to question them, and hence are epistemically responsible. It seems, then, that denial is closely related to social and political incentives. As noted in Chapter 2, protecting privilege and hiding complicity with oppression are strong motives for an unwillingness to know or comprehend.

In the case of hiding one's complicity with oppression, we can also speak of *wilful moral ignorance*. Moody-Adams (1994) argues convincingly that there can be wilful moral ignorance that warrants *diminished* culpability without excusing wrongdoers. She objects to accounts promoting what she calls the "inability thesis about cultural impediments" (293) and argues that culture cannot excuse individuals from wrongdoing when they act out of (arguably culturally imposed) moral ignorance. Moral wrongdoing is explainable through *affected ignorance* rather than culture, that is, through "choosing not to know what one can and should know" (296). Even if some morally questionable practice is widespread and culturally acceptable (as it happens to be the case with genocide denialism), individuals are responsible and partly culpable for their *uncritical* maintenance or perpetuation of that practice. If individuals possess such critical abilities, affected ignorance is a better explanation for their moral wrongdoing than the idea that they were *unable* to know better.

Moody-Adams argues that this critical ability is given because the creation and maintenance of cultural practices are dependent on individual and collective human action. This, in turn, requires basic human abilities such as adopting an "internal perspective" – e.g., of reflecting upon cultural norms, acting according to them, or being sanctioned when violating them.[15] The ability to adopt an internal perspective renders people adequate candidates for responsibility, both for their affected ignorance and for the wrongdoing resulting from it.

To illustrate this, Moody-Adams mentions several varieties of affected ignorance. These are essentially varieties of ways we can choose "not to be informed of what we can and should know" (1994, 301). This process allows individuals to routinely perpetrate wrongdoing. It functions to deny the relationship between one's action and the moral harm or injury it causes. *Linguistic deception* is one of her proposed varieties of affected ignorance. An example is when torturers mask the reality of their activities by describing their "violent methods by means of deceptively benign phrases such as 'the telephone' and the 'parrots' swing'" (ibid.). These descriptions "ultimately allow the torturer to deny the connection between his wrongdoing and the suffering of his victim" (ibid.). I do not think this requires the perpetrator to *know* that his acts are indeed wrong. There is, at least to some extent, an acknowledgment that the situation (or certain aspects thereof) call for strategies to deny or mask its reality. These strategies are invoked to justify one's actions when they visibly or foreseeably inflict pain or suffering.

Linguistic deceptions are starkly present in genocide denialism. Terms such as "civil war" or "tragic events" are employed to obscure and distort the power relations underlying perpetration and culpable agency. The same applies to the way that genocide and its immediate aftermath have

been justified as acts of "national self-defence". Deniers, thereby, abrogate themselves from the responsibility of dealing with historical injustice. Here, too, the need to engage in denial, rationalization and justification might have been prompted by some kind of acknowledgment that the acts were internationally condemned. After all, denial (and justification) would not be a constant feature of the genocidal process if perpetrators were unaware of the norms and ethical imperatives related to (a) respect for human life and (b) civilians and prisoners of war's rights to protection. The fact that such norms were in place is demonstrated by the subsequent Ottoman military tribunals discussed in Section 1.2.2.

Moody-Adams also discusses the example of "asking no questions" (1994, 302). Here, individuals or institutions decide not to inquire further despite evidence that inquiry is needed to stop or prevent wrongdoing. In the case of Armenian genocide denial, for example, this may apply to those who are aware of Hrant Dink's murder but decline to inquire into its surrounding circumstances and underlying motives. Doing so could make them uncomfortably aware of their privilege and the oppressive conditions genocide denial maintains.[16] Moody-Adams considers the most common form of affected ignorance to be *avoiding acknowledgment of human fallibility*. There is a general human tendency to avoid acknowledging the possibility that our most deeply held convictions may be wrong (ibid.). This signals a failure of epistemic humility or demonstrates epistemic arrogance (Section 2.2.2). Affective ignorance is a behavioural pattern that individuals exhibit. But, as mentioned, it can be allowed, encouraged, or cultivated by the broader societal context.

Affected ignorance in a "culture of denial" suggests a certain tension between (a) the disacknowledgement of a given situation's moral features and (b) a concurrent selective acknowledgement of at least some of those features. This tension can prompt moral distortions and re-descriptions of the relevant situation. Given that affected ignorance and denial are *responses* to certain states of affairs, there is a sense in which denial requires partial acknowledgment.

How can we relate this discussion to individual culpability for genocide denial and *testimonial incompetence*? The testimonial incompetence in the examples I discussed is morally charged because we are interested in testimonial incompetence produced by systems of oppression. It manifests itself in relation to specific testimony or testifiers. This, in turn, institutes a practice of silencing. It will, then, contribute to and perpetuate oppression. This is why genocide denial and the testimonial oppression it perpetuates are also matters of moral ignorance.

Which *epistemic* responsibilities can we derive from this? Do conditions of oppression create specific moral *and* epistemic demands for responsible hearers? In other words, are they violating *epistemic* norms and not just

moral ones? Some scholars have argued that such moral demands or reasons can and should have an impact on our belief-forming practices when it comes to *standards of justification* for belief. They demand, for example, the need for more, stronger, or specific sources of evidence for doxastic justification. Thus, the bar for *sufficiency* of evidence is sensitive to practical (including moral) considerations and "what evidential policies we employ can be shaped by our relationships with others" (Basu 2019, 926). This suggests that an epistemically responsible or testimonially competent hearer can both (a) recognize the moral stakes involved in testimony on injustice from a socially vulnerable position and (b) adapt their belief-forming practices accordingly. This includes the hearer's response to the testimony. Rather than rejecting the testimony, they might, for instance, suspend judgement, refrain from challenging the testimony, accept the testimony, or inquire further.

   The problem, however, is that genocide deniers have their own moral and practical stakes in the relevant circumstances. It is these stakes that lead to denial in the face of genocide testimony. This further complicates the situation. It will be difficult to convince deniers that *other's* moral stakes should trump their own and thereby motivate a change of their beliefs. For example, accepting genocide testimony would imply that one might have ancestors who were murderers or might have contributed to genocide in some other way. In that sense, and in accordance with the official political stance, hearers maintain a *self-deceptive* image of their ancestors as inherently innocent.[17] In cases in which people have nationalist sentiments (i.e., identify with state-imposed history and identity), this will likely extend to self-deception with regard to, or whitewashing of, one's cultural heritage.[18] While denial, here, functions to maintain positive self-esteem, it is usually accompanied by moral judgements that rationalize denial, such as that they are "good people" and that they must have been justified in their actions ("they *had to do* whatever they did"). This also relates to protecting a self-image of "being the victim" and never the perpetrator. The result is a "victimhood mentality" that is attributable to Turkism/Turkish nationalism.[19] Ultimately, this presents an actively maintained and distorted (moral) self-image, one that goes hand-in-hand with the avoidance of responsibility. Note that while maintaining positive self-esteem is considered to be a fundamental psychological need, the moral dimension comes into play in relation to how one seeks to *satisfy* that need. It might, for instance, be through sincere, critical introspection or by degrading others. In the case in question, it comes by discrediting and disbelieving testifiers. This can be accompanied by a belief in one's superiority (and others' inferiority), hence epistemic arrogance (although it need not do so).

Another example of the practical stakes involved relates to the fact that acknowledging genocide would require admitting the possibility that one has inherited or received unearned benefits. These benefits might come from the genocide or from the current discriminatory system and would then render one morally and materially indebted. We can call these *reasons to maintain privilege*.

Acknowledging genocide would also mean that, not only the state and its institutions, but also the people one *trusts*, one's schoolteachers, family members, and friends have been lying or (unintentionally) providing misinformation. This presents challenges to one's moral integrity. More specifically, it becomes a matter of loyalty to those with whom one shares trust relationships. It becomes a matter of associative duties to personal relationships, and this can entail disbelieving opposing claims. These stakes also render hearers vulnerable to some extent when they are confronted by genocide testimonies. They can ground a *fear* of truth, which again highlights the emotional and physiological dimensions of denial.

The above incentives make it difficult to know that one has mistaken beliefs and that those beliefs inform behaviour that wrongs others. After all, deniers consider their beliefs to be *justified* (or at least, they have strong incentives to justify them). Denying genocide becomes the righteous thing to do. Recognizing genocide, in contrast, would be an injustice and a harm to *themselves*. Also relevant is the distress that comes with realizing that one's intellectual capabilities have been rendered deficient or that one's whole self-conception and worldview are based on false or misleading information.

Note that I am specifically referring to deniers who are sincere in their denial, that is, deniers who are *in denial* rather than expressing denial while secretly acknowledging the truth. Thus, one way to address questions of *individual epistemic culpability* for testimonial incompetence grounded in denial is to invoke a vice epistemological framework. Here, for example, identity-prejudicial testimonial injustice would be considered as a *personalist epistemic vice*, suggesting that it entails an epistemic failure that has much more to do with our personality or character (i.e., an epistemic agents' bad *dispositions* or *habits*) than with their punctual culpable negligence of some epistemic and moral duties in a given situation.

It seems in all these cases where persistent denial is justified based on personal (though socially inculcated or encouraged) reasons described above, ignorance is integrated with the agent's personal values and motives. This makes genocide denial an expression of a personalist epistemic vice. It expresses *their* epistemic values and motives, such as to "believe whatever is easiest, or whatever preserves the status quo, or whatever makes one feel good, instead of motives for truth, knowledge,

and understanding" (Battaly 2017, 225) or to believe "whatever will … fit with one's group" (226). Therefore, deniers are culpably ignorant in cases where denial reflects a personalist vice. Here, deniers can be said to have some *control* over their degree of closed-mindedness, epistemic arrogance, and epistemic laziness. These are acquired dispositions, which, in turn, render bad motives and values personal. They are expressions of the agent's epistemic character. This can give rise to cases of culpable ignorance, where the agent is "blameworthy for failing to perform the requisite voluntary actions to avoid [bad motives and values] and/or blameworthy for performing the voluntary actions that eventually produce them" (227). They are culpably ignorant, because they could have known better and, hence, should have known better, *but did not want to*. However, as stressed throughout this book, undoing this ignorance and the epistemic oppression it perpetuates and sustains does not only require a change of individual epistemic attitudes, habits, and motives. It also requires social change, that is, the transformation of institutions that are epistemically unjust by design.

Notes

1 By interdependence, Pohlhaus Jr (2012, 716) means one (of two) senses in which the sociality of the knower is epistemically significant. It refers to the idea that the epistemic resources needed to make sense of those parts of the world to which one attends are by nature collective.
2 See also Fricker's (2007, 30–41) central case of identity-prejudicial testimonial injustice (introduced in Chapter 3).
3 Both knowledge and ignorance are situated. Such situatedness is first of all a fact about our human condition and thus not culpable and pernicious *per se*. As Alcoff argues, "[g]roup identity makes an epistemically relevant difference… because groups will sometimes operate with different starting belief sets based on their social location and their group-related experiences, and these starting belief sets will inform their epistemic operations such as judging coherence and plausibility" (2007, 45).
4 The notion of "colour-blindness" is also relevant to the case, that is, of someone being "blind" to difference in contexts where difference actually matters. See also my brief discussion on how this relates to the Turkish context in Section 5.3.
5 There has been continued anti-Armenian prejudice from the late Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic through institutionalized Turkism/Turkish nationalism. This is relevant, because a historically entrenched (mis-)perception of a group makes extant references that play into those perceptions powerful tools of social control. Framing the "genocide debate" in a way that references historically entrenched stereotypes and prejudices makes denialism even more accepted. It embeds itself into familiar perceptions of Armenians and accepted behavioural dispositions towards them.
6 Penal Code of Turkey, Document provided by the European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), CDL-REF(2016)011, Strasbourg,

15 February 2016, https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-REF(2016)011-e

7 Kieser and colleagues note the following: "We are of the firm opinion, strengthened by the contributions in this volume, that the single most important reason for this inability to accept culpability is the centrality of the Armenian massacres for the formation of the Turkish nation-state. The deeper collective psychology within which this sentiment rests assumes that any move toward acknowledging culpability will put the very foundations of the Turkish nation-state at risk and will lead to its steady demise" (2015, 5).

8 This stands in stark contrast to other countries that adopted legislation to criminalize genocide *denial*. Some countries have passed legislation criminalizing Holocaust denial (among them Austria, Belgium Germany, and France), but its extension to denials of other genocides is persistently contested. Rulings to criminalize Armenian genocide denial in France and Switzerland, for example, failed under Turkish pressure. In France, the ruling was overturned by the French Constitutional Court. In Switzerland, it was overturned by the European Court of Human Rights (in *Perinçek vs. Switzerland*). See Garibian (2016) and Belavusau (2017) on the last case. Among other things, the inconsistency of so-called "memory laws" makes it a generally controversial issue: It creates a hierarchy of genocides in which some genocide denials are protected by freedom of speech and others are not. The Memory Laws in European and Comparative Perspective (MELA) project's website is a helpful resource for investigating controversies surrounding laws related to historical memory. Such controversies are often enshrined in state-approved interpretations of crucial historical events. See https://melaproject.org/.

9 In a basic sense, we are all vulnerable. The term "vulnerability" can be understood as a kind of openness to be affected in positive or negative ways. However, people can be more or less vulnerabilized. People can have different vulnerabilities depending on their social location; there are socially situated vulnerabilities. As Gilson notes: "The different ways in which vulnerability will be lived and experienced, the ways in which we will be affected, and thus the meaning that vulnerability will have, however, can be understood only in light of the particularity of embodied, social experience" (2011, 311).

10 Mouradian (2011) discusses the Armenian discontent stemming from Turkish society and state actors' treatment of Dink's assassination.

11 In cases of wilful ignorance, deniers can be aware of (at least some of) the stakes involved, namely those that affect themselves. I return to this in Section 5.5.

12 Similarly, Medina distinguishes between different layers of misrecognition in contexts of epistemic injustice. He stresses how they "often appear deeply intertwined, reinforcing and complicating each other" (2018, 3f.). He discusses this in relation to conversations about racial violence in the United States: On the one hand, "[m]isrecognition affecting the object or subject matter of communication; for example, the topic of racial violence not being discussed properly, and distortions about what is at stake skewing the conversation". On the other hand, "[m]isrecognition affecting the agent of communication; for example, a particular person or group of people not being properly recognized as they attempt to communicate about racial violence". In the latter case, "it is other epistemic subjects who are ignored or silenced on the issue of racial violence (they are not given an opportunity to speak, or they are constrained in the

articulation of their experiences about violence); or they are misheard, and their contributions are improperly appraised, because of identity prejudices (e.g., because they are perceived as the 'angry black person' reacting irrationally or blowing things out of proportion)". In the former case (i.e., in the absence of distorting prejudice against speakers), "the subject matter itself may be improperly recognized, and the discussions run into roadblocks because of an inability to properly recognize—to see, hear, feel, and understand—what is involved in the phenomenon of racial violence, what it is and what is at issue in its discussion" (ibid.).

13 See also Pohlhaus' (2002) account of "knowing communities". She is critical of Harding's notion of a "standpoint" and instead emphasizes the importance of "intersubjective relations among cooperative knowers of different social positions" in achieving liberatory knowledge.

14 Oranlı (2021, 9–10) explicates how some denials can also be explained by epistemic laziness. According to Medina, epistemic laziness is characterized by the privilege of "not needing to know". It is a kind of privileged ignorance that allows privileged people to refrain from caring about or inquiring into certain things, such as not caring about or hearing Armenian testimonies and perspectives. That said, I take it that the "resistances" and hence affected ignorance that especially matter in the *denial* context are closed-mindedness and arrogance.

15 Here, Moody-Adams draws on Hart's account of a "complex internal perspective on important social rules" among those concerned with protecting the group. "[I]t is from this internal perspective that those subject to the rules will take demands for conformity, as well as criticism of breaches of the rules, to be justified. From time to time, taking up the internal perspective will even allow those subject to the rules to undertake self-criticism of their own lapses in conformity to the rules" (Moody-Adams 1994, 295). This means that the "inability thesis" loses its rational foundation when members of social groups can adopt an internal perspective on social rules to ensure the continued existence of the group.

16 For some Turkish people, Dink's murder was a moment of awakening. It motivated them to begin questioning the official state position more actively to inquire further into (historical and current) Turkish–Armenian social relations.

17 Such a stance was expressed on a placard held up during a protest against France's legislation to criminalize Armenian genocide denial. The placard read: "Our grandfathers CANNOT be murderers" (my translation from the Turkish original). The placard can be viewed in "Turkey recalls France envoy after genocide bill" on *ahram online*: http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsAFCON/2019/29984.aspx.

18 Such a stance was expressed on a placard during a protest against Germany's parliamentary resolution to recognize the Armenian genocide. The placard read: "In the history of the Turkish people there is not one shameful dark stain" (my translation from the Turkish original). The placard can be viewed here: https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2016/06/israel-armenian-genocide-double-standard-german-resolution.htm.

19 I thank Imge Oranlı for reminding me of this point. I discuss "victimhood mentality" in relation to Kemalist historiography in Section 2.2.3.

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Concluding remarks

I prefaced this book by noting two realizations that prompted my philosophical investigation into genocide denialism and its epistemic harms:

1 The common view that genocide denial violates the dignity of victims and constitutes an assault on truth and memory.
2 The frequent downplaying of the pernicious implications of at least some cases of genocide denial.

Among other things, the use of partial or problematic analytical concepts contributes to the distortion and obscuring of what is at stake in genocide denial. This concern relates to (a) misconceptions about genocide and genocide testimony and (b) a narrow equation of genocide denial with political lies and its epistemic mischaracterization as a problem of collective amnesia and forgetting. The fact that an adequate analysis of systematic genocide denial is not exhausted by the latter becomes evident when one attends to a systematic case. It is for this reason that I focused on the case of Turkey's denial of the 1915–1917 Armenian genocide (and by extension the genocides of Pontic Greeks and Chaldean/Assyrian/Syriac Christians).

My personal familiarity with the Armenian case of genocide denialism and its pernicious implications has served as a key resource in critical analysis and identifying mistreatments of this case. As a fourth-generation descendant of an Armenian genocide survivor I grew up learning from testimonies about Armenians' living conditions in post-genocide Turkey. As such, I have not been primarily interested in analysing the perspective of the perpetrators, the deniers, and their rationalizations. Instead, my concern is with centring the perspective of those on the receiving end of wrongdoing. These are the genocide victims, survivors, and descendants. By adopting this perspective, I hope to have generated an accurate and comprehensive understanding of some of the neglected or obscured pernicious implications of genocide denialism. I shall highlight two findings:

Consider the common use of notions such as "collective amnesia" or "forgetting" to characterize the state of Turkey in relation to Armenians or the late Ottoman/Young Turk genocides. Such a characterization can probably be explained largely by Mustafa Kemal's imposition of a new Turkish history and identity when the Turkish nation-state was founded. This was supposed to create a break from and discontinuity with its Ottoman imperial past. However, this discontinuity (as narrated in collective memory and identity) is not reflected in social reality, where there exist institutional, ideological, and material continuities between the CUP government and the newly established Kemalist Republic. This refers not only to the ideology of Turkism, which Kemal continued to implement through various Turkification reforms, but also to the fact that the Turkish nation-state was founded on the systematic dispossession of the non-Turkish and non-Muslim populations. The economic dimension of Turkish domination was sustained by and crucially dependent on the denial and justification of former genocides. Thus, Armenians and other groups targeted for genocide were not simply forgotten. Rather, their exclusion from society continued to be justified and genocide denial became normalized.

However, genocide survivors and descendants continue to exist in Turkey and elsewhere. An argument for collective amnesia or forgetting, thus, seems misplaced. The Turkish state and its institutions must exert sustained discrediting and silencing efforts precisely because genocide survivors and descendants display ongoing epistemic resistance. These Turkish efforts sustain a culture of denial. This should clarify the problematic implications of mischaracterizations referring to amnesia and forgetting: They contribute to distortions of social reality and the invisibilization of genocide survivors and descendants.

Those who have benefited, and continue to benefit, from genocide and its legacy certainly have an interest in "forgetting". However, by acknowledging the continued existence and epistemic resistance of genocide survivors and descendants, we learn that such "attempted forgetting" is being persistently challenged and prevented. This means that the oppressors must find other ways to (dis-)engage with the subject matter. This involves active ignorance and denialism. These phenomena have far-reaching consequences for genocide survivors and descendants, as well as post-genocide society at large. As I set out to argue in this book: It brings to light a distinct injustice, one that is perpetrated and sustained by genocide denialism. This injustice takes the form of two interrelated and mutually reinforcing kinds of epistemic oppression: hermeneutical oppression and testimonial oppression.

There is another notable misconception contributing to the invisibilization of genocide survivors. This is the idea that genocide equates to massacre and physical extermination (which, in turn, relates to some extent to the abovementioned use of the terms "amnesia" and "forgetting"). This

misconception represents a partial and problematic understanding of genocide, one that is common in both public and academic discourse. It is a reductive understanding of genocide; it obscures the complexity of the atrocity and downplays its scope. Various forms of violence are mobilized to destroy a social group, which is the central intention of genocide. This is evident in (a) the definition of genocide propounded by the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, (b) Raphael Lemkin's preparatory conceptual work, and (c) genocide scholarship more generally. In the case of the Ottoman genocides, these relevant forms of violence included material dispossession, the destruction of economic foundations, the destruction of cultural assets, linguistic oppression, gender-specific violence through forced marriages, and intergenerational destruction through forced assimilation (e.g., the Turkification and Islamization of orphaned children). The reductive understanding of genocide as "massacre" takes the murdered into account but not the survivors and descendants. Yet it is survivors and their descendants who must continue to live with the far-reaching consequences of the genocide and its ongoing denial. Thus, such misconceptions contribute to an impoverished understanding of what is at stake in genocide denial.

In this book, I have attempted to shed light on the epistemically harmful implications of genocide denialism. In its most pernicious (i.e., systematic) form, genocide denialism is not reducible to mere lies that are easy to debunk and brush off. It also does not simply consist in a lack of knowledge that might be remedied through better access to information and other epistemic resources. Genocide denialism is also not merely a problem of "proper labelling". It involves (a) generating and maintaining distortions and misunderstandings about genocide and related subject matters and (b) the cultivation of ignorant agents. This ultimately consolidates domination, which, as has been argued, creates conditions for epistemic oppression. Genocide survivors and descendants encounter unwarranted constraints on their participation in epistemic practices. They experience constraints in making epistemic contributions that can re-assert their epistemic, moral, and socio-political status and thereby their self-understanding and personhood that were, and continue to be, challenged by the legacy of genocide and its denial. Against this backdrop, remembering and testifying to genocide are acts of both legitimate resistance to ongoing epistemic oppression and active contestation of state-imposed identities. Overall, I hope to have defended the following normative thesis: *Genocide denialism constitutes epistemic oppression of genocide survivors and descendants. It is also a pernicious epistemic practice that harms all members of a post-genocidal society.*

I have argued that genocide denialism produces ignorant agents. It does so by contributing to the development of various epistemic vices in those with dominant privilege. This presents an obstacle to their capacity to develop good epistemic *and* moral characters and renders them complicit in the perpetuation of epistemic oppression. Thus, the agential and structural levels are mutually interdependent in sustaining epistemic oppression. This prompts questions of individual epistemic culpability for denial. I have critically addressed these questions, putting forward an argument that makes room for holding individuals epistemically accountable for engaging in practices of denial. I have highlighted the potential motives and institutional enabling conditions for active ignorance and denialism. Doing so has suggested that countering genocide denialism requires both (a) a change of minds and self-conceptions and (b) institutional transformations and social change.

I have focused on Armenian genocide denialism for reasons that I have made clear. There is, though, a question over how this case relates to denials of other genocides. Plausibly, the insights generated here will apply to other cases of genocide denial if they fulfil the condition of *systematicity* of denial. That said, a substantive comparative analysis with other cases goes beyond the scope of this book. This is especially so given my conviction that a proper analysis of epistemic injustice (as *epistemic oppression*) perpetrated and sustained by genocide denialism requires attentiveness to power relations and a sufficient degree of historical, empirical, and contextual accuracy. Rather than simply assuming or claiming that my analysis has universal applicability, I leave it up to those with the requisite expertise and knowledge of the relevant cases to compare and contrast my analysis of Armenian genocide denialism with other cases of systematic genocide denial.

How does genocide denial and its pernicious implications relate to or differ from other cases of denial? There are surely commonalities regarding the *form* that different denials take (whether it is denial of "expert testimony", testimony about experiences of social violence, or findings in the sciences). Different denials might also result in similar epistemic and practical harms. That said, we must be careful not to straightforwardly equate the harmful implications that different cases of denial can have. We must distinguish between (a) persistent and systematic discriminatory epistemic injustice forming part of broader conditions of social injustice and presenting institutionalized constraints on agency and (b) incidental or more localized cases of discursive silencing or epistemic discredit that are harmful without amounting to epistemic oppression.

I highlight this because I have frequently noted a lack of attentiveness to institutional contexts and structural analysis characteristic of epistemic

injustice in attempts to apply the epistemic injustice framework to other domains (e.g., science and science denial). This results in impoverished analyses in which any prejudicially reduced credibility becomes a purported case of epistemic injustice. With these concerns in mind, I hope my analysis will help to differentiate cases of epistemic oppression from cases of epistemic disadvantage that do not necessarily place institutionalized disabling constraints on epistemic agency. In any event, I have shown that genocide denialism is, no doubt, exemplary of epistemic oppression.

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Pages followed by "n" refer to notes.