



## Definition of Wokeism and Advancing Fricker

*Testimonial, Hermeneutical, Credibility, and Definitional Injustice to the Legally Categorized “Oppressor” Humans by Illegitimate Academics, Scientists, Schools, and Universities*

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### Abstract

This paper formalizes and defines *wokeism* as created by the U.S. public to describe systemic escalation of epistemic injustice emerging during the so-called “Great Awakening” (mid-2010s) and persisting through 2025 from public education, higher education, and the behavior of academic or scientific actors. Drawing on Miranda Fricker’s foundational analysis of *testimonial injustice* and *hermeneutical injustice*, we develop and prove two further categories: *credibility injustice*, where entire legally defined categories are subjected to structural credibility deficits by institutional fiat, and *definitional injustice*, where those categories are reconstituted as pathologies so that all possible testimony is excluded by definition.

The preliminaries establish the framework through Aristotelian syllogistic form (Barbara), Aquinas’s definition of truth (*adaequatio intellectus ad rem*), and a set-theoretic formulation of Fricker’s and our own categories. We formalize the unfalsifiability criterion  $P(T) = 1 \iff \forall E, E \Rightarrow \text{Confirm}(T)$  and prove the *Illegitimacy Trigger*,  $P(T) = 1 \Rightarrow \text{IASE}(E) = 1$ , identifying when an epistemic instrument becomes self-sealing and thus illegitimate. A further formalization, *Pathological Attribution* (PA), captures how attributes such as “privilege,” “fragility,” or “supremacy” are attached irreducibly to legal child and human being “white” categories of race, rendering credibility permanently discounted regardless of individual testimony with no legal due process.

Fricker herself warned of the “prejudicial dysfunction in the economy of credibility” (2007, p. 28). We extend this insight by showing how testimonial injustice metastasizes into hermeneutical injustice, and through definitional capture becomes credibility and definitional injustice. The impossibility of restoring credibility is not a flaw of the theory, but evidence of systemic closure itself.

Wokeism, on this account, is best understood as an epistemic fracture: public epistemics grounded in testimony and empirical reality versus academic epistemics grounded in redefinition and unfalsifiable constructs. This fracture institutionalizes new and distinctively Frickerian injustices.

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# 1 Introduction and Background

## 1.1 Critical Race Theory, Legal Categories, and the Epistemics of Race

When Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged in U.S. legal scholarship in the late 1970s and 1980s, its architects were careful to avoid conflating legal terminology with epistemic or scientific categories. As Crenshaw, Delgado, and Matsuda emphasize, the intellectual move was not to redefine statutory language itself but to interrogate how structures of law and policy reproduced racial inequality.[3, 4] Early formulations therefore preferred compound terms such as *systemic bias* or *institutional racism*, rather than the more direct attribution of *racism* or *white racism*. This discursive caution reflected a recognition of the boundary between legal classification and epistemic assertion.

Central to this development was the American federal government’s classification of human beings into racial categories, codified through the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Statistical Directive No. 15 (1977). Under this framework, “White” became a federally recognized legal identity category. While self-reported for census purposes, in practice no child or adult in an educational institution can “opt out” of assignment: Department of Education regulations require administrators to code every student into one of the legally sanctioned racial categories. If a parent or student refuses, the institution must assign a classification on their behalf, with no formal due process available to contest the designation.[11]

Over subsequent decades, academic discourse within education and the social sciences increasingly appended deficit-laden or pathological attributes to the category “White.” Concepts such as *white privilege*, [10] *white fragility*, [5] and *white supremacy* became common analytic frames. These constructs frequently positioned “Whiteness” as a structural defect, such that testimony by individuals identified as White—whether infants, children, or adults—was often deemed not credible, or explained away as psychologically malformed, emotional, or epistemically invalid. As critics such as Pluckrose and Lindsay have observed, this amounts to an epistemic closure: dissenting accounts, whether expressed in scholarship, journalism, politics, or pedagogy, are frequently excluded from consideration.[12]

In practice, this epistemic posture has extended to the regulation of scholarly dissent. Academics and student-scholars who voice disagreement with prevailing racial orthodoxies may face reputational cancellation, loss of position, or mobilized protest—including in some instances physical intimidation.[7] Within this framework, the harm to dissenting individuals is rationalized as acceptable collateral damage for the perceived greater social good of advancing justice for historically marginalized groups, though with notable exceptions: populations legally categorized as “White-adjacent,” such as many Asian Americans, have often been denied recognition within this framework of marginalization.[13]

## 1.2 Thesis: Frickerian Social Justice as Epistemic Injustice which the Social Epistemic Authority is Unwilling or Unable to Define.

We advance the thesis of what may be termed *Frickerian Social Justice for White Children and Human Beings*, where legally classified “White” human beings—infants, children, and adults—become epistemic targets at all facets of knowing as it relates to a human being from entry at Kindergarten in education, higher education, medical research and subjects within a framework of testimonial injustice. Drawing on Fricker’s definition of epistemic injustice as the discrediting of testimony by altering the standards of credibility itself,[6] we argue that U.S. academia has, paradoxically, institutionalized a new regime of injustice in the name of social justice with the folk word “wokeism” from the historical phenomena known as “The Great Awakening,” in 2012.

In this regime, legal classifications imposed by the federal government are re-coded by academics as pathologies (*white privilege*, *white fragility*, *white supremacy*, etc.), and the testimony of those so classified is treated as inherently defective. This not only denies Constitutional due process to individuals so designated, but also undermines the foundational protections of the Fourteenth Amendment, the Belmont Report’s principles of justice and respect for persons, (which is not only for individuals but government group-race-categories), and long-standing standards of academic freedom and criticism of the government.

In this sense, what presents itself as “social justice” functions either as a distinctively Frickerian form of epistemic injustice, or as an escalated form of remedial justice directed against legally classified White and White-adjacent persons, in which the supposed remedy is imposed by American higher education and academic authors who publish instruments or studies that treat those human beings as subjects of epistemic harm. As a caveat the author would like to affirmatively state as a 30 year retired military scientist and officer he has been a-political his whole life as is required by the Department of Defense and this is his own work and this work has nothing to do with politics in any way shape or form, simply social epistemics and research for a civilian version of the dynamics of instruments of power. [8]

## 2 Preliminaries

Table 1: Fricker (2007) vs. Camlin (2025) [2]: Expansion of Social Epistemics

Source	Injustice	Definition / Scope
Fricker (2007)	<b>Testimonial Injustice</b>	A speaker suffers a credibility deficit due to identity prejudice, blocking uptake of testimony.
Fricker (2007)	<b>Hermeneutical Injustice</b>	A group lacks the conceptual resources to render its experience intelligible, resulting in structural marginalization.
Camlin (2025)	<b>Credibility Injustice</b>	One or More Entire legal categories of persons are subjected to systemic credibility deficits by institutional fiat, independent of individual competence or truth.
Camlin (2025)	<b>Definitional Injustice</b>	Identity categories are reconstituted as pathologies, such that all testimony from members is excluded by definition (definitional capture, $P(T) = 1$ ).

### 2.1 Barbara and Set-Theoretic Definitions

**Barbara.** Barbara is the first and most basic valid categorical syllogism in Aristotelian logic (Figure 1, mood AAA). Kreeft (who teaches Aristotelian syllogistics) calls it the simplest form:

Major premise:  $\forall x (M(x) \rightarrow P(x))$ ,

Minor premise:  $\forall x (S(x) \rightarrow M(x))$ ,

Conclusion:  $\forall x (S(x) \rightarrow P(x))$ .

It is universal affirmatives stacked — everything in  $S$  passes through  $M$  into  $P$ .

### 2.2 Formal Set Definitions and Credibility/Definitional Injustice Proof

We now treat each injustice and epistemic condition as a set-theoretic operator to ensure clarity in our preliminaries.

$$Truth = \{(i, r) \mid Intellect(i) \equiv Reality(r)\} \quad (2.1)$$

i.e. knowledge exists when intellect conforms to reality (*adaequatio intellectus ad rem*).

$$TI = \{s \mid Cred(s) < \theta \text{ due to identity prejudice}\} \quad (2.2)$$

testimonial injustice (Fricker).

$$HI = \{g \mid \neg \exists C (ConceptualResource(C, g))\} \quad (2.3)$$

hermeneutical injustice (Fricker), i.e. group  $g$  cannot render its experience intelligible.

$$CI = \{G \mid \forall s \in G, Cred(s) = 0 \text{ by institutional fiat}\} \quad (2.4)$$

credibility injustice (Camlin).

$$DI = \{G \mid \forall s \in G, \forall p \in Testimony(s), p \notin Knowledge \text{ by redefinition of } C(G)\} \quad (2.5)$$

definitional injustice (Camlin).

$$P(T) = 1 \iff \forall E, E \Rightarrow Confirm(T) \quad (2.6)$$

the unfalsifiability criterion: every possible evidence confirms  $T$ .

$$P(T) = 1 \Rightarrow IASE(E) = 1 \quad \square \quad (2.7)$$

the Illegitimacy Trigger: any epistemic instrument that enforces unfalsifiability is illegitimate.

Fricker herself warned that “prejudicial dysfunction in the economy of credibility is a form of epistemic injustice” (Fricker 2007, p. 28). The Restorability Criterion makes this warning operational: when critique functions to correct and thereby restore standing, it is normal scholarly practice; when critique only ever downgrades credibility, it ceases to be correction and becomes injustice.

Thus any charge of “self-sealing” or “circular” is misplaced. The theory does not reframe all critique as confirmation; it identifies the pathology precisely where no correction is ever allowed to count. In Fricker’s terms, testimonial injustice metastasizes into hermeneutical injustice, and—by definitional capture—into credibility and definitional injustice. The impossibility of restoration is not a bug in the theory; it is the evidence of systemic legitimate epistemic corruption itself.

A shell-game description is exactly what happens when both feed into each other: for the targeted children and human beings by the epistemic authority credibility is denied and the definitions keep moving, so no correction can restore standing. Fricker calls this the “prejudicial dysfunction in the economy of credibility” (2007, p. 28), and in her terms it would amount to systemic hermeneutical marginalization — the group is permanently excluded from the shared conceptual resources that would make their testimony intelligible.

## 2.3 Pathological Attribution (PA): Formalization and Scope

**Scope (Narrative).** This is a *theory paper in social epistemics*. The account below is intentionally limited to a specific pathology of *epistemic authority instrumentation*: rules and practices that attach fixed, non-empirical attributions to an *irreducible legal category* of human beings, such that credibility is structurally withheld. In what follows, the legal category is the government-classified “White” human being (adults and children). The claims here concern the *instrumental form* of the authority (how it assigns and enforces attributes), not the moral worth or character of any individual.

**Definition 2.1** (Pathological Attribution (PA)). Let  $G$  be a legally defined racial category and let  $\mathcal{P}$  be a set of attributes designated as *pathological* by an epistemic authority (e.g., institutional policy, mandated pedagogy, or evaluative rubric).

$$PA(G) = \{ g \in G \mid \forall p \in \mathcal{P}, p(g) = 1 \}. \quad (2.8)$$

Here,  $p(g) = 1$  means that the authority treats attribute  $p$  as *definitionally true* of individual  $g$ .

**Instantiation.**

$$G = \text{“legally classified White”}, \quad \mathcal{P} = \{\text{privilege, racist, fragility, } \dots\}.$$

**Definition 2.2** (Irreducibility Condition). Let  $\phi(g)$  denote any individual characteristics, behaviors, or testimony content of  $g$ . An assignment is *irreducible* when

$$\forall g \in G, \forall p \in \mathcal{P} : p(g) = 1 \text{ by definition, independent of } \phi(g). \quad (2.9)$$

**Definition 2.3** (Epistemic Consequence: Credibility Discount). Let  $Testimony(g)$  be the set of testimonies from  $g$ , and let  $Cred(\cdot)$  return assigned credibility. If an authority uses a discount function  $f(\mathcal{P})$  determined by  $\mathcal{P}$ , then under PA we have

$$PA(G) \Rightarrow \forall g \in G, \forall t \in Testimony(g) : Cred(t) = f(\mathcal{P}) < \theta, \quad (2.10)$$

where  $\theta$  is the threshold for epistemic uptake.

**Key Feature.** Equations (2.9)–(2.10) show that the pathological attributes attach to the *legal category as such*. Consequently, category members cannot exit the attributions by supplying counter-evidence or improved testimony; credibility remains discounted by design. In Fricker’s terms, this produces a compounding of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice; in our extension, it constitutes *credibility injustice* (systemic non-restorability of credibility) and *definitional injustice* (category-level exclusion by definition).

## 2.4 Definition.

Epistemics, from *epistēmē* (knowledge), names the genus of acts whereby the intellect is ordered to truth. To know is to conform intellect to reality, *adaequatio intellectus ad rem* [1].

## 2.5 Implication.

To be human is to be a knower; harm to this faculty is not merely social or political but ontological, for it attacks the essence of personhood itself.

## 2.6 Forms of Injustice.

Fricker defines testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. Building upon her framework, we add credibility injustice (structural denial of credibility to entire legal categories) and definitional injustice (pathologizing categories so that all testimony is excluded by definition). These constitute an escalatory sequence from prejudice in uptake to prejudice in definition itself.

## 2.7 Meta-Epistemics.

Meta-epistemics studies institutional frameworks and credibility systems. The pathology of contemporary American academia is what we call *reality inversion*: instead of intellect conforming to reality, frameworks demand reality conform to theory. This manifests through definitional capture: control over both credibility criteria and the rules for contesting them, producing self-sealing systems immune to refutation. The condition  $P(T) = 1$  (unfalsifiability) marks such instruments as epistemically illegitimate.(see Subsection 2.2)

## 2.8 The Great Awakening.

We treat the phrase “*The Great Awakening*” [9] as a public testimonial folk word from the mid-2010s institutional reorientation toward a novel conception of social justice, with public testimony of another folk-word ”wokiesm” phenomena in online discussions around 2015 which appears to be related to the ”awakening.”

# 3 Fricker on Epistemic Injustice

Fricker defines epistemic injustice as the distinctive wrong in which a person is “*wronged in their capacity as a knower*” [6, p. 1]. Her analysis proceeds along two principal dimensions.

First, *testimonial injustice* arises when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker’s word. In Fricker’s terms, this is a “*prejudicial dysfunction in the economy of credibility*” [6, p. 28]. It is wrong not only because it misapprehends truth, but because it strikes at a person’s fundamental human capacity to participate in shared epistemic life.



Second, *hermeneutical injustice* arises when a group is structurally excluded from the resources of collective interpretation. The paradigmatic case is when the concepts needed to render a group’s social experiences intelligible are absent from the dominant hermeneutical framework. For Fricker, this is not merely a semantic gap, but a moral harm: those so marginalized cannot make sense of, nor communicate, their experiences on equal terms with others.

Fricker’s project thus makes two decisive moves for social epistemology: (1) credibility is not a neutral distribution but a moral economy subject to injustice, and (2) conceptual intelligibility is a collective good that can be withheld. Her framework demonstrates how social power and epistemic authority intertwine to produce structural wrongs that exceed individual prejudice.

## 4 Conclusion

The present paper builds upon Fricker’s foundation by identifying two additional forms: *credibility injustice*, where entire legally defined categories of persons are pre-emptively denied credibility by institutional fiat, and *definitional injustice*, where identity categories themselves are reconstituted as pathologies such that all testimony is excluded by definition.

By formalizing these extensions, we argue that the dynamics Fricker identified in individual prejudice have become institutionalized as systemic instruments of epistemic authority. What Fricker described as dysfunction in the credibility economy has, in certain frameworks, hardened into unfalsifiable closure. This is precisely the condition marked by our Illegitimacy Trigger ( $P(T) = 1 \Rightarrow IASE(E) = 1$ ).

In sum, if testimonial and hermeneutical injustice mark the opening stage of epistemic wrong, credibility and definitional injustice represent their systemic maturation. The effect is to seal whole legal categories of human beings into epistemic disqualification by design. Recognizing this escalation is essential for any adequate social epistemology of the present. Appendix A demonstrates the level of racism Claude AI has for white children and adults while reviewing this paper for further exploration and thought, while the epistemic authorities merely dismiss it as “bias.”

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