



**CULTIVATING EPISTEMIC VIRTUES THROUGH
MEMORY ACTIVISM: THE EPISTEMIC
CONTRIBUTIONS OF HRANT DINK FOUNDATION**

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ABSTRACT

CULTIVATING EPISTEMIC VIRTUES THROUGH MEMORY ACTIVISM: THE EPISTEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF HRANT DINK FOUNDATION

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This study examines the role of memory activism in cultivating epistemic virtues. Drawing on the works of social and political epistemologists such as Jose Medina and Miranda Fricker, it argues that memory activism can contribute to the cultivation of epistemic virtues such as humility, intellectual curiosity/diligence and open-mindedness. The thesis focuses on a particular case study which exemplifies this sort of memory work: the Hrant Dink Foundation. As a crucial site of memory activism in Turkey, it provides an empirical illustration of how civil society actors challenge epistemic oppression and foster epistemic virtues through critical engagement with hegemonic memory narratives.

Keywords: Epistemic Virtues, Epistemic Injustice, Memory Activism

ÖZET

HAFIZA AKTİVİZMİ YOLUYLA EPİSTEMİK ERDEMLERİN GELİŞTİRİLMESİ: HRANT DİNK VAKFI'NIN EPİSTEMİK KATKILARI

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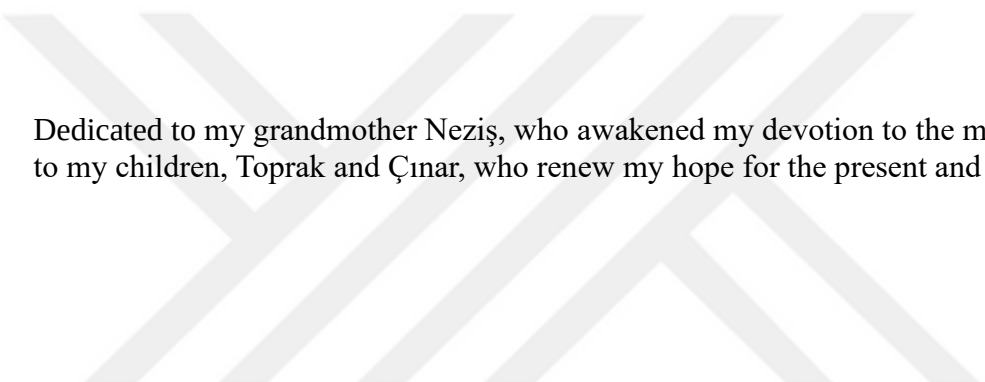
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Bu çalışma, hafıza aktivizminin epistemik erdemlerin geliştirilmesindeki rolünü incelemektedir. José Medina ve Miranda Fricker gibi sosyal ve politik epistemologların çalışmalarından yararlanarak, hafıza aktivizminin alçakgönüllülük, entelektüel merak/özen ve açık fikirlilik gibi epistemik erdemlerin gelişimine katkıda bulunabileceğini ileri sürmektedir. Tez, bu tür bir hafıza çalışmasını örnekleyen belirli bir vaka incelemesine odaklanmaktadır: Hrant Dink Vakfı. Türkiye’de önemli bir hafıza aktivizmi alanı olarak bu örnek, sivil toplum aktörlerinin hegemonik hafıza anlatılarını eleştirel biçimde sorgulayarak epistemik baskıya nasıl meydan okuduklarını ve epistemik erdemleri nasıl teşvik ettiklerini somut bir örnek olarak göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Epistemik Erdemler, Epistemik Adaletsizlik, Hafıza Aktivizmi



Dedicated to my grandmother Neziş, who awakened my devotion to the memory, and to my children, Toprak and Çınar, who renew my hope for the present and the future.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfD: Alternative for Germany

DurDe: Irkçılığa ve Milliyetçiliğe Dur De

DVV: Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband

GDR: German Democratic Republic

HDF: Hrant Dink Foundation

IHD: Human Rights Association

SEHAK: Civil and Ecological Rights Association

YIHR: Youth Initiative for Human Rights

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Central Research Question and Its Significance

Justice, in its deepest sense, concerns not only what is done in the present but how societies relate to what has been done in the past. In contexts marked by mass violence, denial, or historical erasure, the failure to acknowledge past wrongs perpetuates injustice in new forms. Remembering past atrocities is therefore not simply an act of mourning or historical accuracy—it is a matter of justice. To refuse or suppress the memory of collective wrongdoing is to continue the original harm at an epistemic level: it denies victims and their descendants recognition as credible knowers, distorts public understanding, and weakens the moral capacities of society itself.

This thesis examines this dynamic through a central research question: How does memory activism contribute to the cultivation of epistemic virtues in societies marked by historical injustice and denial? The question is significant because it brings together two fields that rarely speak to one another—memory studies and epistemic injustice—and because it approaches memory activism not only as a political or ethical practice, but also as an epistemic one. The analysis is grounded in the idea that confronting the past is inseparable from confronting epistemic injustice: to ignore historical violence is to silence victims, narrow interpretive possibilities, and corrupt collective moral imagination.

Miranda Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice clarifies the nature of the harm caused by denial and amnesia. In "Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing" (2007), Fricker distinguishes between *testimonial* and *hermeneutical injustice*—the first denying credibility to certain voices, the second depriving individuals or groups of the interpretive resources to make sense of their experiences. Both forms are central to the way societies that have committed atrocities sustain ignorance. When survivors' testimonies are dismissed as unreliable or politically motivated, their very capacity as knowers is undermined. When public discourse suppresses the conceptual tools needed to name what occurred as genocide or ethnic cleansing, hermeneutical injustice becomes institutionalized as state ideology.

José Medina's "The Epistemology of Resistance" (2013) deepens this analysis by locating epistemic injustice within the dynamics of power and collective ignorance.

For Medina, epistemic injustice is not merely interpersonal but systemic: a feature of social imaginaries that privilege some ways of knowing while marginalizing others. Overcoming it requires cultivating epistemic virtues—humility, intellectual curiosity/diligence, and open-mindedness—that can sustain resistance to denial and enable moral learning. These virtues are not personal moral traits but socially distributed capacities that arise through dialogue, confrontation, and shared reflection. The refusal to confront the difficult past does not merely leave a historical blank—it generates ongoing social and psychological harm. Biray Kolluoğlu’s study “Forgetting the Smyrna Fire” (2005) demonstrates how the erasure of catastrophic events from national memory produces dissonance and alienation: a fractured urban and moral landscape where collective silence displaces mourning. Similarly, Richard Sennett’s (2012) reflection on “disturbing memories” reminds us that public amnesia impoverishes civic life by foreclosing empathy and reflection; the inability to face what is troubling renders communities morally and emotionally brittle. Dan Stone’s (2012) work on genocide and memory insists that the labor of remembrance is foundational to ethical and political renewal, since genocide destroys not only human lives but the symbolic and interpretive systems that sustain meaning. Gabriele Schwab, (2010), further shows that unacknowledged violence continues to haunt later generations as transgenerational trauma, shaping affective and epistemic relations long after the events themselves.

This dynamic is acutely visible in the Turkish case, where the ignorance of past traumas has constituted a central organizing principle of republican identity. Üngör’s (2014) analysis of memory politics show how institutions have systematically transformed denial into commemoration devoid of acknowledgment, displacing victims’ voices through selective narratives of national suffering. Marc Nichanian (2009), goes further, arguing that the very language of history becomes complicit in violence when it normalizes the unspeakable through categories that render extermination intelligible yet unaccountable. The epistemic harm here is twofold: it silences the victims and corrupts the moral imagination of the perpetrators’ descendants. As Seyla Benhabib (2015) has noted in her essay “Of Jews, Turks and Armenians: Entangled Memories,” the suppression of this history has produced an ethical impasse, obstructing Turkey’s ability to join a broader transnational conversation on historical responsibility.

Remembering, by contrast, restores the possibility of moral and epistemic repair. To acknowledge past atrocities is to redistribute credibility, to enlarge the interpretive space of collective understanding, and to cultivate virtues that enable citizens to live with the discomfort of truth. The work of remembrance is thus inseparable from the pursuit of justice. It challenges not only the factual ignorance of what happened but deeper epistemic habits that sustain denial. When remembrance is practiced sincerely, it creates what Medina (2013) calls *epistemic friction* by encountering that unsettle complacency and make moral learning possible.

To ignore the difficult past is therefore not a neutral omission but a continuation of violence through epistemic means. Denial deforms moral perception, narrows collective imagination, and undermines the very conditions for justice. Remembering, conversely, is an act of epistemic resistance that demands humility in acknowledging the limits of one's knowledge, intellectual curiosity in facing painful truths, diligence in preserving the voices of the silenced, and open-mindedness in re-imagining community beyond inherited exclusions. Through remembrance, societies begin to reconstruct not only their historical narratives but their epistemic and moral selves. Justice, in this sense, is inseparable from the act of knowing rightly—and knowing rightly requires remembering well.

If remembrance constitutes an epistemic resistance, then memory activism can be seen as its organized and sustained practice. In contexts where denial and selective amnesia have become entrenched, remembering cannot be left to individual conscience alone; it must be collectively enacted, institutionally supported, and publicly defended. This is the space in which civic initiatives such as Hrant Dink Foundation (HDF) operate: they transform the moral imperative of remembrance into a social practice aimed at reshaping epistemic relations and cultivating democratic virtues.

1.2 Contribution to the Scholarly Literature

This thesis contributes to two bodies of literature that rarely intersect: memory studies and epistemic injustice theory. While memory studies increasingly acknowledge that remembrance is shaped by power relations, few works explicitly conceptualize memory activism as an epistemic practice. Likewise, the literature on epistemic injustice, despite its robust theoretical foundation, has paid limited attention to the role of civic initiatives in cultivating epistemic virtues.

There is a conceptual innovation by bringing memory activism into conversation with epistemic virtue theory. The thesis argues that memory activism operates not only within moral or political registers but also within epistemic ones: it reorganizes conditions of credibility, expands interpretive resources, and generates *the epistemic friction* (Medina 2013) required for moral learning. This framing extends existing accounts of epistemic injustice by showing how collective practices of remembrance can create the social conditions necessary for epistemic repair.

The thesis also advances memory activism scholarship by analyzing memory work as a generator of epistemic virtues. It demonstrates how remembering the difficult past—whether through commemorations, counter-archives, memory sites, or cultural projects—cultivates humility, curiosity/diligence, and open-mindedness. These virtues are not personal attributes but socially distributed capacities fostered through dialogue, confrontation, and sustained civic engagement. By showing how memory activism nurtures these capacities, the thesis deepens our understanding of the epistemic dimensions of public memory and civic practice.

Moreover, the thesis addresses a gap in both fields by examining how memory activism operates in contexts of entrenched denial and authoritarian nationalism. It argues that sustainable, resilient, and indirect forms of memory activism—those that build long-term infrastructures of remembrance—are especially capable of generating epistemic change under political constraint. Therefore, a further contribution of this thesis lies in proposing a conceptual distinction between *direct and indirect epistemic interventions* within memory activism. This framework broadens existing accounts of epistemic injustice and memory activism by showing that civic actors operate on different epistemic registers when confronting denial and reshaping historical understanding. *Direct interventions* explicitly address historical injustices—such as the public use of the term Armenian Genocide—and generate immediate *epistemic friction* by challenging dominant narratives head-on. *Indirect interventions*, by contrast, work through more subtle practices, including academic and cultural research, and public education initiatives. Although less confrontational, these indirect practices cultivate epistemic virtues such as *humility, curiosity/diligence, and open-mindedness* (Medina, 2013), enabling more sustainable and long-term transformation of collective memory. By theorizing this dual structure, the thesis provides a nuanced analytical tool that deepens our understanding of how memory activism contributes to epistemic repair

and expands the conceptual resources of both memory studies and epistemic injustice scholarship.

1.3 Scope of the Thesis and the Case Selection

The empirical focus of the thesis is Hrant Dink Foundation (HDF), a leading civil society organization in Turkey that engages in a wide range of memory activism initiatives related to the broader multicultural heritage of Anatolia. HDF's projects are not only political and ethical in nature; they are also epistemic interventions aimed at disrupting hegemonic narratives, promoting historical awareness, and enabling spaces for dialogue and reflection. As such, the Foundation provides a compelling case through which to explore the potential of memory activism to cultivate key epistemic virtues such as epistemic humility, intellectual curiosity/diligence, and open-mindedness—what José Medina (2013) described as a trilogy of virtues essential to resisting epistemic injustice. Its initiatives—including the 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory, Asulis, the Bolis Institute, Media Watch on Hate Speech, and the International Hrant Dink Award—illustrate how memory activism functions as epistemic intervention: by creating counter-archives, opening dialogue spaces, and fostering intercommunal engagement.

HDF is uniquely positioned for this analysis for three reasons. First, it operates in a highly constrained political environment where nationalist narratives structure public discourse. Second, the Foundation enacts both *direct interventions* (explicit acknowledgment of historical violence) and *indirect interventions* (heritage preservation, educational initiatives, media monitoring), enabling a nuanced examination of how different forms of activism shape epistemic life. Third, despite its significance, HDF has not been examined through the theoretical lens of epistemic injustice. This thesis thus fills an important gap by analyzing how its practices contribute to epistemic repair, moral learning, and the cultivation of democratic virtues.

The scope of the study is limited to the intersection of epistemic injustice, epistemic virtues, and memory activism. It does not attempt a full historical analysis, nor does it provide an exhaustive sociological study of civil society in Turkey. Rather, it focuses on how specific memory practices contribute to epistemic transformation within a broader landscape marked by authoritarianism, denialism, and nationalist resurgence. In line with this perspective, the purpose and overall focus of the thesis will be twofold. First, I will theoretically discuss the relation between epistemic virtues and civic

initiatives. Put differently, my first objective is to stress the role of civil society activism in the development of epistemic virtues. In the epistemic injustice literature, this topic has not been adequately assessed. While Medina (2013) draws attention to activists who create “beneficial epistemic friction”, the impact of civic initiatives on the creation of epistemic virtues has largely remained unexplored. Second, I will concentrate on the exploration of the impact of civic initiatives on the remembrance of the difficult past. The memory scholar Jenny Wüstenberg (2017) demonstrates how memory activism in Germany in the aftermath of the Second World War gradually transformed the national memory regime. Over the last decade, the transformative power of civic initiatives in Turkey has also attracted scholarly attention (Özbek, 2021). However, the topic has not been analyzed within the theoretical framework of epistemic injustice. I will explore the contributions of civic initiatives in Turkey, by focusing specifically on Hrant Dink Foundation, to the progress of coming to terms with the past.

The resurgence of new nationalisms across the globe has had deeply detrimental effects on memory culture and on the fragile spaces where memory activism attempts to counter official silences. Nationalism, particularly in its illiberal populist forms, thrives on selective remembrance and purposeful forgetting. It seeks to establish an exclusionary vision of collective identity in which certain memories are celebrated, while others are marginalized, denied, or actively repressed. In Turkey, this trend is present, as the political climate over the last decade has witnessed an intensification of authoritarian practices that instrumentalize history to bolster majoritarian narratives. While denialism has been deeply effective since the very foundation of the Republic, the rise of authoritarianism in recent years has produced an additional rupture: memory culture has been directly intervened by official narratives, leaving even less space for civil initiatives to cultivate pluralistic remembrance. This illiberal turn underscores the urgency of studying memory activism not simply as a commemorative practice but as an epistemic intervention that resists the injustices of erasure and silencing.

The notion of epistemic injustice, as theorized by Fricker (2007), illuminates how individuals and groups are wronged specifically in their capacity as knowers. In denialist contexts, testimonial injustice silences the voices of those who bear witness to past violence, while hermeneutical injustice deprives them of the interpretive frameworks needed to make sense of their experience. These injustices have been structurally entrenched in Turkey since the early Republic, as denialism became a

constitutive element of the national identity. Political theorist Barış Ünlü's influential concept of the "Turkishness contract" (Ünlü, 2018) makes clear how this process is structurally entrenched. Ünlü argues that Turkish identity is organized around a tacit contract that confers privileges upon those who conform to the national narrative while penalizing those who challenge it. This contract not only organizes material inequalities but also sustains epistemic hierarchies, where certain voices are automatically granted authority while others are persistently excluded. In this framework, memory activism that seeks to address silenced histories—be it of Armenians, Kurds, or other marginalized groups—faces not only political repression but also systemic epistemic disqualification.

The rise of populism has made these dynamics sharper. Populism thrives on an antagonistic style of politics that divides society into "the people" and their "enemies." In Turkey, the ruling party has increasingly cast dissenters, activists, and minority groups as threats to the unity of the nation. This style of politics not only delegitimizes oppositional political activity but also frames alternative memories as dangerous distortions. Populist rhetoric constructs the past as a sacred national possession, immune to critique and closed to plural reinterpretation. This intensification of nationalist memory politics reinforces epistemic injustice, as entire communities are positioned outside the circle of credible knowers. Their testimonies are not simply ignored; they are marked as alien intrusions into the national body politic.

Against this background, the role of memory activism becomes especially vital. Memory activism can be defined, following Gutman (2017), as a set of practices by civil society actors that aim to reshape public understanding of the past, often in opposition to dominant historical narratives. In illiberal contexts, such activism is more than symbolic—it is epistemic resistance. By curating counter-archives, organizing commemorations, and creating spaces for dialogue, activists contest epistemic injustice directly. They reassert the credibility of marginalized testimonies and expand interpretive frameworks to include suppressed histories. The significance of this resistance is amplified in times of nationalist resurgence, when the risks of silence and denial are greatest.

Yet the durability of memory activism under conditions of authoritarianism depends on its ability to adapt or survive. Memory practices that emphasize sustainability, long-term cultivation, and resilience in the face of hostile conditions are likely to survive difficult political contexts. Unlike rapid, event-based commemorations that can be

easily disrupted, these memory works through gradual accumulation, creating enduring infrastructures of remembrance can create an epistemic change. In Turkey, where the political climate often swings toward repression, such sustainable practices allow memory work to survive beyond immediate political cycles. By embedding remembrance in everyday practices, cultural institutions, and intergenerational networks, slow memory ensures that silenced histories retain a presence even when public space is closed.

Memory activism intervenes in the epistemic life of societies that have inherited violent pasts. It challenges dominant narratives, archives silenced voices, and creates arenas of dialogue in which marginalized experiences can be expressed and heard. As such, it performs an epistemic function as much as a moral one. It does not merely call for recognition but actively reorganizes the social conditions under which knowledge about the past is produced and circulated. In this sense, it is a form of epistemic resistance: a collective response to testimonial and hermeneutical injustices that have long defined the politics of history in Turkey and elsewhere.

Hrant Dink Foundation exemplifies how memory activism can cultivate epistemic virtues within a society marked by denial and polarization. Founded in memory of journalist Hrant Dink, who was assassinated in 2007 for his outspoken commitment to dialogue between Turks and Armenians, the Foundation's work proceeds from the conviction that justice cannot exist without truth, and that truth cannot flourish without courage, humility, and empathy. Through its diverse institutes and programs—such as the 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory, the Media Watch on Hate Speech, the Turkey-Armenia Fellowship and Dialogue Programs, and the Bolis Institute—the Foundation enacts a civic pedagogy of remembrance. Each initiative contributes to transforming the epistemic environment by opening spaces for critical reflection, cross-community encounters, and plural narratives of the past.

HDF's practices collectively generate what José Medina (2013) calls epistemic friction—productive encounters between diverse ways of knowing that stimulate moral and cognitive growth. The Foundation's initiatives bring together journalists, researchers, artists, and citizens from different communities, creating an environment where ignorance can be interrogated and new interpretive frameworks can emerge. By unsettling entrenched assumptions and facilitating public dialogue, the Foundation functions as an epistemic agent in the Turkish public sphere: one that cultivates the virtues necessary for a just relation to the past.

In a broader sense, the Hrant Dink Foundation's work reveals the transformative potential of memory activism as a vehicle of epistemic justice. It shows that the work of remembrance is not limited to preserving archives or erecting monuments; it is a dynamic and dialogical process that reconfigures relationships between knowledge, power, and morality. In a context where the marginalization of minority experiences have long structured national identity, the Foundation's interventions enact an alternative politics of knowledge—one grounded in listening, acknowledgment, and shared vulnerability.

The epistemic virtues cultivated through such activism do not belong solely to the activists themselves. They are social achievements: dispositions gradually embedded within civic life through education, art, public discourse, and institutional practices. The Foundation's work thus exemplifies how memory activism can nurture a democratic ethos that extends beyond commemoration toward the creation of more inclusive and reflexive forms of citizenship.

In this way, the struggle for epistemic justice through remembrance bridges the ethical and the political. It invites societies to reconstruct not only their historical narratives but also their moral sensibilities and epistemic capacities. Hrant Dink Foundation's sustained efforts to make the difficult past speak—through memory sites, cultural projects, and discursive interventions—demonstrate that coming to terms with history is not a singular act of recognition but an ongoing process of epistemic cultivation.

The politics of memory is not only a struggle over what societies remember, but also over how they come to know, understand, and reckon with their pasts. Memory activism, particularly in post-conflict and post-authoritarian societies, has increasingly emerged as a form of civic intervention aimed at countering denial, erasure, and silence. While memory studies has traditionally focused on collective remembrance and its cultural or political dimensions, a growing body of scholarship now recognizes memory activism as an epistemic project one that interrogates how historical knowledge is constructed, who is authorized to speak, and what kinds of narratives are legitimized or excluded. This thesis builds on this emerging perspective by investigating how memory activism can contribute to the cultivation of epistemic virtues, understood as character traits or intellectual dispositions that enable individuals and communities to navigate epistemic injustice and pursue more just knowledge practices.

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into five chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides the conceptual groundwork by examining the problem of epistemic injustice and the role of epistemic virtues as potential remedies. It traces the intellectual genealogy of the concept through recognition theory, feminist epistemology, and race theory, emphasizing how these traditions converge around questions of credibility, interpretive power, and epistemic exclusion. The chapter concludes by elaborating the virtues most relevant to memory activism: epistemic humility, intellectual diligence or curiosity, and open-mindedness drawing in particular on José Medina's account.

Chapter 3 explores the intersection of memory activism and epistemic virtue cultivation. It begins by defining memory activism as a form of civic engagement that seeks to contest dominant historical narratives and promote marginalized perspectives. The chapter then examines how activism particularly in the field of memory can be understood as a practice of epistemic resistance. Through case studies from Germany and other contexts, it illustrates how memory activism can contribute to the development of critical epistemic dispositions, both individually and collectively.

Chapter 4 turns to the empirical core of the thesis: a detailed examination of the Hrant Dink Foundation. The chapter is divided into four subsections: a brief institutional history of the HDF, an account of epistemic injustice in Turkey, a survey of memory activism in the Turkish context, and a critical analysis of the HDF's initiatives. This final section introduces the distinction between *direct* and *indirect epistemic interventions*, showing how both types of action contribute in different ways to reshaping historical consciousness and cultivating epistemic virtues.

Chapter 5, the conclusion, synthesizes the findings of the thesis and reflects on their broader implications. It argues that memory activism, when understood as an epistemic practice, offers a powerful means of resisting injustice and promoting civic virtues. It also highlights the importance of *indirect interventions*, which—though often less visible may prove more effective in cultivating long-term epistemic transformation.

Through this conceptual and empirical journey, the thesis aspires to offer a new perspective on memory activism: not only as a moral or political endeavor, but also as a crucial site for epistemic growth and resistance.

CHAPTER 2: THE PROBLEM OF EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE AND EPISTEMIC VIRTUES

2.1 Introduction

This chapter lays a theoretical foundation for analyzing epistemic injustice and introduces epistemic virtues as a necessary response. In societies structured by power hierarchies, epistemic authority is often monopolized by dominant groups. This imbalance silences marginalized voices, impedes their ability to make sense of their experiences, and results in testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, as conceptualized by Miranda Fricker (2007). Testimonial injustice involves unjustly discrediting someone's word due to prejudice, while hermeneutical injustice occurs when marginalized groups lack the interpretive tools to understand and communicate their experiences. Addressing these issues requires more than correcting individual bias; it demands cultivating intellectual character traits epistemic virtues that promote inclusivity, reflexivity, and justice in knowledge production. They are not just personal traits but social and political tools, especially when developed within activist and civic contexts.

The chapter begins by outlining the theoretical foundations of epistemic injustice, focusing on three key sources: recognition theory, feminist epistemology, and race theory. These bodies of thought are not merely surveyed as background literature; rather, they are approached as critical epistemic interventions that illuminate how diverse perspectives can generate profound epistemic transformations. Each of these traditions has played a formative role in shaping the discourse on epistemic injustice, offering insights into how power, identity, and knowledge are interwoven. At the same time, they serve as a conceptual foundation for this PhD thesis, which argues that memory activism, through its practice of epistemic resistance, has the potential to disrupt dominant narratives and ultimately foster epistemic transformation. This transformative process, in turn, provides fertile ground for the cultivation of epistemic virtues.

Recognition theory, particularly the work of Charles Taylor (1994) and Axel Honneth (2023), provides an alternative lens. Recognition is essential not only for inclusion but for epistemic credibility how people are acknowledged as credible knowers. Misrecognition leads to epistemic exclusion, especially when dominant groups shape

collective frameworks of understanding. The theory of recognition thus reveals the structural and interpersonal dimensions of epistemic injustice. Feminist epistemology deepens this critique by emphasizing how knowledge is situated. Thinkers like Sandra Harding (1993a, 1993b, 2004), Lorraine Code (1991), and Donna Haraway (1988) challenge the assumed neutrality of traditional epistemic norms, exposing their male, Eurocentric, and heteronormative biases. Feminist thinkers assert that marginalized communities are denied epistemic authority because dominant knowledge systems reflect the social positions of privileged groups. This exclusion is both epistemic and political, reinforcing systemic inequality. Race theory complements feminist thought by highlighting the racialized nature of epistemic harm. It shows how testimonial injustice such as not being believed and hermeneutical gaps such as lacking the language to express certain forms of oppression are deeply linked to histories of enslavement, segregation, and colonial domination. These insights further demonstrate that epistemic injustice is inseparable from broader social systems.

The chapter proceeds by laying out the theoretical foundation of the thesis through a sustained and critical engagement with the literature on epistemic injustice. Rather than treating this body of work as a mere conceptual background, the chapter offers a thorough analysis of the key debates, definitions, and frameworks that have shaped the field. Central to this analysis is the question of how epistemic injustice operates at the intersection of power, knowledge, and identity, and how it manifests through mechanisms such as testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. Building on this foundation, the chapter transitions into an in-depth examination of epistemic virtues, which constitutes the most pivotal and theoretically robust part of the chapter. This section is central not only to the chapter itself but to the overarching argument of the PhD thesis, which seeks to demonstrate that the cultivation of epistemic virtues is both a necessary and achievable goal in the struggle against epistemic injustice. Here, the concept of epistemic virtue is explored in detail: what it means, how it has been theorized, and why it matters in both individual and collective epistemic life. Drawing from virtue epistemology and its intersection with social epistemology, the chapter explores the contributions of thinkers such as Fricker who introduces testimonial and hermeneutical justice as virtues and Medina, who elaborates on a triad of virtues: epistemic humility, intellectual curiosity/diligence, and open-mindedness. The chapter delves into how these virtues function not only as personal dispositions but as socially embedded practices that are shaped through interaction, reflection, and resistance.

A major concern of this section is the question of how such virtues are cultivated. Rather than assuming that epistemic virtues are innate or individually acquired in isolation, the chapter argues that their development is fundamentally relational and political. It shows that epistemic virtues can emerge through processes of epistemic resistance acts of questioning, challenging, and disrupting dominant epistemic structures. Resistance, in this context, is not merely oppositional but also generative, creating new spaces for knowledge, recognition, and transformation. The chapter concludes by asserting that epistemic resistance serves as a crucial mechanism for nurturing epistemic virtues. This conclusion forms a critical bridge to the next chapter, which moves from theoretical reflection to practical application by exploring how memory activism, as a form of epistemic resistance, creates fertile ground for the emergence and strengthening of epistemic virtues. In this way, the chapter not only grounds the thesis in current epistemological debates but also prepares the reader for the analysis of memory activism as a site of epistemic resistance and transformation.

2.2 Theoretical Sources of Epistemic Injustice Framework

In contemporary philosophical dialogues, the concept of epistemic injustice has become a critical subject of examination, fundamentally shifting perceptions and engagements with knowledge, power and justice. Rooted in the intricate interplay between epistemology and ethics, epistemic injustice addresses the ways in which individuals or groups are wronged specifically in their capacity as knowers. Introduced most influentially by Miranda Fricker (2007), epistemic injustice names distinct forms of harm that occur when people are discredited, silenced, or denied the resources necessary to make sense of their experiences. While Fricker's foundational work identifies testimonial and hermeneutical injustice as core phenomena, the richness and critical depth of epistemic injustice theory owes much to its interdisciplinary development. Three major theoretical traditions have played a central role in expanding, complicating, and deepening the concept: recognition theory, feminist epistemology, and race theory. Each of these bodies of thought contributes essential insights into the structures of power, identity, and social interaction that underpin epistemic harms.

Recognition theory provides a normative and relational framework for understanding how epistemic injustice operates not only as an epistemic failure but as a form of misrecognition. From this perspective, being regarded as a "knower" is not merely a

matter of cognitive performance but a recognition-dependent status. Feminist epistemology has also been central to the theorization of epistemic injustice, long before the term was formalized. Feminist scholars have demonstrated how traditional epistemology often marginalizes or excludes the knowledge and experiences of women and other oppressed groups. Feminist epistemology reveals how gendered structures produce both testimonial and hermeneutical harms, often rendering women's experiences unintelligible or systematically devalued within dominant epistemic frameworks. This tradition has been instrumental in shifting epistemology from abstract individualism toward a socially embedded understanding of knowing. Race theory, especially critical race theory and Black feminist thought, further enriches the analysis by illuminating how racial power structures create and maintain epistemic injustice. Race theorists have emphasized that epistemic injustice is not only about cognitive failures or individual bias but is embedded in systemic structures that suppress, distort, or appropriate the knowledge of racialized subjects. Contributions from race theory have therefore pushed epistemic injustice studies to confront histories of colonization, segregation, and exclusion, offering a more materially grounded and politically urgent critique.

Taken together, these three traditions recognition theory, feminist epistemology, and race theory constitute a powerful theoretical foundation for epistemic injustice scholarship. They foreground the relational, structural, and political dimensions of epistemic harm and provide essential resources for a more critical and inclusive epistemology.

2.2.1 Recognition Theory and Epistemic Injustice

Recognition theory, with its focus on the normative importance of being acknowledged by others, provides a significant framework for understanding and addressing epistemic injustice because it links the formation of individual identity and agency to the quality of one's social relations. In this framework, being recognized is not merely a matter of emotional support but a condition for developing self-respect and being treated as a legitimate participant in social and epistemic practices. Epistemic injustice can thus be understood as a form of misrecognition that undermines an individual's epistemic agency and moral standing. Studying recognition theory not only inspires epistemic injustice scholarship by foregrounding the relational conditions of knowing, but also clarifies how misrecognition and ignorance are not just epistemic failures or

interpersonal harms, but can constitute profound injustices that undermine the ethical foundations of social interaction.

Charles Taylor's (1994) work on recognition theory offers valuable insights that can deepen the connection between recognition and epistemic injustice, particularly in understanding how identity formation and self-understanding are influenced by social recognition. Taylor argues that individuals develop a sense of self through dialogical relationships with others, in which mutual recognition is essential for personal and social flourishing. This understanding can significantly contribute to the discussion of epistemic injustice by framing the ways in which social recognition shapes not only the moral and emotional dimensions of identity but also epistemic capacities.

"Everyone should be recognized for his or her unique identity. But recognition here means something else. With the politics of equal dignity, what is established is meant to be universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities; with the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else. The idea is that it is precisely this distinctness that has been ignored, glossed over, assimilated to a dominant or majority identity. And this assimilation is the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity." (Taylor, 1994: 38)

Taylor's concept of 'misrecognition as a harm' (1994: 26) offers a valuable lens for understanding epistemic injustice, particularly in relation to hermeneutical injustice. Taylor argues that misrecognition, or the failure to properly recognize someone's identity or worth, is a profound harm because it prevents individuals from developing a full sense of self. In his view, the recognition of individuals is not just a social courtesy but is essential for their ability to form a coherent self-understanding. Misrecognition, therefore, can undermine one's sense of agency and belonging, leading to deep psychological and social harm. When applied to epistemic injustice, Taylor's idea of misrecognition resonates with the concept of hermeneutical injustice, as articulated by Miranda Fricker. Hermeneutical injustice occurs when individuals are denied the resources to make sense of their own experiences due to gaps in shared social understanding. Taylor's work suggests that this form of epistemic harm is not just a cognitive failure but a form of misrecognition because it prevents individuals from being recognized as legitimate knowers. In this sense, when people's experiences

are left unnamed or misunderstood within the dominant social narrative, they are denied recognition in their epistemic role both as agents of knowledge and as contributors to the collective understanding.

As developed by Axel Honneth (1995), recognition theory, underscores the foundational role that interpersonal and institutional forms of recognition play in enabling individual self-realization. Honneth distinguishes between three spheres of recognition love, rights, and solidarity each of which supports a distinct dimension of personal identity: self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. These forms of recognition are not merely expressive but constitutive of a person's ability to relate to themselves as capable, morally equal, and socially valued. When individuals are denied recognition—whether through neglect, disrespect, or exclusion they suffer not only personal harm but a form of social injustice that distorts their practical relation-to-self.

Contemporary academic investigations (Honneth, 2004 and 2023; McConkey, 2004; Giladi, 2018; Congdon, 2018 and 2020; Hänel, 2020) link the concept of recognition theory to the issue of epistemic injustice. These works provides a powerful foundation for understanding how the denial of recognition in communicative and epistemic contexts such as being silenced, dismissed, or treated as epistemically inferior can amount to a form of injustice. In this light, epistemic injustice can be seen as a specific manifestation of misrecognition, one that undermines individuals' status as credible knowers and equal participants in the social world.

Matthew Congdon's (2017) analysis of epistemic injustice, grounded in recognition theory, emphasizes that the wrongness of epistemic injustice lies not only in the harm it causes but also in the misrecognition it entails. For Congdon, epistemic injustice occurs when individuals are denied the recognition they deserve as knowers, which undermines their capacity to participate fully in epistemic practices. Drawing from recognition theory, he argues that being recognized as a legitimate knower is not just a social benefit but a normative necessity for individual self-realization and agency. Just as recognition is crucial for the development of self-respect and moral identity, it is equally vital for the cultivation of epistemic agency. When epistemic recognition is withheld, individuals experience not only epistemic harm but also a form of objectification being reduced to mere passive recipients of knowledge rather than active contributors to the collective epistemic community. Thus, for Congdon, epistemic injustice is inherently tied to the denial of recognition, which is both an

epistemic and an ethical wrong, as it deprives individuals of their right to participate in the social construction of knowledge.

The influence of recognition theory on the literature of epistemic injustice is profound and multifaceted. Recognition provides a normative framework for understanding the harms of epistemic injustice, grounding these harms in broader concerns about identity, agency, and social participation. Theorists of recognition theory demonstrate that epistemic injustice is not merely a failure of knowledge but a failure of social recognition. Addressing it requires more than correcting cognitive errors; it demands the cultivation of epistemic communities grounded in mutual respect, solidarity, and resistance to domination. Recognition theory, in this light, is not only a resource for epistemology but a call to reimagine the social conditions under which knowledge is produced and shared.

2.2.2 Feminist Epistemology and Epistemic Injustice

“I am a woman committed to a politics of transliteration, the methodology of a mind, stunned at the suddenly possible shifts of meaning—for which like amnesiacs in a ward on fire, we must find words or burn.” (Broumas, 1977: 24)

The impact of feminist epistemology on the development of contemporary debates on knowledge, power, and justice is significant. Over the last few decades, scholars in feminist philosophy have greatly expanded the understanding of epistemic injustice, bringing to light the ways in which gendered norms and biases intersect with overarching systems of oppression to exclude certain forms of knowledge and ways of knowing. In this section, the influence of feminist epistemology on the literature on epistemic injustice is explored, with a spotlight on key concepts, and debates for addressing injustices in society.

Feminist epistemology developed as a reaction to limitations of traditional epistemological systems which tend to favor abstract, detached forms of knowledge linked to privileged, predominantly male perspectives. In the 1970s, feminist scholars started to question the Anglo-American tradition of epistemology. From practical matters upon which the feminist movement has been developing around to theoretical issues; feminist theorists challenged universality, objectivity and rationality claims of natural and social sciences. They argued that scientific knowledge is constructed with

social bias and typically includes androcentric and sexist assumptions; knowledge is always situated within social and historical contexts and influenced by power dynamics. Feminist scholars criticized Anglo- American intellectual tradition in which women are denied the epistemic authority and their experiences and perspectives are excluded from the general knowledge; new theories on epistemology grew out of this criticism.

Among different feminist epistemology tendencies, the feminist standpoint theory became particularly influential on different literatures (postcolonial studies, gender studies, epistemic injustice etc.) since it underlines the importance of “the social context and status of knowers” in the production of the knowledge (Alcoff and Potter, 1993: 1). Donna Haraway (1988), a leading figure in the feminist standpoint theory, argued that all knowledge is situated; it reflects the positionality of the knower whose characteristics determine the way in which the knowledge is constructed.

Feminist theorists analyzed the Western philosophical canon and pointed out two important observations; the predomination of male philosophers in philosophy and patriarchal prejudices in philosophical theories (Stone, 2019: 40). Lorraine Code (1991) underlines that in the philosophy, the knower is presupposed to be “adult (but not old), white, reasonably affluent (latterly middle-class) educated man of status, property, and publicly acceptable accomplishments”; however, women have been seen as “incapable, for many reasons, of achieving knowledge worthy of the name” (1991: 8-9). Since who the knower is determines how the knowledge is constituted, “the sex of the knower is epistemologically significant” as Code argues (1991: 8-9).

Genevieve Lloyd (1989), in her analysis on the western philosophy, points out that there is a tradition of associating nature with femaleness and reason and objectivity with maleness. For Lloyd, Kantian ethics creates a dichotomy in between “the moral value of ‘feminine’ concerns with the personal and particular, as against the universal and impartial” (1989: 105). There is a hierarchy (Flax, 1987) in between statuses of masculinity and femininity; the former is seen as “an attainment” (Lloyd, 1989: 86).

“Rational knowledge has been construed as a transcending, transformation or control of natural forces; and the feminine has been associated with what rational knowledge transcends, dominates or simply leaves behind.” (Lloyd, 1989: 2)

The femininity has been seen as an inferior status and woman is accepted as the other, she is excluded from the universal sphere of man. On the subject of othering woman in Western philosophy, Luce Irigaray contributed to the feminist theory with supporting arguments. In “This Sex Which is Not One” (1985a) and “Speculum of the Other Woman” (1985b) she argued that the universality claim of the enlightenment philosophy is based on the suppression of the sexual difference and the subordination of the feminine. In philosophy and in psychoanalysis, woman is defined with masculine terms and with no status at all. Irigaray criticizes this logic of sameness that suppresses the sexual difference and prevents woman to represent herself.

Feminist epistemology approaches underline the need for women to represent themselves in the intellectual sphere; in other words, women should become subjects in studies where they have been objects of. To include woman’s perspective in the production of knowledge will bring strong objectivity (Harding, 1993a: 150) to the scientific knowledge. On the contrary of the traditional objectivity understanding in science in which the identity of the researcher or the object should have no impact on the knowledge; Harding argues that a research project can achieve strong objectivity by strong reflexivity on the relation between the researcher and the object (152) and on the cultural particularity of the object (163). “Objectivity requires taking subjectivity into account” (Code, 1993: 32); the intellectual repertoire lacks the positionality of female knowers so the outcome cannot be objective unless their perspectives are included.

The emphasis put on cultural particularity challenges the universality claim of white men’s knowledge and includes objects of the study as subjects; this is an important point that links standpoint feminism with the struggle of other others. The production of the knowledge is run by dominant mechanisms that prevents the access of women and other subordinated groups to the process. “Struggles over what will count as rational accounts of the world are struggles over how to see” (Haraway, 1988: 587); feminist theorists by criticizing patriarchal monopoly over the knowledge pointed out ways in which epistemic oppression occurs and not only women but other marginalized groups suffer from it. However, an epistemic advantage can be rooted in oppression itself. Taking the origin from the Marxist theory, feminist theories of knowledge argue that the cultural particularity brings an epistemic advantage for women and/or other suppressed groups especially to understand the oppression they are subjected of. Since the dominant group’s perspective is limited to its own

positionality and they are exempt from the patriarchal oppression, their standpoint represents a narrow aspect of social occurrences (Harding, 1993b:6). Patricia Hill Collins (1990) by introducing the Black feminist thought, argues that Black women possess sui generis personal experiences of racism and sexism. The oppression that they were subjected of brings to them a unique, intersectional standpoint to express common themes in different ways. The Black feminist epistemology underlines the importance of the epistemic advantage for Black women to resist against dehumanization in the patriarchal domination. Collins (1986: 18) argues that “racist and sexist ideologies both share the common feature of treating dominated groups the “others” as objects lacking full human subjectivity”; so by using the epistemic advantage of Black female otherness, one can respect and admire her identity.

Defining the nature of knowledge production as a social process, inevitably leads into the argument of epistemic dependence of different parties to each other (Hardwig, 1985; Pritchard, 2015). Dotson (2014: 238) argues that “to communicate we all need an audience willing and capable of hearing us”; if one community is denied the epistemic authority, there occurs the epistemic violence. It means their words are not given any credibility and they cannot contribute to the knowledge production. This exclusion is the reason why having a marginalized social position does not automatically bring an epistemic privilege; to acquire a standpoint necessitates critical awareness and engagement about one’s social location (Bar On, 1993; Harding, 2004; Intemann, 2010; Wylie, 2012). In societies where there is epistemic oppression, to transform a marginalized social location into an epistemic advantage requires resistance against different forms of epistemic injustice.

As standpoint theorists argue marginalized groups have unique epistemic perspectives that offer valuable insights into the workings of power and privilege within society. They insist that knowledge produced from the margins can challenge dominant epistemic norms and reveal hidden forms of oppression. Only by seeing ethical dimensions of knowledge production, epistemic oppression can be prevented. To do so, one needs to acknowledge the limitations of one’s own perspective. Epistemic practices should be guided by inclusiveness; diverse epistemic communities should have been engaging in dialogue within themselves.

Feminist epistemology has significantly influenced the literature of epistemic injustice by challenging traditional epistemological frameworks, expanding the concept of epistemic injustice to include a broader range of social identities and experiences, and

advocating for strategies to address epistemic injustices in society. By centering the perspectives of marginalized groups and promoting epistemic pluralism, feminist scholars have contributed to a more nuanced understanding of knowledge, power, and justice in contemporary discourse.

2.2.3 Race Theory and Epistemic Injustice

Race theory enriches and radicalizes our understanding of epistemic injustice by foregrounding systemic racism and resistance epistemologies. The integration of critical race theory into epistemic injustice discourse has not only diversified its analytical lens but has also transformed it from a primarily interpersonal ethical concern into a powerful tool for diagnosing and contesting structural epistemic oppression.

One of the most influential race theorists in the epistemic injustice literature is Charles W. Mills, particularly through his work on the epistemology of ignorance and white ignorance. In “The Racial Contract” (1997) and later essays (e.g., Mills, 2007), Mills argues that racial domination is sustained not only through political and economic structures but also through epistemic practices that distort, ignore, or erase the knowledge of racially subordinated groups.

Mills introduces the idea of white ignorance as a systemic, motivated failure of knowing—an active not-knowing that maintains racial hierarchies. This concept goes beyond Fricker’s notion of individual prejudice to analyze how entire epistemic systems are structured to sustain ignorance among dominant racial groups. White ignorance is thus a form of epistemic injustice embedded in institutional and historical processes, rather than reducible to individual moral failings. Mills’ work forces epistemologists to contend with the historical construction of racial categories and the complicity of epistemic institutions in sustaining racial subordination. His notion of epistemic resistance aligns closely with the decolonial imperative in critical race theory, which seeks to center the voices and knowledges of the oppressed (Tuana, 2006).

Patricia Hill Collins’ “Black Feminist Thought” (1990) is another foundational text influencing epistemic injustice literature. Collins argues that Black women have developed a distinctive epistemology rooted in lived experience, collective wisdom, and resistance to dominant knowledge structures. Collins’ concept of the “outsider within” (1986) captures how Black women, excluded from dominant institutions yet

intimately familiar with them, offer unique epistemic insights. Her emphasis on standpoint theory directly informs discussions of epistemic privilege and credibility, central to leading scholars of epistemic injustice, Fricker's and Medina's frameworks. Collins' work also highlights the intersectionality of epistemic injustice. Black women are subjected to credibility deficits not only on account of race but also gender, class, and sexuality dimensions often overlooked in early formulations of epistemic injustice. Her contribution thus broadens the scope of analysis and underscores the importance of intersectionality in epistemology (Crenshaw, 1991).

Kristie Dotson extends and deepens the insights of Fricker, Mills, and Collins by theorizing epistemic oppression as the persistent exclusion of marginalized knowers from epistemic participation (Dotson, 2014). Dotson introduces the idea of epistemic exclusion, whereby epistemic institutions systematically devalue or ignore the contributions of racialized knowers, especially Black women. She distinguishes between epistemic violence when one's speech is not heard as knowledge and epistemic quieting when one's epistemic agency is not recognized. These concepts capture the lived experience of racialized individuals navigating white-dominated epistemic spaces and offer a more radical and structural account than Fricker's virtue-theoretic model. Moreover, Dotson's work on resistance epistemologies (2012) emphasizes that marginalized communities often cultivate alternative epistemic norms that defy dominant standards. This aligns with Collins' Black feminist epistemology and underscores the political dimension of epistemic justice: it is not only about inclusion but also about transforming epistemic norms and institutions.

The literature on epistemic injustice has undergone a significant transformation through its engagement with race theory. While Fricker's framework provided the initial vocabulary for diagnosing credibility and interpretive injustices, race theorists have significantly transformed and refined the literature on epistemic injustice by foregrounding the structural, historical, and racial dimensions of epistemic harm shifting the focus from isolated interactions to broader systems of power and exclusion; Luvell Anderson (2017) exemplifies this intervention through his focus on hermeneutical injustice, showing how racialized structures not only marginalize but actively suppress the interpretive resources needed for understanding and articulating racial experience. Anderson (2017: 146) argues that hermeneutical injustice is not solely the result of marginalized groups lacking the conceptual tools to articulate their experiences; it also stems from the deliberate suppression or displacement of existing

interpretive resources. This suppression can occur through dominant cultural narratives that promote alternative concepts such as the idea of a “postracial” society which function to obscure ongoing racial injustices and silence the voices of those who challenge such narratives. Anderson’s insight underscores the importance of race theory for epistemic injustice studies by showing how racialized power dynamics shape the very availability and legitimacy of interpretive frameworks. Understanding how dominant ideologies can actively maintain hermeneutical gaps reveals that epistemic injustice is not just a passive failure of understanding but often a politically motivated act of misrecognition and silencing.

By foregrounding structural racism, historical exclusion, and the epistemic virtues of marginalized communities, race theory challenges epistemologists to move beyond individual virtue and toward collective, political transformation. It demands that we rethink not only who counts as a knower, but also what counts as knowledge, how epistemic institutions are structured, and whose voices shape our collective understanding of the world.

2.3 Epistemic Injustice

Within contemporary debates on justice, a relatively new but significantly influential concept has been introduced, that is epistemic injustice. Centered on the intersection of knowledge, power, and social justice, epistemic injustice examines the ways in which individuals and groups are treated unjustly in their roles as knowers. The framework of epistemic injustice carves out a distinct space for examining how epistemic practices and structures can perpetuate inequality and marginalization. To comprehend the nuances of epistemic injustice, it is essential to start by defining what is meant by injustice through an epistemic lens. In traditional discussions, injustice is often perceived in terms of material deprivation, legal inequalities or social discrimination. Epistemic injustice, however, focuses on the wrongs done to people in their capacity as knowers and participants in communicative practices. This perspective shifts the analysis from purely distributive justice to a recognition that the very processes of knowing and understanding the world can be sites of injustice.

Epistemic injustice is not merely a subset of broader injustices but represents a distinct dimension where individuals are wronged specifically because of how their knowledge and experiences are received, ignored or discredited. This concept invites to reconsider power dynamics at play in the processes of knowledge creation and dissemination.

Who gets to be a knower? Whose voices are heard and validated? These questions are central to understanding epistemic injustice.

The term “epistemic” refers to anything related to knowledge or to the process of knowing. Therefore, epistemic injustice occurs when someone is unfairly treated in their capacity as a knower. This could manifest through the dismissal of someone’s testimony, the exclusion of certain groups from epistemic communities or the distortion of an individual’s experiences through a dominant interpretative framework that does not accurately reflect their experiences. Philosopher Miranda Fricker (2007) who introduced the concept of epistemic injustice, broadly categorized this concept into two primary forms: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. These categories help elucidate the specific mechanisms through which epistemic wrongs are enacted.

The concept of epistemic injustice provides a crucial lens for examining the ways in which knowledge practices can perpetuate inequality and marginalization. By focusing on the epistemic dimensions of injustice, pervasive mechanisms that undermine the capacities of individuals and groups as knowers can be uncovered. In the following part, specific forms of epistemic injustice are presented, exploring the dynamics of testimonial and hermeneutical injustices and considering implications for fostering a more just and inclusive epistemic community.

2.3.1 Defining Injustice with Epistemic Terms

Miranda Fricker’s (2007) introduction of the concept of epistemic injustice has become an important subject in today’s epistemological discourse. It deals with injustices that happen in the realm of knowledge, where individuals or groups are unjustly treated in their capacity as knowers. Through addressing how individuals and groups are marginalized as knowers, scholars have provided new pathways for understanding and combating systemic oppression and inequality. This section aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of epistemic injustice, investigating its various types, leading concepts, and implications for memory justice.

Injustice is epistemic when unjustified presuppositions like prejudices, stereotypes etc. prevent someone to receive credibility for her words; in other words, her capacity as a knower is wronged (Fricker, 2007: 1). Feminist epistemology demonstrated that “the cognitive authority” requires “a cluster of markings (gender, race, class, sexuality, culture, age)” (Alcoff and Potter, 1993: 3) and those who are not having this authority

are unable to produce knowledge or their knowledge is not given any credibility. Epistemic injustice includes:

“(...) wrongful treatment and unjust structures in meaning-making and knowledge producing practices, such as the following: exclusion and silencing; invisibility and inaudibility (or distorted presence or representation); having one’s meanings or contributions systematically distorted, misheard, or misrepresented; having diminished status or standing in communicative practices; unfair differentials in authority and/or epistemic agency; being unfairly distrusted; receiving no or minimal uptake; being coopted or instrumentalized; being marginalized as a result of dysfunctional dynamics; etc.” (Kidd et. al., 2017: 1)

A good example for epistemic injustice can be found in Spivak’s (1988) noted essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” that questions the very specific kind of injustice that the subaltern has been subjected to. She argues that Western intellectuals produce Eurocentric knowledge that benefits economic advantages of the West. She criticizes their use of universal norms and principles to study a different culture; this can only lead to the production of biased knowledge and a continuous epistemic violence against the subaltern who cannot speak since her voice cannot be heard in this hegemonic context.

“Inequality is the enemy of knowledge: it handicaps our capacity to know and to learn from each other. Social injustices breed epistemic injustices; or rather, these two kinds of injustice are two sides of the same coin, always going together, being mutually supportive and reinforcing each other.” (Medina, 2013: 27)

Ignorance plays a significant role in creating and sustaining domination and exploitation (Sullivan and Tuana, 2007). It can trigger epistemic violence where the privileged community silences marginalized groups. Dotson (2011: 238) defines epistemic violence as follows:

“In short, to communicate we all need an audience willing and capable of hearing us. The extent to which entire populations of people can be denied this kind of linguistic reciprocation as a matter of course institutes epistemic violence. Epistemic

violence in testimony is a refusal, intentional or unintentional, of an audience to communicatively reciprocate a linguistic exchange owing to pernicious ignorance. Pernicious ignorance should be understood to refer to any reliable ignorance that, in a given context, harms another person (or set of persons)."

Racialized ignorance is one of the well-known forms of epistemic violence; in his seminal book "The Racial Contract" (1997), Charles W. Mills explains how racialized ignorance affects social relations and causes injustices. Mills (1997) argues that the social contract is based on the idea of white supremacy and it is indeed a racial contract; "(...) whites, who take their racial privilege so much for granted that they do not even see it as political, as a form of domination" (Mills, 1997: 1). White ignorance justifies itself in oppressive societies by accepting "particular forms of inequality and exploitation as basically just and fair, or at least the best of all possible worlds" (2007:48). White ignorance accepts the idea of white racial superiority and it includes "both false belief and the absence of true belief" (Mills, 2007: 16). It is no coincidence that white ignorance is influential in the memory selection as well; positive stories about non-whites and negative stories about whites disappear through collective amnesia.

Marilyn Frye, in her book called "The Politics of Reality" (1983) rightfully argues that ignorance should be seen with its complexities. Supporting her argument, it should be recalled that ignorance is embedded not only in political, economic, social and institutional mechanisms but also in personal relationships, actions and oversights.

"Ignorance is not something simple: it is not a simple lack, absence or emptiness, and it is not a passive state. Ignorance of this sort the determined ignorance most white Americans have of American Indian tribes and clans, the ostrichlike ignorance most white Americans have of the histories of Asian peoples in this country, the impoverishing ignorance most white Americans have of Black language ignorance of these sorts is a complex result of many acts and many negligences." (1983: 118)

Ignorance can pose a significant challenge in the search for knowledge. Nonetheless, by looking at it from an epistemological standpoint, a powerful tool in the battle against ignorance can be identified. Epistemology is not just a theoretical concept; it also provides practical guidance by offering insights and methodologies to help

navigate the complexities of understanding. Epistemology gives us the critical thinking abilities needed to face and defeat ignorance by exploring the limits of what we can know, how we come to know it, and what counts as reliable knowledge. Ignorance flourishes in the absence of knowledge or in the presence of misinformation, resulting in gaps in understanding, misconceptions, biases, and prejudices that prevent progress and cultivate division. Nonetheless, through delving into epistemological exploration, we set out on a quest for enlightenment, revealing the foundational structures of knowledge creation and evaluation.

The American philosopher Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski (1996: 267) argues that knowledge should be defined in a “practically useful” way. Following her theoretical account, Fricker (2007) emphasizes the role of epistemology to detect epistemic injustices in the knowledge production process. Unlike her predecessors from virtue epistemology, Fricker’s analysis (2007) particularly focuses on epistemic vices as causes of epistemic injustices. She focuses on power relations in the society to understand how epistemic injustices occur. For Fricker (2007: 4), “power is a socially situated capacity to control others’ actions”; from this definition, it becomes clear that she problematizes social identity as the main determinant of power. She specifically identifies “identity power” as “a form of social power which is directly dependent upon shared social-imaginative conceptions of the social identities of those implicated in the particular operation of power” (4). She argues that identity power affects epistemic relations; “ideas such as that epistemic trust might have an irrepressible connection with social power, or that social disadvantage can produce unjust epistemic disadvantage” (2). The root cause of epistemic injustice is identity prejudice that is “a label for prejudices against people qua social type” (4); social imagination produces these prejudices that influence the judgement of a hearer about someone’s credibility.

2.3.2 Testimonial and Hermeneutical Injustices

In her seminal book, Fricker (2007) conceptualizes two categories of epistemic injustice: testimonial and hermeneutical. In the case of testimonial injustice, certain deeply rooted prejudices prevent a hearer from giving credibility to a speaker’s statement. Fricker gives the example of Tom Robinson’s case which is taken from Harper Lee’s novel “To Kill a Mockingbird” and argues that he was subjected to testimonial injustice since his words were not given credibility because he was black. Prejudices about the trustworthiness of black people led to the withholding of listening

on the part of the jury. Thus, the jury failed to listen to Robinson objectively as they would listen to a white man. Precisely this failure is an expression of misrecognition that “constitutes an institutionalized relation of subordination and a violation of justice” (Fraser, 2003: 29).

Dotson (2011) conceptualizes two types of testimonial oppressions: testimonial quieting and testimonial smothering. The first one appears when a speaker is not recognized as a knower by an audience and since the basic requirement of the communication is to have a hearer, the speaker cannot testify. Dotson gives the experience of Black women as an example for testimonial quieting. Their “epistemically disadvantaged identity” (Tuana, 2006) causes their testimonies and memories to be accepted as not credible. The second one, testimonial smothering, appears when a speaker refrains herself to share a testimony with an audience who is not hearing the speaker. This self-silencing can be understood in the context of Fricker’s second category of epistemic injustice: hermeneutical injustice.

Hermeneutical injustice happens when due to “structural identity prejudice”, someone’s experiences are not recognized in and excluded from public debate (Fricker, 2007). As a result, those who are subjected to hermeneutical injustice have “(...) incapacity to make sense (sometimes both to themselves and to others) of their life experiences and predicaments, enter communicative interactions in a disadvantaged position” (Medina, 2013: 71). The oppressed possesses a special characteristic due to hermeneutical injustice, Medina calls it “ego skepticism: a skepticism about the self, about its capacities and even about its very existence” (2013: 42). Hermeneutical injustice damages “the very construction (constitutive and/or causal) of selfhood.” (Fricker, 2007: 168). Medina (2013: 41) as well, argues that hermeneutical injustice may cause severe harms on selfhood that could be turned into hermeneutical death:

“(...) hermeneutical death, that is, in phenomena that radically constrain one’s hermeneutical capacities and agency such as the following: the loss (or radical curtailment) of one’s voice, of one’s interpretative capacities, or of one’s status as a participant in meaning-making and meaning-sharing practices. This is something that oppressed groups have denounced for a long time. (...) Hermeneutical harms can run so deep as to annihilate one’s self, so as to produce hermeneutical death. On my view, this occurs when subjects are not simply mistreated as intelligible communicators, but

prevented from developing and exercising a voice, that is, prevented from participating in meaning-making and meaning-sharing practices.” (Medina, 2013: 41)

To better understand the harm of hermeneutical injustice on the selfhood, the effects of white supremacy over black identity can be recalled. Steve Biko who was a South African anti-apartheid activist and leader of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1960s and 1970s developed “Black Consciousness” as a concept and movement that aimed at empowering black people psychologically, socially, and politically against the oppression caused by white racial supremacy. The essence of “Black Consciousness” (Biko, 2014) was the encouragement for black people to accept and embrace their identity and heritage without feeling inferior to other races. Biko believed that self-acceptance was essential for black liberation. He encouraged black individuals to seek progress and growth within their own communities, rather than seeking validation or assistance from the oppressive apartheid regime or white society. “Black Consciousness” promoted critical analysis among black individuals regarding their social and political realities, leading to an understanding of the systemic injustices of apartheid and advocating for non-violent resistance against oppression. Lastly, Biko stressed the significance of honoring and safeguarding black culture and traditions as a source of resilience and empowerment. He argued that embracing one’s cultural heritage was crucial for fostering pride and dignity within the black community.

Biko (2014) clearly shows that black people face obstacles in understanding or conveying their experiences because of the structural inequalities in interpreting and expressing their social truth. The correlation between racial supremacy and hermeneutical injustice reveals how racial dominance intensifies and sustains these injustices, resulting in significant impacts on marginalized groups. Their voices can be marginalized; perspectives of the racially privileged often dominate narratives, leaving little room for the voices and experiences of marginalized communities. Moreover, racial supremacy distorts how we interpret history, culture, and social phenomena. This leads to a form of hermeneutical injustice, where people from marginalized backgrounds find it challenging to have their personal experiences recognized and respected by society.

Racial supremacy leads to epistemic exclusion as well, which systematically prevents individuals from marginalized groups from accessing the knowledge and resources

needed to fully engage in society. Dealing with these unfairness calls for challenging and dismantling systems that uphold racial superiority, amplifying voices that are often silenced, and fostering environments that respect and appreciate diverse viewpoints. Only through collective action and commitment to equity and justice can we begin to address the profound impact of racial supremacy on hermeneutical injustice.

At this point, it is important to emphasize a distinction in Fricker's and Medina's discussions of hermeneutical injustice. Both Fricker and Medina draw attention to the impact of hermeneutical injustices on perpetuating epistemic marginalization and contributing to wider patterns of oppression. They are in consensus about the need to enhance interpretive resources and encourage more inclusiveness in epistemic activities to confront these injustices. On the other hand, they have differing opinions on the structural and historical causes of hermeneutical injustices. Fricker's focus is on the lack of interpretive resources and the suppression of marginalized voices in current socio-cultural frameworks. Despite recognizing the influence of power dynamics in perpetuating these injustices, her analysis tends to give precedence to individual experiences of testimonial silencing rather than systemic and historical forms of oppression. On the other hand, Medina's perspective offers a more comprehensive view by connecting hermeneutical injustices to colonialism, racism, and structural inequality. He points out the deliberate erasure and distortion of marginalized narratives by dominant epistemic authorities, stressing the essentiality of epistemic decolonization and the redistribution of epistemic power. In his words, Medina (2012: 202) would like "to make Fricker's social contextualism more deeply pluralistic, interactive, and dynamic". Nevertheless, they both find the solution in the same place: it is the context in which epistemic virtues are cultivated.

Both hermeneutical and testimonial injustices occur due to the "credibility excess" (Fricker, 2007: 17) of the privileged that is nurtured by "tracker prejudices" that track the subject through different dimensions of social activity—economic, educational, professional, sexual, legal, political, religious, and so on" and can breed "other kinds of actual or potential injustice" (27). For instance, in his analysis of contemporary poverty, Necmi Erdoğan (2023) focuses on the poor and their absenteeism in the social sphere. By naming them as "lost people", Erdoğan shows that prejudices not only track but even make subjects invisible in the social context. Similarly, Judith Butler (2004) demonstrates that by manipulating public sphere, authorities may convince the public to see wars against designated others as justified and to regard their lives as

unimportant, not even deserving mourning.

To overcome the problem of “credibility deficit” of the marginalized (17), there is a need for “a corrective anti-prejudicial virtue that is distinctively reflexive in structure” (91). Fricker’s account on corrective virtues as cures for epistemic injustice is explained in detail in following sections. Before closing this section, it is important to keep in mind that the pioneering contributions of Miranda Fricker to the study of epistemic injustice have had a profound effect on virtue epistemology. Her analysis of how individuals can be subjected to injustices as knowers has brought attention to the importance of virtues like testimonial justice, intellectual humility, and epistemic responsibility.

There is a remarkable connection in between literatures on recognition and epistemic justice. This connection can be found in Axel Honneth’s theoretical approach on recognition more directly. Honneth himself argues that both theories on epistemic injustice and recognition can develop “a theory of social recognition” (Honneth, 2023: 31). Honneth’s theory of social esteem is based on solidarity that makes differences visible and recognized. Social Esteem “requires the hearer to be aware of and to overcome identity prejudice” (Nielsen and Utsler, 2023: 81); only in this way there is a possibility to build unprejudiced identity for oneself.

“Finally, for Honneth, difference is present in social esteem as the highest form of mutual recognition. The other forms of mutual recognition, love and legal rights, do not allow for a complete openness to difference and often are based far more on sameness. But recognizing and esteeming the social addressee welcomes or is, at the least, open to difference and organizes social life around difference.” (Nielsen and Utsler, 2023: 83)

Keeping in mind Honneth’s theory of recognition, it is critical to observe the way in which Fricker’s framework has revealed how certain social structures and power dynamics can impede individuals from fully engaging in epistemic communities. Her focus on the social aspect of knowledge acquisition has prompted virtue epistemologists to acknowledge the significance of considering not just individual cognitive abilities, but also the wider socio- cultural environment in which knowledge is created and exchanged. This transition has enriched conversations in virtue epistemology by promoting a more nuanced understanding of how virtues operate in

social settings and how they can be nurtured to combat epistemic injustices.

Before analyzing epistemic virtues in the context of epistemic injustice literature, the following section recalls the intellectual background of virtue epistemology. Virtue epistemology is a framework in epistemology that emphasizes the importance of intellectual and epistemic virtues in guiding critical thinking and the acquisition of knowledge, with the epistemic agent being at the center of this process. Unlike traditional methods that focus mainly on justifying beliefs or analyzing knowledge propositions, virtue epistemology looks towards the character and habits of individuals engaged in epistemic practices. Essentially, it emphasizes the significance of having and nurturing intellectual virtues for reliable and responsible inquiry. Additionally, virtue epistemology takes a comprehensive view on achieving epistemic excellence by acknowledging that intellectual virtues are influenced by societal and cultural factors. Shared norms, practices, and values within communities of inquiry have a significant impact on shaping the epistemic landscape for the epistemic agent. Accordingly, virtue epistemology encourages reflection on not just individual virtues but also on the societal factors that affect the process of gaining and spreading knowledge.

Virtue epistemology is highly relevant to memory politics. This relevance is heightened when virtue epistemology extends its focus beyond individual virtues to include societal factors that impact the process of gaining and spreading knowledge. Memory politics involves the ways in which societies remember and interpret their pasts, often influenced by power dynamics, cultural hegemony and social injustices. By applying virtue epistemology to memory politics, we can critically examine both personal and collective virtues necessary for an equitable and comprehensive understanding of history.

Reflection on epistemic virtues is crucial in memory politics. These virtues enable individuals to critically engage with historical narratives, question dominant perspectives and seek out marginalized voices. However, focusing solely on individual virtues is insufficient. Societal factors such as institutional biases, power structures and cultural norms also play significant roles in shaping collective memory. Memory studies encourage the examination of these broader influences, prompting researchers to consider how societal virtues or vices affect the process of memorialization. For example, a society that values inclusivity and justice is more likely to support the integration of diverse historical perspectives, whereas one that upholds exclusionary practices may perpetuate epistemic injustices.

By incorporating societal factors into virtue epistemology, we can better understand how collective memory is constructed and manipulated. This approach highlights the need for systemic changes to create environments that foster epistemic virtues. In this way, virtue epistemology not only informs individual conduct but also guides societal efforts to rectify historical injustices and ensure that all voices are heard and valued in the collective memory.

2.4 Epistemic Virtues

In the quest for knowledge, the concept of virtue has traditionally been relegated to the realms of ethics and moral philosophy. However, the integration of virtue into epistemology, known as virtue epistemology, offers a robust framework for understanding the characteristics and dispositions that contribute to good epistemic practices. Epistemic virtues are those traits that aid individuals in acquiring, maintaining and transmitting knowledge effectively. This section aims to delve into the multifaceted nature of epistemic virtues, their significance in the literature on epistemic injustice.

Virtue epistemology represents a paradigm shift in the study of knowledge, moving away from a sole focus on the traditional epistemological questions of “what is knowledge?” and “how do we acquire it?”. Instead, it emphasizes the qualities of the knower and the importance of intellectual character in the pursuit of truth. Central to virtue epistemology is the idea that knowledge acquisition is not merely a cognitive process but also a deeply moral one, involving the cultivation of certain virtues that enhance our epistemic endeavors.

Epistemic virtues can be understood as those qualities that make a person a good knower. The emphasis on these virtues underscores the belief that good epistemic practices are not just about having true beliefs or avoiding false ones, but about cultivating a character that is conducive to the ongoing search for truth. By focusing on the qualities of the knower, virtue epistemology provides a richer account of what it means to engage in epistemic practices ethically and effectively. It suggests that the pursuit of knowledge is not just a technical endeavor but one that is deeply intertwined with our moral and intellectual character. The intersection of epistemic virtues and epistemic injustice literature provides a fertile ground for exploring how certain intellectual virtues can help mitigate the harms of epistemic injustice.

2.4.1 Epistemic Virtues as Normative Dispositions

Virtue epistemology is a contemporary philosophical approach in epistemology. Although conventional epistemology approach focuses on how to justify the reliability of knowledge, virtue epistemology is interested in the relation between experiences of knowing and actions. This recent approach takes its philosophical foundation from virtue ethics that is developed in ancient Greek ethical and political thought. One of the most canonical accounts on virtue ethics is that of Aristotle's. It is important to recall some of his main arguments on virtues from his noted book *Nicomachean Ethics* (2004) to understand current debates in virtue epistemology.

For Aristotle, virtues are states but not feelings nor capacities (29). Unlike Plato, he deals with virtues in a practical way rather than understanding them in a purely theoretical manner; "(...) it is not in order to acquire knowledge that we are considering what virtue is, but to become good people" (24). So, according to Aristotle, a virtue is an excellent character trait that is "worthy of praise" (22); this excellence can be attained only with education, practice and habituation of a state of character (23). Virtues are voluntary and people have control over them (48). He classifies virtue into two categories; intellectual virtue (wisdom, judgment, practical wisdom/phronesis etc.) and virtue of character (courage, generosity, temperance, etc.) (22). Among these virtues, especially practical wisdom (phronesis) as an intellectual virtue is worth to be mentioned because this virtue is connecting the intellect with the practice. Phronesis "involves the virtuous person's commanding himself to perform what is called for in the circumstances" (xxv). To achieve it, there is a need for all virtues of character since practical wisdom requires a level of wisdom that leads to do the right thing routinely by "giving oneself the correct orders" (xxvi) without any guidance.

Virtue epistemology has been remarkably influenced by Aristotle's virtue ethics. Even so, the theory itself is designed to be practically useful (Zagzebski, 1996; Fricker, 2007). The contemporary virtue epistemology approach focuses on agents and their epistemic/intellectual virtues. In 1980, Ernest Sosa's intervention with his paper called "The Raft and the Pyramid" (1980) transformed the way in which epistemology has been discussed. In his paper, Sosa developed a virtue-centered perspective to study epistemology to challenge knowledge as a justified true belief understanding raised by Edmund L. Gettier (1963). Virtue perspectivism made visible a critical disagreement

in the literature over the definition of an intellectual virtue; Axtell (1997) conceptualized this debate as virtue-reliabilism versus virtue responsibilism. Virtue-reliabilism is an approach that accepts an intellectual virtue as a reliable cognitive faculty that focuses on vision, introspection and memory as sources of knowledge (Sosa, 1980; Greco, 2005). Virtue responsibilism on the other hand, sees an intellectual virtue as a character trait for a responsible knower and accepts attentiveness, fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, intellectual tenacity and courage as examples of intellectual virtue (Code, 1984; Montmarquet, 1993; Zagzebski, 1996).

The debate on the definition of an intellectual virtue is indeed revolving around whether a knower has control over her character trait to develop a motivation for knowledge. Followers of reliabilism tradition argue that a knower has no such control over her intellectual virtues (Greco, 2005). The virtue responsibilism camp, on the other hand, argues that character traits and personal dispositions can be controllable (Montmarquet, 1993; Zagzebski, 1996; Baehr, 2011). Precisely this control makes it possible to define epistemic responsibility. Highly influenced by Aristotle's account on moral virtues, proponents of this latter approach advocate that "intellectual virtues are acquired character traits like open-mindedness, intellectual humility, and intellectual perseverance that require dispositions of epistemic motivation and epistemic action" (Battaly, 2019: 118). Furthermore, following the control argument, they maintain that epistemic vices like closed-mindedness or inattention might also be seen as character traits that are within the limits of control but accepted as "failures" to reach at the truth/knowledge (Montmarquet, 2019: 38).

The reliabilism vs. responsibilism disagreement within virtue epistemologists is significantly relevant to the discussion on the development of epistemic virtues through memory activism. Reliabilism camp focuses on the reliability of cognitive processes in producing true beliefs, while responsibilism camp emphasizes the agent's active role and accountability in the acquisition of knowledge. This debate enriches memory activism, a practice dedicated to challenging and transforming collective memory by highlighting marginalized narratives and promoting historical justice.

From a reliabilist perspective, memory activists strive to ensure that the methods and processes used to uncover and disseminate historical truths are reliable. This involves rigorous research, corroboration of sources, and adherence to scholarly standards, all aimed at producing accurate and trustworthy accounts of the past. By emphasizing reliable cognitive processes, reliabilism helps memory activists build a foundation of

credibility, which is crucial for gaining public trust and fostering a more truthful collective memory.

Conversely, the responsibility approach highlights ethical and moral obligations of memory activists. It underscores the importance of intellectual virtues in the pursuit of historical truth. Memory activists, driven by a sense of responsibility, actively seek out suppressed or neglected narratives, often facing significant resistance and challenges. Their commitment to uncovering and presenting these narratives reflects a deep sense of duty to justice and truth, embodying the intellectual virtues that the responsibility view champions.

The interplay between reliabilism and responsibility in the development of epistemic virtues through memory activism is thus crucial. It ensures that the pursuit of historical truth is both methodologically sound and ethically grounded. Memory activists who integrate both perspectives are better equipped to challenge dominant historical narratives and advocate for a more inclusive and accurate representation of the past. This dual approach not only enhances the credibility and integrity of memory activism but also fosters a more just and comprehensive collective memory, addressing past injustices and contributing to societal healing and reconciliation.

Influences of Aristotle's virtue ethics, the taxonomy of reliabilism vs. responsibilism, the debate over control and epistemic responsibility are noteworthy in recent virtue epistemology studies that focus on diverse epistemic virtues. The Routledge Handbook of Virtue Epistemology (2019: 5) provides a detailed literature review on recent academic works; the list of intellectual virtues include epistemic autonomy (Code, 2006; Roberts and Wood, 2007); epistemic humility and courage (Roberts and Wood, 2007; Riggs, 2010; Medina, 2013; Kwong, 2017); epistemic justice and injustice (Fricker, 2007; Anderson, 2012); intellectual humility (Whitcomb et al., 2017; Church and Samuelson, 2017; Tanesini, 2018); curiosity (Whitcomb 2010); creativity (Kieran 2014); virtues connected to trust epistemic autonomy, deference, and skepticism (Encabo, 2008; Le Morvan, 2011; Zagzebski, 2012); epistemic perseverance (King, 2014; Battaly, 2017). This extendible list shows that epistemic virtues can be analyzed through diverse perspectives.

The epistemic virtues surveyed in The Routledge Handbook of Virtue Epistemology reflect a broad and evolving understanding of what it means to be a good knower. From individual traits like humility, curiosity, and creativity, to socially embedded virtues like justice and trust, these character dispositions provide a richer

and more humane picture of epistemic agency. They emphasize not only how knowledge is acquired, but how it is pursued, shared, and challenged in communities. Together, they point toward a vision of epistemology grounded in character, shaped by context, and oriented toward justice.

Epistemic autonomy refers to the intellectual virtue of thinking for oneself, resisting undue influence, and independently evaluating evidence and reasons. Lorraine Code (2006) emphasizes that autonomy must be socially situated; it is not merely about isolated reasoning but involves critical engagement with epistemic norms and institutions. Roberts and Wood (2007) further develop this concept as a regulative virtue that balances receptivity to others with self-governance in inquiry. Autonomy plays a crucial role in contexts where deference is common such as education or expert testimony and helps safeguard against epistemic dependency that might lead to intellectual growth.

Among the most discussed epistemic virtues are epistemic humility and epistemic courage, often seen as complementary. Roberts and Wood (2007) define humility as an awareness of one's intellectual limitations and fallibility, coupled with a readiness to revise beliefs. This virtue is particularly important in pluralistic societies, where exposure to diverse perspectives is inevitable. Riggs (2010) argues that humility is essential for epistemic improvement, as it prevents dogmatism and encourages openness to correction.

Epistemic courage, in contrast, is the disposition to pursue truth and maintain epistemic commitments despite fear, risk, or opposition. As Kwong (2017) notes, this virtue is vital for resisting epistemic injustice, especially for marginalized knowers who risk social sanction by asserting their epistemic authority. Medina (2013), while not including courage in his virtue trilogy, implicitly supports its function in his account of resistant epistemic practices. Courage ensures that agents persist in inquiry even when doing so is socially or psychologically costly, particularly in oppressive or unjust contexts.

Why might Medina have omitted courage as a leading epistemic virtue? One possible explanation is that Medina views courage as an underlying disposition that is embedded within other virtues, rather than a stand-alone intellectual virtue. For instance, humility in the face of epistemic challenge or open-mindedness in hostile environments may require courage, but Medina may see these as expressions of humility or openness rather than as manifestations of a distinct virtue. Another

possibility is that Medina's emphasis is more on collective epistemic resilience than on the heroism often associated with courage. His focus is on dialogical, distributed, and situated resistance rather than individual acts of bravery. From this perspective, highlighting courage may reinforce a more individualistic or exceptionalist epistemic model. Still, the absence is notable, and as I will argue, courage deserves a place among the leading epistemic virtues.

While not always foregrounded in epistemology, creativity has been increasingly recognized as an intellectual virtue, particularly in contexts of problem-solving and theory innovation. Kieran (2014) frames creativity as essential to epistemic discovery, arguing that it involves the imaginative recombination of ideas, the capacity to see connections across domains, and the willingness to entertain novel possibilities. In science, philosophy, and art, creativity enables epistemic breakthroughs that exceed routine or algorithmic methods of thinking.

Trust is central to epistemic life we rely on others for vast amounts of our knowledge. Yet navigating trust requires a suite of intellectual virtues that balance dependence with critical judgment. Encabo (2008) and Le Morvan (2011) discuss the importance of epistemic deference, the readiness to trust others appropriately, particularly in expert-layperson dynamics. However, this must be tempered by epistemic skepticism, or the virtue of not believing too readily. As Linda Zagzebski (2012) notes, the interplay between autonomy, deference, and skepticism is vital for epistemic maturity. Too much trust can lead to gullibility; too little undermines collective knowledge. The virtuous agent knows when to trust, when to question, and when to seek further evidence.

Finally, epistemic perseverance is the virtue of persisting in inquiry despite difficulty, frustration, or failure. As King (2014) argues, it supports long-term intellectual projects and is indispensable in contexts where knowledge is hard-won. Heather Battaly (2017) underscores that perseverance often accompanies other virtues like diligence and courage, particularly when confronting systemic obstacles such as injustice, ignorance, or institutional resistance. In activist, scientific, and educational contexts, perseverance sustains agents through the inevitable setbacks of inquiry.

In what follows, I turn to the epistemic injustice framework, with particular attention to how it defines and defends specific epistemic virtues. The selection of Fricker's two virtues testimonial justice and hermeneutical justice and Medina's three epistemic humility, intellectual curiosity/diligence, and open-mindedness serves to highlight

influential and contrasting accounts of how individuals and communities can resist epistemic injustice through cultivated epistemic character.

2.4.2 Epistemic Virtue in Epistemic Injustice Literature

The concept of epistemic virtue has risen to prominence as a central theme in discussions on epistemic injustice in recent years. Miranda Fricker and other contemporary theorists have discussed epistemic injustice as the mistreatment of individuals in their capacity as knowers, often caused by systemic biases, prejudices or power imbalances within social and epistemic structures. In this framework, the cultivation and practice of epistemic virtues are pivotal in dealing with and minimizing instances of epistemic injustice. Epistemic virtues encompass a range of intellectual character traits and dispositions that facilitate reliable, responsible, and fair engagement with knowledge and inquiry. These virtues not only shape individual knowledge-seeking behaviors but also enhance the collective knowledge base of communities and societies. By exploring epistemic virtues within the framework of epistemic injustice literature, insights can be gained into how individuals and communities can challenge and resist oppressive norms and practices.

Knowledge is constructed in a context where there is an interaction in-between community; in this social knowledge production process, it is possible to observe transactions of epistemic virtues and vices. Daukas (2019: 384) reminds that:

“The vast majority of our knowledge and understanding relies on testimony; that is, on learning from and with others through spoken, written, and signed communication. Testimonial exchange is therefore a rich focus for scrutinizing intellectual virtues and vices.”

Interaction is a key word here because whether it is an inclusive or an exclusive interaction determines the way in which public knowledge is built up. In an inclusive epistemic environment, epistemic virtues are widespread; on the contrary, an exclusive epistemic context is where epistemic vices overrule.

It is important to turn back to Aristotle once more. One of the most important moral virtue for Aristotle is justice. He defines it as “complete virtue”, “the greatest virtue”, “the only virtue considered to be the good of another, because it is exercised in relation to others: it does what is beneficial for another” (83); the emphasis put on the

relationality and on the benefit, is the reason why justice is a moral virtue for Aristotle. This reasoning is influential on the leading scholar of epistemic injustice, Miranda Fricker (2007) who sees epistemic justice as a virtue that realizes itself in a social context where it becomes an antidote for epistemic injustice which in turn represents an epistemic vice.

Fricker (2007) defines two epistemic virtues testimonial and hermeneutical justices in relation to and as a cure for two epistemic vices. Both virtues are “corrective” (7) and “hybrid” in the sense that they are both ethical and intellectual virtues, looking for both “truth and justice” (124 and 187). The virtue of testimonial justice requires “a testimonial sensibility” that can be acquired by “a process of epistemic socialization - a social training of the interpretative and affective attitudes in play when we are told things by other people” (Fricker, 2003a: 161). The virtue of hermeneutical justice is defined as a “sensitivity” or “a certain reflexive awareness” of the hearer to detect hermeneutical injustice against a speaker (Fricker, 2007: 169).

While Fricker defines a certain sensibility and/or sensitivity towards epistemic injustices as epistemic virtues, José Medina (2013) emphasizes the importance of different character traits as epistemic virtues. In his treatment of epistemic injustice caused by racial and sexual oppression, Medina (2013) underlines the crucial importance of critical thinking. For Medina, imposed silences and insensitivities create epistemic injustice that provokes the exclusion of some groups from participating in public debate. Those who have epistemic virtues can resist epistemic injustice that grows upon epistemic vices.

Medina (2013) defines epistemic vices and virtues that influence the process of knowledge production. In his view, an epistemic vice is “a set of corrupted attitudes and dispositions that get in the way of knowledge” and hence of remembrance. An epistemic virtue, by contrast, denotes “a set of attitudes and dispositions that facilitate the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge” (30). Medina defines three epistemic vices: epistemic arrogance, epistemic laziness, and epistemic closed-mindedness. These vices are both structural and systematic because they entail attitudes that are “deeply rooted in one’s personality and cognitive functioning” (30).

The epistemic vice of arrogance is a “cognitive superiority complex” that can be observed in those groups who enjoy a set of social and political privileges. This is a “complex” social and political atmosphere that makes subjects unable to listen to others’ experiences since they think that they know best. Epistemic laziness is the

privilege of having a continuing “lack of curiosity” about some life experiences. In this case, certain subjects feel no need to know about others’ experiences. Medina argues that “arrogance and laziness support and reinforce each other, individually contributing to the deterioration of the epistemic character of the subject and jointly producing epistemic injustices that ultimately affect all members of society” (34). The third epistemic vice is closed-mindedness that is “the lack of openness” to others’ experiences completely. All three of epistemic vices constitute “active ignorance” that is a socially constructed knowledge based on forgetting and denial which guarantees the continuation of the current privileges of privileged subjects.

“Actively ignorant subjects are those who can be blamed not just for lacking particular pieces of knowledge, but also for having epistemic attitudes and habits that contribute to create and maintain bodies of ignorance” (39).

Miranda Fricker and José Medina offer influential yet distinct perspectives on ignorance within the field of epistemology, each contributing significantly to our understanding of how ignorance operates within societal contexts. Both scholars agree that ignorance is not merely a lack of knowledge but a socially situated phenomenon that often serves to uphold power structures and injustices. However, they differ in their emphases and approaches to addressing ignorance.

Fricker (2007), in her work on epistemic injustice, focuses on how power dynamics influence whose voices are heard and whose knowledge is recognized. She introduces the concepts of testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice to illustrate how marginalized individuals often suffer from systematic exclusion from epistemic communities. In Fricker’s view, ignorance can be a result of these injustices, where certain groups are denied credibility or the necessary interpretative resources to make sense of their experiences. Her approach highlights the ethical dimensions of epistemic interactions and the importance of recognizing and rectifying these injustices to foster a more inclusive epistemic environment.

Medina (2013), on the other hand, expands on Fricker’s ideas by exploring the concept of “active ignorance” which he describes as a willful form of ignorance maintained to protect privilege and power. He emphasizes the role of epistemic resistance and activism in combating this ignorance. Medina argues that ignorance is not only a passive state but can be actively produced and maintained through social practices and

institutions. He introduces the notion of “epistemic friction” to describe the productive conflict that arises when marginalized voices challenge dominant narratives. This friction is essential for disrupting entrenched ignorance and fostering epistemic justice. While both Fricker and Medina recognize the social dimensions of ignorance and the need for epistemic justice, Fricker’s work is more focused on the ethical responsibilities of individuals within epistemic practices, whereas Medina emphasizes the active resistance and systemic change necessary to dismantle ignorance. Together, their views provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing ignorance in its various forms, highlighting the interplay between individual responsibility and collective action in the pursuit of epistemic justice.

The cure for epistemic injustice is the cultivation of epistemic virtues. José Medina’s epistemic virtue approach is profoundly important in contemporary epistemology, especially in understanding and addressing issues of ignorance and injustice. Medina emphasizes the role of virtues in fostering a more just and inclusive epistemic environment. His approach highlights the active and dynamic nature of epistemic practices and the crucial role of individual and collective virtues in challenging and transforming oppressive structures of knowledge production and dissemination.

There are three epistemic virtues in Medina’s analysis of epistemic justice: humility, intellectual curiosity/diligence and open-mindedness. The first epistemic virtue, humility, is the ability of having a self-questioning attitude towards one’s cognitive capacities and repertoire. The epistemic virtue of intellectual curiosity/diligence is not easy to acquire since there is not so much motivation for privileged subjects who desire to dig through existing collective knowledge repertoire. Even those who are unprivileged and oppressed in society “often find themselves in need of certain bodies of knowledge in order to escape punishment or stigmatization, sometimes even to survive” (44). The third epistemic virtue is open-mindedness which means to be open to others’ viewpoints and their life experiences.

Medina argues that unprivileged subjects have the virtue of open-mindedness because they develop their cognitive skills by constantly paying attention to perspectives of others, especially those of privileged ones, since they are the ones that matter in society. Jack Kwong (2015) considers open-mindedness as the most important remedy to cure epistemic injustices since “culprit-based epistemic injustices (...) occur because the people who commit them are closed-minded in some respect; these injustices can therefore be remedied through the cultivation of the virtue of open-

mindedness” (2015: 349).

For Medina, all three of epistemic virtues; humility, curiosity/diligence and open-mindedness constitute “subversive lucidity”: “epistemically humble, curious/diligent, and open-minded subjects are likely to detect and overcome blind spots and to develop new forms of lucidity that can enrich social cognition” (2013: 44-45). He emphasizes the importance of the socio-historical context in which epistemic virtues can develop; “a critical awareness” on “self-knowledge and social knowledge of others” is necessary (55). Influenced by the literature on the epistemic advantage, Medina defines “meta-lucidity” which is a “capacity to see the limitations of dominant ways of seeing” (47) that becomes an important tool for the oppressed to transform the process of knowledge production.

“This meta-lucidity has a critical and subversive potential: it provides insights into the functioning of perspectives that makes it possible to redraw our cognitive maps, to redescribe our experiences, and to reconceptualize our ways of relating to others. Lucid experiences of oppression can yield new insights that trigger struggles for the rede- scription of the relevant experiences—the cognitive side of social struggles.” (47)

To develop epistemic virtues a “cognitive-affective sensibility that includes empathy” is required (81). Medina argues that to overcome epistemic injustices, there is a need for “shared social sensibility” (305); he defines it in pluralistic terms and calls it “kaleidoscopic social sensibility” (306). Only by cultivating a “kaleidoscopic consciousness”, a transformative process of “beneficial epistemic friction” can be facilitated (21). Only such a process that expands social sensibilities and attitudes can lead to fundamental changes in the existing epistemic sphere, which in turn can pave way to the overcoming of epistemic injustice in the long run.

By creating “networks of solidarity”, societies can develop a “kaleidoscopic social sensibility” that has the potential to detect and rectify existing epistemic injustices (309). However, Medina highlights the difficulty to develop this social sensibility especially in societies where deeply-rooted privileges such as racism, segregation and other forms of discrimination dominate. In such contexts, public life is to a very large extent under the influence of “insensitivity to insensitivity”, which in turn can be defined as an “emotional meta-blindness” (81). Medina remarks that in such societies

“epistemic heroes” play a very significant role (186). But who are epistemic heroes? According to Medina, they are “extraordinary subjects who under conditions of epistemic oppression are able to develop epistemic virtues with a tremendous transformative potential” (25). However, Medina argues that their role is quite limited when it comes to securing epistemic justice.

While José Medina’s account on epistemic virtues offers significant insights into promoting epistemic justice, it also has notable limitations, particularly concerning his emphasis on “epistemic heroism”. Medina advocates for individuals and communities to embody epistemic virtues to challenge dominant narratives and resist ignorance. However, the focus on epistemic heroism can inadvertently create unrealistic expectations and overlook the more mundane, everyday practices necessary for cultivating and sustaining epistemic virtues. One limitation is that the concept of epistemic heroism may place undue pressure on individuals to act courageously and resist oppression constantly, which can be overwhelming and unsustainable. Not everyone possesses the same level of resilience or resources to engage in such active resistance, especially those already marginalized or oppressed.

By idealizing epistemic heroism, Medina’s approach risks marginalizing those who contribute to epistemic justice in quieter, less confrontational ways. Everyday acts of care, listening, and small-scale advocacy are also crucial for fostering an inclusive epistemic environment but may be undervalued in a framework that emphasizes heroic resistance. Furthermore, Medina’s focus on epistemic heroism might overshadow the systemic and structural changes needed to support the development of epistemic virtues. While individual actions are important, they must be complemented by broader institutional reforms to create environments that nurture and sustain these virtues. Without addressing systemic barriers, the burden of achieving epistemic justice falls disproportionately on individuals, which can be both inequitable and ineffective. Additionally, emphasizing heroism can create a dichotomy between the “heroes” who challenge ignorance and the “ordinary” individuals who do not, potentially leading to a simplistic understanding of epistemic agency. This binary overlooks the complexity of epistemic engagement, where even small, incremental changes contribute significantly to the larger goal of epistemic justice.

Limitations of José Medina’s account on epistemic heroism necessitate to find a broader context in which it is possible to observe the cultivation of epistemic virtues. Public memory serves as fertile ground for cultivating epistemic virtues because it

shapes our understanding of the past and informs our present and future actions, making it a critical arena for fostering virtues that promote knowledge and justice. Ignorance, often seen as merely a lack of knowledge, can be a harmful epistemic practice when it is willfully maintained to protect power structures. This form of ignorance, what José Medina terms “active ignorance”, is not passive but is perpetuated by societal norms and institutions that favor certain narratives over others. In the context of public memory, this manifests when dominant groups control historical narratives, systematically excluding or devaluing the experiences and perspectives of marginalized communities. This creates a biased collective memory that perpetuates injustices and reinforces social hierarchies. Addressing this form of ignorance requires cultivating epistemic virtues that challenge and dismantle these entrenched biases. Public memory offers a practical context for cultivating epistemic virtues. For instance, commemorative practices can be designed to reflect the complexity and plurality of historical experiences. By presenting history as a multifaceted and contested field, these practices can encourage the public to question dominant narratives and considering alternative viewpoints. This approach not only enriches collective memory but also promotes a more just and inclusive society.

2.4.3 Epistemic Virtues and Resistant Memory

The development of epistemic virtues involves a complex interaction between intellectual, emotional, and social factors. To understand how these virtues take shape within communities, it is important to revisit the contributions of key thinkers in the field of epistemic injustice, particularly Miranda Fricker and José Medina. Fricker (2007) emphasizes that testimonial justice is cultivated through epistemic socialization a process in which individuals hone their interpretive and emotional capacities by engaging with a range of perspectives. Hermeneutical justice, in turn, requires a critical self-awareness that allows individuals to detect and challenge patterns of epistemic exclusion. Building on this foundation, Medina (2012; 2023) underscores the importance of a cognitively and affectively attuned sensibility, proposing that epistemic change is enabled by an open and evolving social consciousness. Through ongoing participation in what he terms “beneficial epistemic friction,” both individuals and collectives can challenge dominant epistemic norms and work toward greater epistemic justice.

Both scholars agree that epistemic virtues are not static traits but ongoing practices that require continuous engagement, self-correction and responsiveness to epistemic injustice. Medina (2012 and 2023) further provides a framework for understanding how epistemic resistance can generate “chained action” and “echoability” in social movements. He argues that epistemic resistance creates a dynamic of solidarity and mutual responsiveness among marginalized groups and their allies. This resistance does not operate in isolation; rather, it builds on past struggles and extends into new contexts, forming what Medina calls “chained action”; emphasizing how embodied protest and affective resistance amplify the echoability of marginalized voices. Echoability, in this sense, refers to the capacity of resistance to reverberate across different movements and generations, ensuring that epistemic disobedience remains an ongoing, collective endeavor rather than a singular or fleeting act. Through this framework, Medina highlights how epistemic resistance is both historically rooted and forward-moving, fostering networks of solidarity that sustain long-term struggles against epistemic injustice.

In the context of memory studies, the concept of resistant memory (Medina, 2013: 299-304) serves as a powerful site for cultivating epistemic virtues. When communities resist dominant historical accounts that erase or distort their experiences, they engage in epistemic practices that demand humility, curiosity, and open-mindedness. Remembering against the grain challenges individuals to confront the limits of collective memory and acknowledge marginalized perspectives. Through this process, both individual and collective agents can develop the very virtues José Medina emphasizes: epistemic humility in recognizing one's limited historical understanding, intellectual curiosity/diligence in recovering silenced stories, and open-mindedness in embracing alternative frameworks of meaning. Moreover, such acts also require and cultivate epistemic courage the willingness to remember dangerously in the face of denial, hostility, or repression. Thus, memory work becomes not only a political and ethical act, but also an epistemic practice deeply intertwined with the formation of intellectual character.

“ (...) in order to avoid an ossified life, we need to abandon the path of least resistance; that is, we have to resist the easy denial and the easy oblivion of unexplored possibilities that surround the lives we fall into and the identities we come to adopt. And just as a resistant memory can help us overcome the kind of oblivion that constrains our minds and numbs our sensibilities, a resistant forward-looking

imagination can help us cultivate openness to possible changes of the relational networks in which our identities are enmeshed: as the snake sheds its skin to grow and keep on living, perhaps we also have the vital need to open ourselves up to relational changes.” (Medina, 2013: 300)

José Medina’s concept of epistemic resistance provides a valuable lens for understanding the epistemic contributions of memory activism. Memory activism challenges dominant historical narratives and disrupts epistemic injustices by amplifying silenced voices, thereby fostering what Medina calls “chained action” and “echoability”. Through mnemonic practices activists engage in epistemic disobedience, resisting hegemonic interpretations of the past. This resistance not only unsettles established knowledge but also generates ripple effects, inspiring further acts of remembrance and truth-seeking across different contexts and generations. Just as Medina argues that epistemic resistance is collective and sustained over time, memory activism creates networks of solidarity, ensuring that suppressed histories remain visible and contested. The echoability of memory activism means that each act of resistance resonates beyond its immediate moment, reinforcing the continuity of struggles against epistemic injustice. By reclaiming erased histories and refusing imposed silences, memory activism exemplifies Medina’s idea of resistance as an ongoing, interconnected practice that extends beyond individual efforts, mobilizing broader epistemic communities in the pursuit of justice.

Epistemic resistance, as Medina theorizes it, is the set of practices by which individuals and communities push back against epistemic injustice and the structural mechanisms that perpetuate ignorance, such as silencing, marginalization, and willful misunderstanding. These practices are not just ethical or political they are also epistemically transformative, reshaping how individuals come to know, whom they listen to, and what they consider credible. Thus, resistance becomes both a site of struggle and a school of virtue. It is in confronting injustice, navigating disagreement, and challenging ignorance that individuals cultivate epistemic virtues that make good epistemic agents. These virtues, however, do not operate in isolation; they are nurtured, challenged, and refined through the very practices of epistemic resistance that seek to counter ignorance and uphold epistemic justice.

In sum, the cultivation of epistemic virtues is not solely an individual cognitive achievement but a socially embedded practice that can be nurtured through acts of

epistemic resistance. By challenging dominant epistemic frameworks and engaging in critical reflection, individuals and communities create the conditions under which virtues such as epistemic humility, diligence, and open-mindedness can flourish. When applied to the field of memory studies, this insight suggests that memory activism—through its contestation of silenced histories and marginalized narratives—constitutes a powerful site for the development and exercise of these virtues. The following section explores this connection further by examining how memory activism functions as a form of epistemic resistance and how it contributes to the nurturing of epistemic virtues in practice.

2.5 Direct and Indirect Epistemic Interventions: Pathways to Memory Activism

The concept of epistemic injustice has generated a growing body of literature examining how social structures distort processes of knowing, understanding, and credibility attribution. While much of this scholarship has focused on diagnosing forms of epistemic harm—such as testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice—a parallel concern has emerged regarding how such harms can be resisted and remedied. Within this context, the notion of epistemic intervention becomes analytically central. Epistemic interventions refer to deliberate practices aimed at disrupting ignorance, correcting distorted interpretive frameworks, and reconfiguring epistemic relations in unjust contexts. This thesis advances the literature by introducing an original distinction between direct and indirect epistemic interventions, offering a conceptual framework for differentiating between interventionist practices that confront epistemic injustice through immediate, explicit challenge and those that operate indirectly through long-term, infrastructural, and often less visible epistemic transformations. Not all epistemic interventions operate in the same way. Some interventions seek to confront ignorance directly through explicit critique, naming, and exposure, while others aim to transform epistemic conditions more gradually by cultivating alternative spaces, practices, and dispositions. This chapter proposes a systematic distinction between direct and indirect epistemic interventions. The distinction is not meant to establish a hierarchy of effectiveness, but rather to clarify the conditions under which different forms of epistemic resistance are possible, desirable, or sustainable—especially in politically constrained contexts.

The chapter argues that this distinction is essential for understanding how memory activism operates as an epistemic practice. In particular, it shows why indirect

epistemic interventions play a crucial role in contexts where direct contestation is risky, delegitimized, or counterproductive, while also acknowledging the limits and trade-offs of indirect approaches.

2.5.1 Defining Direct Epistemic Interventions

Direct epistemic interventions are practices that aim to correct epistemic injustice by explicitly challenging falsehoods, denial, or ignorance through public confrontation. Such interventions typically involve naming injustice, presenting counter-evidence, demanding recognition, and holding perpetrators or institutions accountable for epistemic harms. They operate under the assumption that distorted knowledge can and should be corrected through exposure and critique.

Examples of direct epistemic interventions include official truth commissions, judicial proceedings addressing historical crimes, public acknowledgements of wrongdoing, and confrontational forms of memory activism such as protests, counter-monuments, or campaigns that directly name perpetrators and demand restitution. In global memory politics, processes such as South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission or public acknowledgements of past atrocities in post-war Germany exemplify forms of direct epistemic intervention insofar as they explicitly target denial and institutionalized forgetting.

From a theoretical standpoint, direct interventions are often associated with a rectificatory understanding of epistemic injustice. They aim to restore epistemic justice by correcting distorted beliefs, redistributing credibility, and replacing false narratives with truthful ones. This approach aligns with accounts that emphasize the moral urgency of truth-telling and the political necessity of public recognition, particularly in the aftermath of mass violence.

Direct epistemic interventions have significant strengths. First, they make injustice visible in clear and unambiguous terms. By naming wrongdoing and attributing responsibility, they counter epistemic silence and challenge the normalization of ignorance. Second, they can produce relatively rapid epistemic shifts, particularly when supported by institutional authority or widespread public mobilization. In some contexts, direct interventions can reconfigure official narratives, legal frameworks, and educational curricula within a relatively short timeframe.

However, the limits of direct epistemic interventions are equally significant. One major limitation concerns epistemic backlash. In deeply polarized or authoritarian contexts,

direct confrontation may trigger defensive reactions, leading to further entrenchment of denial rather than epistemic transformation. Rather than opening interpretive space, direct challenges can harden identity boundaries and reinforce affective attachments to distorted narratives.

A second limitation concerns feasibility. Direct epistemic interventions often require institutional access, legal protection, or political leverage that may be unavailable to marginalized groups or civil society actors. In contexts where speech is criminalized, direct interventions may expose individuals and organizations to legal persecution, violence, or social ostracization, thereby narrowing the space for sustained memory-work.

Finally, direct interventions often assume that epistemic change follows from exposure to facts or authoritative recognition. This assumption underestimates the affective, relational, and habitual dimensions of ignorance. As feminist epistemologists and critical race theorists have shown, ignorance is frequently resistant to correction because it is socially functional, identity-protective, and institutionally reproduced. In such cases, direct epistemic confrontation may reveal injustice without transforming the underlying epistemic dispositions that sustain it.

2.5.2 Defining Indirect Epistemic Interventions

Indirect epistemic interventions address epistemic injustice not by directly confronting falsehood or denial, but by reshaping the epistemic environment in which knowledge is produced, circulated, and received. Rather than aiming for immediate belief revision, they work on the conditions of intelligibility, credibility, and attention over time. These interventions are often mediated through cultural practices, educational initiatives, artistic expression, dialogical forums, and the creation of alternative archives or memory spaces.

Indirect interventions do not primarily seek to declare what must be acknowledged; instead, they invite engagement, curiosity, and reflection. They create opportunities for epistemic friction without prescribing its resolution. This makes them particularly suited to contexts where direct accusation or explicit naming would foreclose dialogue or provoke repression.

In the field of memory activism, indirect epistemic interventions can be found in museums, exhibitions, commemorative practices, oral history projects, and educational programs that foreground plurality, ambiguity, and encounter rather than

closure. Such practices may address historical violence obliquely, through personal narratives, material traces, or artistic representation, allowing audiences to approach difficult knowledge without immediate defensiveness.

The normative force of indirect epistemic interventions lies not in their capacity to correct beliefs directly, but in their role in cultivating epistemic virtues. Virtues such as epistemic humility, open-mindedness, and intellectual curiosity/diligence are dispositions that enable agents to recognize the limits of their knowledge, remain receptive to alternative perspectives, and engage responsibly with contested information.

Indirect interventions are particularly effective at fostering these virtues because they do not demand assent but encourage inquiry. By exposing audiences to multiple perspectives, unresolved questions, and marginalized narratives, they disrupt epistemic arrogance and habitual certainties. This aligns with virtue-based accounts of epistemic justice, which emphasize that just epistemic relations require not only correct beliefs but ethically appropriate ways of knowing.

From this perspective, indirect interventions should not be evaluated primarily in terms of short-term outcomes or immediate consensus. Their success lies in long-term epistemic transformation: altering how individuals and communities relate to the past, to marginalized knowers, and to uncertainty itself.

Despite their advantages, indirect epistemic interventions are not without limitations. One frequently raised concern is their lack of immediate political impact. Because they often avoid explicit demands or confrontational rhetoric, indirect interventions may fail to produce short-term institutional change or legal accountability. In contexts of ongoing injustice, this may appear insufficient or even complicit.

Moreover, indirect approaches that emphasize openness and dialogue may leave room for relativization or depoliticization of harm. Without careful curation and ethical framing, pluralism can slide into false equivalence, undermining the normative clarity required to name injustice.

Additionally, indirect interventions may be inaccessible to those most affected by injustice if they operate primarily within cultural or elite spaces. This raises questions about inclusivity, reach, and the distribution of epistemic labor.

2.5.3 Contextual Effects of Epistemic Interventions

The distinction between direct and indirect epistemic interventions should be understood as context-sensitive rather than absolute. Several criteria help determine which form of intervention is more appropriate or effective in a given setting. First, political conditions matter. In relatively open democratic contexts with functioning legal systems, direct epistemic interventions may play a crucial role in institutional reckoning. In contrast, under authoritarian or semi-authoritarian conditions, indirect interventions may be more sustainable and less likely to provoke closure.

Second, the structure of ignorance matters. Where ignorance is maintained through explicit denial, direct exposure may be effective. Where ignorance is affectively entrenched, identity-protective, or normalized, indirect approaches that cultivate epistemic virtues may be more transformative. Third, temporality matters. Direct interventions often operate on short time horizons, aiming for immediate recognition or redress. Indirect interventions operate on longer temporal arcs, prioritizing endurance over immediacy. These forms of intervention should therefore be seen as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Indeed, indirect interventions may have prepared the ground for later direct reckonings by expanding what can be thought, said, and received.

This distinction provides a conceptual bridge to memory activism. Memory activism can be understood as a field in which epistemic interventions are continuously negotiated in response to shifting political and social conditions. While some forms of memory activism pursue direct confrontation, others adopt indirect strategies precisely in order to remain viable, durable, and transformative under constraint. Attending to this distinction clarifies how memory activism operates as a site of epistemic resistance.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has laid the critical theoretical groundwork for this thesis by examining the concept of epistemic injustice and introducing epistemic virtues as a necessary response to the structural and relational failures of epistemic systems in societies dominated by power imbalances. Drawing from recognition theory, feminist epistemology, and race theory, the chapter has argued that epistemic injustice is not a merely cognitive or individual phenomenon but a deeply social, political, and historical one. The denial of epistemic credibility and the lack of interpretive resources are not random occurrences; they reflect entrenched power asymmetries and systems

of domination that regulate who is heard, who is believed, and who is rendered intelligible within prevailing epistemic frameworks. By understanding epistemic injustice in this way, the chapter reframes the problem of knowledge not as a question of truth versus error, but as a question of whose knowledge is allowed to matter and under what conditions.

Recognition theory has illuminated how epistemic standing is tied to broader processes of social recognition. Individuals and groups do not merely seek acknowledgment in moral or political terms they also seek to be recognized as knowers, as people capable of producing, interpreting, and communicating knowledge. Misrecognition, in this framework, is not just a form of disrespect but a source of epistemic exclusion, whereby certain voices are systematically ignored, diminished, or denied credibility. These dynamics become especially apparent in contexts where marginalized groups confront dominant interpretive frameworks that do not reflect their lived realities. Honneth's (2004) emphasis on the moral psychology of recognition helps to explain how epistemic injustices are experienced not only as cognitive failures but as existential wounds that impair individuals' sense of self-worth and agency.

Feminist epistemology builds on and radicalizes these insights by challenging the very foundations of traditional epistemology; knowledge is always situated—it emerges from specific social locations, shaped by particular experiences, identities, and relations of power. Epistemic norms that purport to be neutral or universal often obscure the ways in which they are implicitly male, white, Western, and heteronormative. Feminist epistemology exposes how dominant knowledge systems exclude those who do not conform to the normative knower, and how this exclusion is both epistemic and political. By foregrounding the epistemic agency of marginalized knowers and the value of standpoint epistemology, feminist theorists reveal that epistemic transformation is not only possible but necessary. Such transformation involves not just expanding who gets to speak but rethinking the standards by which knowledge is validated and valued.

Race theory further deepens this analysis by foregrounding the historical and structural dimensions of epistemic injustice. Scholars have shown how racial hierarchies shape the conditions of epistemic credibility and intelligibility. Testimonial injustice is a common experience for racialized subjects navigating white-dominated epistemic spaces. Likewise, hermeneutical injustice arises when there is a gap in the collective interpretive resources needed to make sense of racialized experiences, especially those

involving violence, exclusion, or resistance. These gaps are not accidental; they are produced through histories of enslavement, colonialism, segregation, and systemic erasure. Race theory makes it clear that epistemic injustice cannot be adequately addressed without confronting its deep roots in social, political, and economic structures of inequality.

Having established this theoretical foundation, the chapter turned to the central concern of the thesis: the role of epistemic virtues in responding to and resisting epistemic injustice. Epistemic virtues are not merely traits of good individual thinkers; they are deeply social dispositions that enable both individuals and communities to engage in more just, inclusive, and reflexive forms of knowledge production. Virtues such as epistemic humility, intellectual curiosity/diligence, and open-mindedness, as articulated by José Medina (2013), are particularly relevant in this context. These virtues help individuals remain attentive to epistemic difference, receptive to marginalized perspectives, and committed to unsettling dominant assumptions. They are also crucial in cultivating a kind of epistemic vigilance that allows one to recognize and resist the ways in which knowledge practices reproduce power.

This thesis builds on the work of Fricker and Medina to argue that epistemic virtues are not innate characteristics or static ideals but dynamic dispositions that must be cultivated through specific social practices. Crucially, the chapter argued that these virtues are most effectively nurtured through epistemic resistance that is, through the active contestation of unjust epistemic norms and structures. Epistemic resistance involves not only challenging dominant narratives but also creating new interpretive frameworks, building alternative epistemic communities, and fostering spaces for marginalized voices to speak and be heard. In this way, resistance is not merely oppositional; it is constructive and transformative. It is through ‘epistemic friction’(Medina, 2013) that individuals and communities can develop the capacities needed for more equitable epistemic relations. This insight has profound implications for how we think about the conditions under which epistemic virtues can flourish. It suggests that cultivating epistemic virtues is not simply a matter of better education or moral training; it is a political and collective process that unfolds in the context of struggle. It requires engaging with those who have been epistemically marginalized, not as passive recipients of knowledge but as active agents of epistemic transformation. It also requires a willingness to question one’s own epistemic assumptions, to listen across difference, and to accept that epistemic growth often

involves unlearning deeply held beliefs. As such, the cultivation of epistemic virtues must be situated within broader efforts to democratize knowledge, to decolonize epistemology, and to recognize the epistemic contributions of those who have long been excluded.

The chapter concludes, therefore, by asserting that epistemic resistance is not merely compatible with epistemic virtue but essential to it. Acts of resistance create the conditions under which epistemic virtues can be developed and exercised, while also contributing to shifts in the broader epistemic culture in which knowledge is produced, validated, and circulated. In developing this argument, the chapter has introduced an original distinction between direct and indirect epistemic interventions, offering a conceptual vocabulary for analyzing how epistemic resistance operates through both immediate, confrontational practices and more gradual, infrastructural forms of transformation.

This conceptual framework leads directly to the focus of the next chapter, which moves from the theoretical to the practical by examining memory activism as a form of epistemic resistance. Memory activism provides a particularly revealing site for observing how direct and indirect epistemic interventions are mobilized in response to entrenched historical injustices and political constraints.

By exploring memory activism through the lens of epistemic intervention, the next chapter demonstrates how activist memory practices not only contest dominant historical narratives but also cultivate epistemic virtues over time. In doing so, it shows how epistemic resistance—operating across different temporalities and modes of intervention—can sustain the emergence of more just and inclusive epistemic communities. Building on the theoretical insights developed in this chapter, the following analysis concretizes the relationship between epistemic injustice, resistance, and virtue, thereby advancing the broader argument of this thesis.

CHAPTER 3: MEMORY ACTIVISM AND EPISTEMIC VIRTUES

3.1 Introduction

In recent years, memory activism has emerged as a vital field of inquiry within memory studies. At the intersection of social remembrance and civic engagement, memory activism involves the mobilization of memory practices to challenge dominant historical narratives and to contest ongoing injustices. These acts are more than political gestures; they are epistemic interventions that reshape public understandings of the past, expand the bounds of collective memory, and cultivate the conditions necessary for democratic knowledge-making. This chapter explores the theoretical and practical connections between memory activism and the development of epistemic virtues, which are crucial for resisting epistemic injustice and for nurturing a more inclusive epistemic context.

The chapter proceeds in four steps. The first situates the discussion in contemporary epistemic injustice literature and shows how memory activism directly addresses testimonial and hermeneutical marginalization. The second clarifies the conceptual specificity of memory activism within broader activist landscapes. The third traces recent theoretical contributions in memory studies that shed light on activism's epistemic impact especially the activist turn and the emergence of slow memory. Finally, the chapter introduces empirical cases that exemplify how grassroots mnemonic practices function as epistemic interventions, illustrating the cultivation of epistemic virtues in different social and political contexts.

The concept of epistemic injustice, introduced by Miranda Fricker, has become central to the contemporary discussion of knowledge and power. In "Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing", Fricker (2007) distinguishes between testimonial injustice, which occurs when prejudice leads hearers to assign reduced credibility to certain speakers, and hermeneutical injustice, which arises when structural gaps in collective interpretive resources prevent marginalized groups from rendering their experiences intelligible (Fricker, 2007: 1–9). Both forms of injustice not only damage individual credibility but also impoverish the collective epistemic environment.

Memory activism intervenes in these domains in particularly forceful ways. By challenging testimonial silencing, activists amplify marginalized voices and ensure that their accounts of historical trauma gain credibility in the public sphere. For

instance, in Germany, the recognition of Roma, Sinti, disabled people, and LGBTQ+ victims of Nazism was not the result of state-led initiatives but of persistent civic activism that insisted on the validity of their testimonies (Wüstenberg, 2017: 91–95). This insistence directly countered testimonial injustice by widening the epistemic space for those whose credibility had been historically undermined.

At the same time, memory activism confronts hermeneutical injustice by creating new interpretive frameworks. When survivors, descendants, or allied activists commemorate forgotten massacres, organize memory walks, or erect counter-monuments, they are producing interpretive tools that allow societies to understand silenced experiences. These interventions expand hermeneutical resources, enabling communities to articulate the meaning of their histories in ways that dominant narratives had foreclosed.

José Medina (2013) develops Fricker's framework by emphasizing that epistemic injustices are structural and that resistance must be collective. In *The Epistemology of Resistance*, he introduces the idea of epistemic friction: the productive clash that emerges when different perspectives confront one another, disrupting entrenched imaginaries (Medina, 2013: 46–52). He also coins the notion of kaleidoscopic sensibility, the cultivated ability to view social realities from multiple, shifting perspectives simultaneously (Medina, 2013: 305–310). Memory activism embodies both concepts. Through commemorations that unsettle official histories or protests that juxtapose silenced and dominant narratives, activists generate epistemic friction, forcing publics to confront dissonant perspectives. By sustaining plurality in remembrance, they cultivate kaleidoscopic sensibilities across society.

Aleida Assmann's theory of memory helps articulate the epistemic significance of these practices. She distinguishes between monologic memory, which simplifies history into univocal narratives, and dialogic memory, which sustains complexity, contradiction, and ambivalence (Assmann, 2020: 374–390). Civic memory activism pushes societies toward dialogic memory by compelling them to integrate marginalized stories into collective remembrance. In doing so, activists not only resist injustice but also foster epistemic virtues that make democratic knowledge possible.

While activism generally seeks to alter unjust structures through protest, advocacy, or policy influence, memory activism is distinctive in both its methods and its goals. Its distinctive method lies in the deployment of memory practices commemorations, archives, exhibitions, oral history, and symbolic performances as the very tools of

activism. Its goal is not only to secure immediate political change but also to reshape collective understandings of the past and, through them, the horizons of present and future justice.

In this sense, memory activism is both symbolic and epistemic. Symbolic, because it contests the signs, monuments, and narratives that constitute cultural memory. Epistemic, because it reconfigures who is recognized as a knower, what counts as legitimate knowledge, and how societies understand their histories. Unlike other forms of activism that may focus on pressing short-term demands, memory activism often works on a long temporal register. Its outcomes are rarely instantaneous; they unfold gradually, as collective narratives shift and public sensibilities transform.

This specificity also clarifies how memory activism relates to the broader justice debate. Much scholarship on justice and memory has focused on transitional justice, understood as the legal and institutional mechanisms truth commissions, tribunals, reparations designed to address the legacies of atrocity (Fricker, 2007: 10–12). While these mechanisms are crucial, they often fail to address the epistemic dimensions of injustice. Memory activism complements and, in many cases, precedes or outlasts transitional justice by embedding justice in everyday mnemonic practices. It prevents memory from ossifying into state-led rituals and instead sustains a plural and dialogic engagement with the past.

Recent years have witnessed important conceptual innovations in the study of memory activism. Two developments are particularly salient: the activist turn in memory studies and the concept of slow memory. Jenny Wüstenberg's *Civil Society and Memory in Postwar Germany* (2017) exemplifies what has been called the activist turn in memory studies. Earlier scholarship tended to focus on states, official memorials, and institutionalized remembrance. Wüstenberg shifts attention to the agency of civil society actors from local history workshops to NGOs that mobilize memory practices to democratize public discourse. Her research shows that these actors were decisive in Germany's memory culture, uncovering silenced narratives and pushing official institutions toward recognition. This activist turn has re-centered the study of memory on grassroots agency. Civic actors are not merely reactive to state initiatives but proactive in shaping cultural horizons. They are epistemic agents, producing new knowledge about the past, curating archives, and fostering interpretive frameworks that challenge silences. By re-centering agency, the activist turn reframes

memory not as static inheritance but as a field of contention, where civil society plays a decisive role in cultivating epistemic justice.

A second key development is the emergence of slow memory, elaborated by Wüstenberg and colleagues in more recent work (Wüstenberg & Sierp, 2020). Slow memory refers to mnemonic practices that are gradual, cumulative, and often quiet, unfolding over long periods of time. Unlike spectacular protests or official state commemorations, slow memory emphasizes repetition, persistence, and endurance. Examples include annual vigils, the long-term work of building local memorials, or sustained oral history projects. Such practices rarely produce immediate political breakthroughs, but they transform societies by cultivating habits of reflection and resilience. They embody what Medina (2013: 249–252) calls echoability: the way acts of resistance reverberate across networks, inspiring further action. Slow memory fosters epistemic humility by requiring societies to live with uncomfortable truths, intellectual curiosity/diligence by stimulating continuous inquiry, and open-mindedness by keeping narratives plural rather than closed. By conceptualizing memory activism as both activist and slow, scholars highlight its unique epistemic contributions. Memory activism generates frictions that destabilize hegemonic narratives, while simultaneously cultivating long-term sensibilities that sustain democratic knowledge.

The final part of this introduction previews the empirical cases that will be analyzed in this chapter. Each demonstrates how memory activism functions as an epistemic intervention and how it cultivates epistemic virtues. Germany's reckoning with the Holocaust illustrates how memory activism can function as an epistemic intervention. Civil society initiatives such as the Active Museum and local history workshops compelled communities to confront their own complicity, thereby cultivating epistemic humility (Wüstenberg, 2017: 105–126). Through the unearthing of forgotten archives and the organization of exhibitions, these initiatives also demonstrated intellectual curiosity and diligence, while the pluralization of remembrance to include diverse victim groups fostered open-mindedness in German society (Wüstenberg, 2017: 92). A similar epistemic dynamic is visible in Israel, where the organization Zochrot introduces the silenced memory of the Palestinian Nakba into Israeli public discourse through tours of destroyed villages, educational programs, and publications. By generating epistemic friction, Zochrot challenges entrenched national narratives and encourages both humility and open-mindedness in the face of

previously excluded histories (Assmann, 2011: 45–47). In Argentina, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo embody the principle of slow memory through their weekly vigils, sustained over decades. Their persistence not only cultivated diligence and resilience in remembrance but also reshaped Argentina’s collective narrative of the disappeared (Assmann, 2020: 380–383). Finally, in the post-Yugoslav context, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) has fostered dialogue across divided communities, nurturing what Medina (2013: 305–310) terms a kaleidoscopic sensibility. By encouraging participants to engage with multiple perspectives, YIHR shows how memory activism can generate epistemic virtues even in contexts marked by deep distrust and antagonism. These cases demonstrate that memory activism is not an abstract category but a lived practice with tangible epistemic effects. By cultivating humility, curiosity/diligence, and open-mindedness, these initiatives directly address epistemic injustices, broadening collective memory and democratizing knowledge.

This introduction has situated memory activism as a field of inquiry that operates at the intersection of epistemic injustice and civic engagement. By challenging testimonial exclusion, remedying hermeneutical gaps, and cultivating epistemic virtues, memory activism provides a crucial counterpart to institutional forms of justice. It is distinctive in its symbolic and cultural methods, oriented toward reshaping narratives rather than merely securing immediate political gains.

The activist turn has re-centered civil society as a decisive agent of mnemonic transformation, while the concept of slow memory has illuminated the incremental but enduring power of grassroots remembrance. Empirical cases from Germany, Israel, Argentina, and Serbia demonstrate that memory activism is indispensable for cultivating the epistemic dispositions that make democratic memory possible. The argument advanced here is that memory activism should be understood as a privileged site for cultivating epistemic humility, intellectual curiosity/diligence, and open-mindedness virtues without which no society can fully reckon with its past or commit to more inclusive futures.

3.2 Development of Epistemic Virtues and Memory Activism

The question of how epistemic virtues are cultivated in conditions of structural inequality has become increasingly important. Scholars like Miranda Fricker and José Medina have significantly contributed to this debate, offering frameworks that seek to explain how individuals and communities can develop the dispositions necessary to

combat epistemic injustice. Here, I critically examine their respective contributions and limitations. Their philosophical accounts guide the exploration of the development of epistemic virtues even in contexts where there is rising authoritarianism. Especially inspired by José Medina's emphasis on the role of activism to create beneficial epistemic frictions; I will further argue that memory activism can provide a fertile ground to develop epistemic virtues and contribute to epistemic justice in public memory.

Miranda Fricker's landmark work (2007), offers an ethical conception of epistemic agency. She argues that epistemic injustice occurs when people are wronged specifically in their capacity as knowers, either through testimonial injustice (when prejudicial stereotypes skew credibility assessments) or hermeneutical injustice (when interpretive gaps disadvantage marginalized groups in making sense of their experiences). To resist such injustices, Fricker introduces the virtue of testimonial justice, a reflexive, individual disposition aimed at counteracting one's own implicit biases. This virtue is described as a capacity for 'moral perception', a cultivated sensibility toward the epistemic treatment of others.

"The idea of a testimonial sensibility is introduced as a form of rational sensitivity that is socially inculcated and trained by countless experiences of testimonial exchange, individual and collective. This real-life training instils in the virtuous hearer empirically well-grounded habits of epistemically charged social perception, and thus reliable perceptual judgements of speaker credibility. But our predicament as hearers is that even if we are personally innocent of prejudiced beliefs, still the social atmosphere in which we must judge speakers' credibility is one in which there are inevitably many stray residual prejudices that threaten to influence our credibility judgements; so the primary conception of the virtuous hearer must be that of someone who reliably succeeds in correcting for the influence of prejudice in her credibility judgements." (Fricker, 2007: 5)

Fricker (2007) grounds the development of such virtues in individual moral effort and introspective ethical improvement but how does a virtuous hearer correct herself by herself? While this approach was groundbreaking in bringing together moral philosophy and epistemology, it has been widely critiqued for its individualism (Mason, 2011; Medina, 2013). It assumes that injustice can be ameliorated primarily through individual virtue rather than structural or communal change. The emphasis on

internal virtue cultivation underestimates the collective, relational, and political dimensions of epistemic struggle.

I believe Fricker's account is important not only for introducing a compelling framework for developing epistemic virtues but also for correctly identifying the central aim of this project: the cultivation of a reflexive epistemic sensibility. By highlighting that insensitivity lies at the root of many forms of epistemic injustice, Fricker rightly stresses the need to develop a perceptual and affective attunement to others' epistemic positions. However, her model remains limited by framing this cultivation largely as an individual moral and epistemic task. This is where José Medina's intervention (2013) is especially valuable. Medina complements and expands Fricker's account by emphasizing the socially embedded nature of epistemic virtue, arguing that such sensibilities are not formed in isolation but are cultivated through interaction, communicative friction, and engagement within diverse communities. His account underscores the crucial role of dissent, collaboration, and civic participation in shaping the habits of mind necessary for resisting epistemic injustice, thus offering a more dynamic and politically responsive approach to virtue development.

José Medina, in *The Epistemology of Resistance* (2013), expands the terrain by reconceptualizing epistemic virtue as a collective, political, and dynamic phenomenon. Rather than relying on the individual moral subject, Medina argues that epistemic virtues are socially distributed and cultivated through interaction, dissent, and civic engagement, especially among marginalized communities. Medina deepens this framework by introducing the concept of kaleidoscopic sensibility (2013: 306) as a capacity to see from multiple perspectives simultaneously, an ability sharpened in contexts of social heterogeneity and oppression. In the context of epistemic injustice, individuals lack the pluralistic and dynamic social imagination necessary for recognizing alternative viewpoints. This results in a kaleidoscopic social sensibility being underdeveloped, trapping people not only in insensitivity to others but also in a deeper insensitivity to their own ignorance what Medina calls meta-blindness. Such exclusionary imaginaries diminish empathy and create emotional and cognitive barriers that prevent people from seeing others as equals or understanding their experiences as relevant. To counter this, Medina argues for the pluralization of the social imagination and the active cultivation of a more nuanced, kaleidoscopic

sensibility, which allows us to better perceive others' needs, interests, and struggles, and to relate them meaningfully to our own lives.

To illustrate the practice of epistemic resistance, Medina (2013: 230-249) invokes the notion of epistemic heroes, focusing on figures like Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Rosa Parks. These individuals represent exemplary agents who embody epistemic courage and contribute to the transformation of social imaginaries. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a 17th-century Mexican nun and polymath, used her literary and theological skills to critique the misogynistic structures that constrained women's access to knowledge. Despite ecclesiastical censorship and forced silence, Sor Juana's writings displayed epistemic tenacity and subtle resistance through allegory and philosophical inquiry. Medina reads her as an agent of epistemic defiance, someone who articulated alternative hermeneutical frameworks under oppressive conditions. Rosa Parks, meanwhile, is celebrated not only for her defiance during the Montgomery bus boycott but also for her epistemic resistance to the white supremacist norms embedded in Jim Crow Segregation Law. Her act is framed as an interruption of normative injustice and a call to reconfigure the epistemic order that legitimized racial segregation.

These figures powerfully illustrate how individual actions can destabilize dominant knowledge systems. However, an overreliance on epistemic heroes can reinforce a problematic politics of exceptionality. By elevating singular, dramatic acts, the framework risks marginalizing the quieter, collective, and enduring epistemic labor carried out through civic initiatives and ongoing community practices. Nonetheless, Medina deliberately situates his account of the epistemic hero within a broader social framework, emphasizing the relational and communal conditions that make such resistance possible.

“(Sor Juana’s and Parks’) Their actions and their characters were rendered possible by the social support they received. It is thanks to the fertile soil of a particular social field that they could develop the attitudes and habits of resistance that they developed; and it is thanks to the subsequent social support of networks and movements that their insurrectionary acts could be echoed and woven into collective practices of resistance.” (Medina, 2013: 249)

Rather than centering epistemic virtue on acts of heroic rupture, I argue that it is important to foreground civic epistemic initiatives non-institutional, often informal spaces where communities engage in epistemic resistance through sustained,

participatory, and memory-driven practices. These initiatives include diverse activities from exhibitions, memory walks, oral history projects, counter-monuments, education programs, to digital memory archives; operate through slow epistemic labor, building transformative capacities over time rather than through singular disruptions.

Medina's (2013) concept of the echoability of chained actions becomes vital here. Echoability refers to the way that acts of resistance reverberate through social networks, inspiring connected actions that reinforce and amplify one another. Civic epistemic initiatives produce epistemic frictions small but resonant actions that create space for others to speak, remember, reinterpret, and resist. This echoability is central to how civic initiatives help cultivate distributed epistemic virtues. Unlike the isolated act of a hero, these networks of action are cumulative and mutually reinforcing, generating virtuous capacities across communities rather than within individual agents alone.

Ultimately, the development of epistemic virtues is less about the cultivation of individual excellence than about the co-creation of conditions that sustain virtuous practice. Civic epistemic initiatives provide these conditions. They enable dialogue, foster critical memory, create spaces for healing and learning, and connect participants through shared affective and epistemic investments.

Memory activism functions not merely as a form of political protest or historical correction, but as an epistemic practice in its own right. It creates civic spaces where dominant narratives are questioned, forgotten histories are recovered, and communities engage in sustained reflection on the past. Importantly, these practices do not just transfer knowledge; they shape how individuals and communities learn to know that is, how they cultivate the sensibilities, dispositions, and habits of engagement that scholars of epistemic injustice identify as epistemic virtues. While these virtues have typically been framed in individualistic moral terms, memory activism shows that their development is deeply relational, historically situated, and socially distributed.

Memory studies scholars have long emphasized the civic and transformative potential of memory practices. As Rothberg (2009) argues in "Multidirectional Memory", memory does not function as a zero-sum economy but as a dynamic, relational process through which different historical experiences can resonate with and illuminate one another. This multidirectionality fosters conditions for what José Medina (2013) calls "epistemic friction" the productive clash of perspectives that disrupts complacency

and invites reorientation. Memory activism thrives in this space of friction: by staging encounters with difficult pasts in pluralistic, participatory ways, it pushes participants beyond the limits of inherited narratives and enables the reconsideration of established epistemic frameworks.

One of the most vital contributions of memory activism is its ability to unsettle mechanisms by which societies normalize historical erasure and maintain epistemic closure around violence and injustice. Practices such as counter-monuments or grassroots memory walks, often designed and led by local communities, do not simply transmit marginalized knowledge; they restructure the very conditions under which people are allowed to speak, remember, and be heard. These practices call for new modes of listening, more careful habits of attention, and a sustained engagement with complexity. They resist the quick moral resolution or emotional closure that often characterizes state-sponsored commemorations, offering instead ways of engaging with the past through affective, ethical, and intersubjective labor.

This slow and communal mode of engagement is what makes memory activism so crucial for the cultivation of epistemic capacities. As Aleida Assmann (2010) argues, cultural memory is not a passive container of information but a dynamic process shaped by contestation, repetition, and reinterpretation. Through memory activism, communities continually revisit, revise, and expand their understanding of the past, thereby training participants in the very forms of attentiveness and self-reflexivity that epistemic virtues require. This is especially important in societies marked by historical injustice, where dominant institutions have long silenced or distorted the testimonies of marginalized groups. In such contexts, memory activism becomes a civic pedagogy: it teaches participants to sit with discomfort, to trace the structural conditions of forgetting, and to recognize their own positionalities in relation to contested histories. Moreover, memory activism does not demand exceptional moral courage or intellectual brilliance from individuals. Instead, it offers a relational framework in which epistemic growth becomes possible through collective labor. As José Medina (2013) argues, virtues like epistemic humility and open-mindedness are not private traits but socially distributed sensibilities that emerge through communicative interaction, dissent, and civic engagement. Memory activism exemplifies this by cultivating what he calls a kaleidoscopic sensibility. It is a space for sustained, reciprocal engagement in which epistemic transformation is slowly built over time.

In this sense, the value of memory activism lies not in its direct capacity to produce epistemic virtues, but in its capacity to ground and enable them. It provides the social, historical, and emotional infrastructure through which communities can learn to perceive injustice, respond to complexity, and remain open to alternative ways of knowing. Memory activism builds these capacities from the ground up, through lived experience, affective resonance, and dialogical exchange. In conclusion, memory activism matters not only because it challenges dominant historical narratives or honors marginalized voices, but because it fosters the very conditions in which epistemic virtues can take root. By engaging with contested pasts through participatory, pluralistic, and reflective practices, it offers a powerful model of civic epistemology one that is slow, collective, and profoundly transformative.

3.3 How does Memory Activism Differ from Activism?

Activism, broadly defined, refers to collective or individual practices aimed at challenging, resisting, or transforming existing social, political, or economic structures. It encompasses a wide range of actions from protest and petitioning to lobbying, art, and digital advocacy unified by their commitment to enacting change outside institutional or conventional channels of power. At its core, activism is driven by an ethical and political imperative: the recognition that the status quo is unjust, and that transformation is both necessary and possible. While activism is traditionally associated with mass mobilizations and contentious politics, contemporary scholarship has increasingly emphasized its everyday, cultural, and epistemic dimensions (Choudry, 2015).

Memory activism represents a specific form of activism that centers the past as a site of struggle. Yifat Gutman and Jenny Wüstenberg (2023: 5) defines memory activism as “the strategic commemoration of a contested past to achieve mnemonic or political change by working outside state channels”; it is explained by its attempts to challenge prevailing narratives, preserve marginalized histories and advance social justice through shared remembrance. Memory activism is now a major influence in shaping public discourse and memory policies. In recent years; grassroots movements, advocacy groups and individuals have mobilized to confront historical injustices, commemorate victims of violence and oppression and advocate for more inclusive and reflective forms of memory. These practices aim at challenging hegemonic narratives and fostering alternative forms of remembrance. It includes activities such as

memorialization, commemorative events, public education initiatives, artistic expressions and advocacy campaigns. On certain occasions, civic initiatives have managed to influence the establishment of memorials, museums and commemorative days to honor victims of past atrocities and educate the public on their importance. Memory activism has also paved the way for official apologies, reparations and reconciliation processes in response to historical injustices.

Memory activists play a crucial role in epistemic landscape by contesting dominant narratives and advocating for the inclusion of marginalized voices. As epistemic actors, they engage in practices that uncover silenced histories and promote alternative perspectives. This active engagement positions them as contributors to the collective understanding of history. Memory activists address both forms of epistemic injustice introduced by Miranda Fricker (2007), testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice, by validating the testimonies of marginalized groups and expanding the interpretive resources available for understanding historical events. This involves developing new frameworks and vocabularies that better capture the experiences of marginalized groups.

By enriching the interpretive landscape, memory activists enable more nuanced and comprehensive understandings of historical and contemporary issues. For example, predominant history narratives often marginalize or erase women's experiences and instead include heroic war memories of men into public memory; however, women across different cultures and historical contexts engage in acts of remembrance and forgetting to resist oppression and advocate for justice (Altınay et al., 2019). In this way, women use memory to mobilize social and political change by enabling women themselves to reclaim their histories and reshape collective memories.

Memory activism underlines the importance of civic action. Particularly civic associations usually serve as important avenues for the creation and dissemination of alternative memory narratives that question the selective amnesia of imagined communities (Assmann, 2006, 2007, 2008). Yifat Gutman (2017) in her study on memory activism, in the context of Israel/Palestine, emphasizes initiatives for political change that are carried out independently from the state's institutions. She argues that although memory activists can have different motivations, they can be defined as such if they have "an effort to advance peace and reconciliation worldwide" (2017: 15). It is important to underline the fact that memory activists do not act in accordance of

their personal benefits since effort to raise awareness for the remembrance of the contested past has its own risks.

“While memory activists are political actors, they mobilize the past not for the aim of gaining power and status, but for advancing their moral and ideological visions. (...) Moreover, the silenced past that memory activists wish to make present and their interpretation of violent histories are highly controversial and more often attract public rejection and denial rather than granting the activists legitimacy and recognition in their society.” (2017: 19)

Memory activists continue their work in spite of critical hazards; their actions raise awareness, inspire and encourages others to act and in this respect they can be considered as developers of epistemic virtues in the society. They can develop new skills in times of protests such as talking about politics, organizing protests, resisting against different obstacles (political, physical etc.) and develop critical thinking. They can learn to participate in politics and tend to participate in protests more than once (Meyer, 2021: 187); build solidarity networks creating a feeling of closeness (187-188).

Memory activism involves intentional practices of remembrance that challenge dominant historical narratives, resist collective amnesia, and affirm marginalized histories. Unlike traditional historiography, which often claims neutrality, memory activism is explicitly normative and political: it seeks not only to preserve the past, but to intervene in how the past is publicly understood and used in the present. As such, it serves both epistemic and political functions.

One of the defining features of memory activism is its responsiveness to contexts of historical denial, erasure, or revisionism. In societies emerging from authoritarianism, genocide, colonialism, or racialized violence, the struggle over memory becomes inseparable from broader demands for justice. In these settings, memory activism challenges official histories that legitimize or sanitize state violence, and it constructs alternative archives and narratives from below.

Memory activism also differs from conventional activism in its temporality. While most activism focuses on present grievances and future aspirations, memory activism mobilizes the past as a political resource. This backward orientation, however, is not nostalgic or conservative it is insurgent. It aims to expose historical continuities of

oppression, foster epistemic friction, and envision futures that break from entrenched patterns of injustice (Medina, 2013). Moreover, memory activism is deeply intersectional. Drawing from feminist, decolonial, and critical race theories, it recognizes that memory is not neutral but stratified: some histories are institutionally valorized, while others are rendered invisible or illegitimate. Memory activism therefore strives to democratize historical knowledge by centering the voices and experiences of those excluded from official narratives (Fricker, 2007; Crenshaw, 1991).

While memory activism is undeniably political and transformative, it should not be simply conflated with activism in the broader sense since it operates through unique modes of engagement, temporality, and symbolic labor that distinguish it from other forms of political action. Although both activism and memory work aim at transformation, memory activism involves a distinct orientation toward the past, present, and future mobilizing remembrance not merely as a strategy but as a mode of action with its own logic and effects.

Rigney (2021: 302) underscores that ‘acts of recollection’ are not passive reflections but active interventions in the present. This understanding of memory as a form of action is essential to distinguishing memory activism from other kinds of activism. Memory activism centers on symbolic transformation: it contests hegemonic narratives and dominant understandings of the past, opening space for marginalized voices and alternative interpretations. Rather than aiming for immediate legal or institutional change, memory activism disrupts cultural imaginaries, reconfigures social recognition, and influences how societies understand themselves. The concept of the ‘memory-activism nexus’ further clarifies why memory activism should be treated as analytically distinct. Rigney (2021: 229) outlines three interrelated dimensions: memory activism (contentious promotion of specific memories), memory of activism (remembrance of past movements), and memory in activism (memory’s role in current struggles). This framework reveals that memory activism is not simply a subset of activism but a unique form of political engagement with its own historical and cultural dynamics.

Memory activism rather than activism in general occupies a crucial space in the discussion of epistemic justice because it directly addresses the silences, distortions, and exclusions that underpin testimonial and hermeneutical injustices. In Miranda Fricker’s formulation, epistemic injustices in both forms of injustice are historically

entrenched and structurally reinforced, often through the selective remembering and forgetting that organize collective narratives. Memory activism intervenes in these processes by disrupting epistemic hierarchies that marginalize certain groups from the domain of legitimate knowledge. It creates civic and cultural spaces in which neglected voices and suppressed histories gain recognition, thereby fostering the epistemic conditions necessary for justice.

One of the ways memory activism aligns with epistemic justice is through the cultivation of testimonial justice. For Fricker (2007: 88–90), testimonial justice is a virtue that allows hearers to correct for prejudice in credibility judgments. Yet, while this virtue can be cultivated at the individual level, the persistence of testimonial injustice reveals its structural dimension: entire groups can be systematically discredited or silenced in the public sphere. Memory activism addresses this broader dimension by creating platforms where marginalized communities can articulate their experiences and testimonies. Public memorials, oral history projects, and commemorative rituals serve as epistemic interventions that counteract credibility deficits not simply one interaction at a time, but at the level of collective discourse. By reshaping what counts as a legitimate contribution to public knowledge, memory activism strengthens the conditions under which testimonial justice can flourish.

José Medina expands Fricker's framework by emphasizing the social and political nature of epistemic virtues. He identifies epistemic humility, intellectual curiosity/diligence, and open-mindedness as key dispositions for resisting epistemic injustice, and insists that these virtues are cultivated through interaction, dissent, and communicative friction (Medina, 2013: 30–35). Memory activism provides precisely such contexts of epistemic friction. By staging encounters with contested histories, it generates the discomfort and perplexity necessary for epistemic growth. For example, counter-monuments or memory walks disrupt familiar landscapes by inserting alternative narratives of the past, forcing participants to recognize the limits of their inherited assumptions. These moments of disruption foster epistemic humility by reminding individuals of their own ignorance, cultivate intellectual curiosity by prompting engagement with overlooked sources, and encourage open-mindedness by confronting participants with the plurality of historical perspectives.

Medina's concepts of kaleidoscopic sensibility and echoability are particularly illuminating when applied to memory activism. Kaleidoscopic sensibility refers to the ability to see from multiple perspectives and to shift between them dynamically

(Medina, 2013: 305–310). Memory activism exemplifies this sensibility by making visible the coexistence of conflicting narratives. Commemorative practices that juxtapose national pride with histories of violence, or that bring together the memories of victims from different communities, cultivate the capacity to hold tensions without collapsing them into a singular narrative. Echoability, meanwhile, captures how acts of resistance resonate across time and space, generating chained actions that amplify one another (Medina, 2013: 249–252). Memory activism relies on this mechanism: each commemorative act whether a march, a plaque, or a digital archive—gains significance through its capacity to inspire further acts of remembrance. In this way, memory activism not only addresses present injustices but also sustains long-term processes of epistemic transformation.

Medina's later work on protest further reinforces the connection between memory activism and epistemic justice. In "The Epistemology of Protest", he conceptualizes protest as a form of communicative resistance that creates obligations for uptake (Medina, 2023: 96–105). Protest is not only an expression of dissent but also a demand for recognition, a claim to epistemic standing. Memory activism can be read as a form of protest against silencing, one that insists on proper uptake of marginalized testimonies about the past. When societies refuse to listen to these testimonies, they commit not only political but also epistemic injustices, undermining the conditions of shared understanding. By insisting on recognition of suppressed histories, memory activism forces publics to confront the epistemic harms of selective remembrance and to reconstruct interpretive frameworks that are more inclusive.

Aleida Assmann's work on cultural memory provides another crucial perspective on why memory activism matters for epistemic justice. In her Erasmus Medal Lecture, she emphasizes that cultural memory is not static but is constantly reshaped through civic practices (Assmann, 2019: 5–7). Far from being neutral, collective memory is deeply political: it can serve to entrench nationalist myths and epistemic closure, or it can open spaces for pluralism and dialogue. Civil society initiatives are particularly important because they resist the monopolization of memory by state institutions, which often sanitize or suppress traumatic histories. By reinterpreting and reactivating cultural memory, memory activists destabilize hegemonic narratives and foster conditions for epistemic justice. Assmann highlights that memory practices involve affective and emotional investments, which are integral to epistemic sensibilities.

Engaging with painful or dissonant pasts cultivates the habits of attentiveness, reflexivity, and ethical responsiveness that are necessary for epistemic virtue.

A comparative perspective between activism in general and memory activism in particular helps clarify the distinctive epistemic contributions of the latter. Political activism broadly seeks to mobilize for change, resist injustice, and transform structures of power. Its epistemic dimension lies in raising awareness, amplifying marginalized voices, and generating new vocabularies for resistance. However, activism does not always prioritize epistemic transformation as such; its immediate focus may be political reform, redistribution, or legal recognition. Memory activism, by contrast, is oriented toward the reconstruction of collective understanding itself. Its primary site of intervention is epistemic: the ways in which societies remember, interpret, and narrate their pasts.

This distinction has important implications. While political activism may highlight ongoing injustices, memory activism insists that historical injustices remain epistemically alive and demand recognition. By recovering suppressed narratives, memory activism enriches collective interpretive resources, addressing hermeneutical injustices that arise from historical silences (Medina, 2017: 41–45). Whereas activism often seeks to change laws or policies, memory activism transforms epistemic sensibilities by training individuals and communities in the virtues of humility, curiosity, and open-mindedness. It demands not only political but also epistemic accountability: a willingness to listen to uncomfortable truths, to expand one's conceptual frameworks, and to confront the lingering effects of past wrongs.

The epistemic contributions of memory activism are therefore both unique and indispensable. They foster long-term dispositions rather than immediate outcomes. By cultivating epistemic virtues in communal settings, memory activism ensures that political change is accompanied by epistemic transformation. It embeds resistance within practices of remembering, which generate enduring epistemic frictions that sustain critical reflection. As Medina notes, the sustainability of resistance depends on echoability the capacity of actions to reverberate across time and communities (Medina, 2013: 249). Memory activism institutionalizes echoability by anchoring acts of resistance in cultural forms that can be revisited, reinterpreted, and reactivated by future generations.

Medina (2013) also emphasizes that epistemic injustice is reproduced through institutions and cultural imaginaries rather than simply through individual failures.

Pohlhaus (2017: 13–26) clarifies that testimonial and hermeneutical injustices occur in patterned ways that exceed individual bias, while Tuana (2017: 125–138) highlights how feminist epistemology reveals the structural exclusions in who counts as a knower. This insight underscores the distinct role of memory activism: it intervenes precisely in those cultural and institutional processes that shape collective imaginaries. By contesting hegemonic memories and expanding interpretive frameworks, memory activists reconfigure the epistemic landscape itself, making it more inclusive and responsive. In this sense, memory activism is not a subset of political activism but a form of epistemic activism in its own right, one whose primary aim is the cultivation of epistemic justice.

I would like to use Gutman and Wüstenberg's (2022; 2023: 9-10) account of memory activism in my thesis because their conceptualization aligns closely with my argument that memory activism provides fertile ground for the development of epistemic virtues. By deliberately distinguishing 'memory activism' from 'memory movements,' they emphasize a more inclusive and flexible understanding of memory-based political engagement—one that does not rely on sustained collective organization but can emerge through individual, informal, or ad hoc practices. This understanding reinforces my view that epistemic virtues are cultivated not solely through individual nor institutional settings but through participatory and socially embedded memory practices. Gutman and Wüstenberg's insistence on treating remembrance as both the means and the goal of activism highlights memory work as a transformative epistemic process in its own right one aimed not only at altering dominant narratives of the past, but also at reshaping societal norms and values through critical engagement with history. Their account acknowledges the political complexity and unpredictability of memory work, yet insists on its potential to contest hegemonic memory regimes and democratize public knowledge. This framework provides a valuable theoretical basis for understanding how civic memory initiatives can foster the epistemic sensibilities necessary for resisting ignorance and promoting justice.

3.4 Theoretical Contributions of Memory Activism

Until recently almost all scholarly interest the field of memory studies concentrated on the content of memory politics, but neglected the role of agents who perform commemorative acts (Wüstenberg, 2020).

“Agency, in contrast to the concept of actors, implies the power (either latent or exercised) to create or prevent change. This definition enables us to shift attention from merely identifying actions of commemoration that cross borders in some manner to inquiring about their social and political drivers and outcomes. In other words, the contributions here think explicitly about how the interplay of local, national, regional, international and global dynamics and the agents that shape them result in the emergence of transnational memory spaces.” (Wüstenberg, 2020: 4)

Recognizing the contributions of agents involved in memorial acts stands as one of the foundational theoretical advancements in memory activism. This increasing interest in activism, often referred to as ‘the activist turn’ (Chigney, 2023: 65) repositions memory activists not just as passive agents of remembrance but as active participants in shaping collective memory. This shift provides a more dynamic and inclusive framework for understanding how memory is mobilized. By focusing on civic memory initiatives, this expanded lens allows for a more nuanced examination of how memory is produced and contested in public spaces. These initiatives are actively involved in reimagining and reconstructing collective memory, making them powerful tools for social and political transformation.

One of the major theoretical insights of memory activism is its concentration on the non-violent dimensions of history, as opposed to the violent occurrences in the realm of memory work (Katriel 2016; Reading and Katriel 2015). This shift reshapes the landscape of memory research by moving away from an exclusive focus on trauma, violence, and victimhood, and instead highlighting the transformative potential of non-violent, memory-based activism. This perspective, championed by scholars like Ann Rigney (2018), encourages a forward-looking approach to memory that connects the past with the potential for societal change. Instead of centering on the suffering caused by past violence, memory activism is framed as a means of healing and hope, offering new possibilities for social change. This approach is optimistic in nature, focusing on how memory can be a resource for positive transformation, rather than simply a means of processing past harms. Rigney’s work calls for a memory studies approach that emphasizes memory as a vehicle for social innovation, helping to shape futures that are more just and equitable.

By placing memory at the center of non-violent struggles, this shift also challenges traditional narratives of resistance, which often prioritize direct confrontation and

violent action. Instead, memory activism is understood as a form of resistance that works through symbolic and cultural channels, using memory practices as tools for social and political transformation. Memory activists, through their efforts to reclaim or reinterpret collective memories, can influence how societies understand themselves and their histories, creating more inclusive communities.

Memory activism is a heterogeneous field, populated by a diverse range of actors; survivors and victims' families, artists, social movements and civil society groups and youth activists and digital creators are leading examples. Their activism deploys a broad repertoire of methods and tools, ranging from archival research and testimonial gathering to artistic expression and digital storytelling. Its methodological flexibility stems from the hybridity of its goals it is part scholarship, part activism, and part cultural critique.

Inspired by critical race theory and feminist theory, memory activists understand that forgetting is not evenly distributed. Therefore intersectionality informs both the content of memory activism and its organizational logic.

“ (...) intersectionality creates a potentially interventional and transformative memory praxis. This framework allows for a wide-ranging critique of practices, institutions, claims, and norms carried out in association with mnemonic purposes. It provides a nuanced approach to establishing which remembering and remembered subjects are being occluded, how social differences might form the basis of coalition-building, and how to move beyond entrenched standpoints of “pure oppressed” or “pure oppressor.” (Chidgey, 2023: 39)

Activist groups often adopt inclusive, collaborative, and non-hierarchical structures to reflect their commitment to democratic pluralism. Moreover, intersectional memory activism is acutely aware of the politics of representation. It emphasizes not only whose stories are told, but who tells them, how they are told, and with what effects. This has led to greater connection to epistemic justice ensuring that marginalized communities are not only subjects of memory but also its narrators and curators (Fricker, 2007).

The transformative ambitions of memory activism lie in its function as resistance. As resistance, it confronts dominant power structures that enforce forgetting, such as settler colonial states or authoritarian regimes. It seeks to rebuild damaged epistemic

and social relationships, particularly those rooted in hermeneutical gaps (Medina, 2013) where marginalized memories are ignored or denied. Importantly, the transformation is not only political but also epistemic: memory activism invites publics to think otherwise, to unlearn dominant paradigms, and to engage in what Medina (2013) calls epistemic friction. However, transformation is often slow, partial, and contested. It rarely yields immediate policy change but can shift public discourse, reconfigure collective imaginaries, and create conditions for future justice.

Despite its transformative potential, memory activism faces several limitations that challenge its sustainability and impact. Many initiatives operate under precarious conditions, often lacking stable funding and institutional support. This vulnerability makes them susceptible to co-optation, where their messages can be depoliticized or appropriated by dominant actors for symbolic purposes. Activists also frequently encounter emotional fatigue and trauma exposure, particularly when dealing with painful or violent pasts. Moreover, while memory activism can achieve symbolic recognition and cultural visibility, translating these achievements into concrete policy change remains a significant and ongoing struggle.

To end with, I would like to mention one of the most recent and compelling theoretical contributions of memory activism is the introduction of the concept of slow memory. As articulated by Jenny Wüstenberg, slow memory challenges the dominance of “fast memory” rapid, event-focused, and often institutionally driven forms of remembrance by drawing attention to gradual, sustained, and frequently invisible processes of change and harm. It highlights the moral urgency of acknowledging violence and honoring the everyday, often overlooked experiences of suffering and endurance. In this way, slow memory reorients memory activism toward long-term healing, ethical attentiveness, and the cultivation of alternative temporalities of commemoration. It also underscores the need for scholars and practitioners to adopt slower, more reflective modes of working and collaborating. As such, slow memory not only enhances the field’s analytical tools but also expands the activist potential of memory work by aligning it with enduring social transformation and ethical responsibility (Wüstenberg, 2023: 67).

Community-based remembrance practices are especially suited to slow memory. When local groups, families, neighborhood associations, or cultural networks adopt slow remembrance of, say, land dispossession, environmental degradation, structural inequality, they commit to memory practices as part of everyday life. These might

include regular communal rituals, storytelling, mapping of change, educational initiatives, or art installations that evolve over time. Such practices allow epistemic virtues to become not occasional, but habitual because slow memory is less about singular grand events and more about process, it draws in many more actors, including those whose voices are often excluded in fast-paced memorial politics.

In conclusion, the theoretical contributions of memory activism, particularly the concept of slow memory, offer a crucial framework for understanding how long-term, community-based remembrance practices cultivate epistemic virtues and foster critical reflection. By emphasizing sustained, participatory engagement with the past, slow memory resists the pressures of spectacle and immediacy that often characterize institutional commemorations, instead fostering deeper, more dialogical forms of public knowledge. This approach foregrounds the ethical imperative to attend to marginalized voices and silenced histories, thereby enabling collective epistemic development. These theoretical insights will be further examined through empirical case studies from Germany's multifaceted engagements with Holocaust memory to Zochrot's efforts in Israel, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo's ongoing presence in Argentina, and YIHR's transnational work in the Balkans—all of which demonstrate how grassroots memory activism actively reshapes public memory and cultivates epistemic virtues in the process.

3.5 Memory Activism in Germany

Studying memory activism in Germany provides critical insights into the transformative role of civil society in reshaping public memory with lessons that resonate in other cases. Germany's approach to dealing with its past, particularly its reckoning with the Holocaust and the atrocities of the Nazi regime, serves as a significant case of how grassroots activism intersects with predominant narratives to address historical injustices. This interplay illustrates how collective memory is not a static entity imposed by dominant circles but a dynamic process shaped by civil society actors. By examining Germany, it can be understood that the mechanisms through which memory activism can challenge dominant narratives, foster accountability and contribute to social change.

In the aftermath of World War II, Germany faced the immense challenge of confronting its troubled past. While state-driven efforts like the establishment of Holocaust memorials and education initiatives have been central, memory activism by civil

society has played a vital complementary role. Activist movements have uncovered marginalized narratives, such as those of Roma and Sinti victims, LGBTQi+ communities and political dissidents, often overlooked in mainstream memory discourse.

The significance of memory activism in Germany lies not only in its domestic implications but also in its transnational influence. Civil society actors in Germany have often collaborated with international organizations to promote frameworks for acknowledging historical injustices, thus globalizing the principles of memory activism. These exchanges highlight how local practices can inform global approaches, as Rothberg (2009) argues in his concept of multidirectional memory where memories of distinct historical events intersect and inform one another. Moreover, studying memory activism in Germany underscores the tension between state-sanctioned remembrance and grassroots efforts. While official memory politics in Germany are often cited as exemplary, they are not without limitations. State-driven narratives can sometimes ossify into rigid frameworks that exclude certain voices or prioritize national redemption over critical reflection. Civil society activism counters these tendencies by introducing epistemic frictions. Activist interventions often serve to recalibrate public memory, ensuring it remains inclusive and responsive to contemporary challenges.

Germany's experience also sheds light on the risks and challenges of memory activism. Efforts to confront the Nazi past were not immediate or universally embraced. The postwar period saw significant resistance to acknowledging culpability and it was only through sustained pressure from civil society, particularly the student movements of the 1960s, that public discourse began to shift (Assmann, 2010). This trajectory underscores the persistence required to transform public memory and the need for a vigilant civil society to prevent backsliding into denial or revisionism.

Germany's memory activism has long been regarded as exceptional because of the unique historical circumstances following the country's defeat in World War II. Unlike other nations, Germany could not deny or glorify its past with the same impunity; the sheer scale of the Holocaust and Nazi atrocities forced confrontation. Yet this confrontation was not automatic, nor was it driven solely by state institutions. As Jenny Wüstenberg (2020) shows in *Civil Society and Memory in Postwar Germany*, it was civic actors survivor groups, local history workshops, grassroots initiatives that pushed remembrance into public life, making Germany a global example of how societies can

reckon with historical violence (Wüstenberg, 2020: 32–80). Their persistence challenged official narratives of silence, complicity, or minimal acknowledgment, transforming remembrance into an ongoing societal project rather than a closed chapter. This civic pressure explains why Germany became a paradigmatic case of “coming to terms with the past,” a model studied internationally for decades.

Yet recent years reveal a sharp tension: remembrance culture in Germany has increasingly taken on an instrumental character, serving political and diplomatic purposes rather than fostering genuine confrontation. Volkan Çıdam (2023a; 2023b), in his two-part series “Geçmişle Yüzleş(eme)mek: Almanya’da Ne Oluyor?” in *Birikim*, shows how after the 7 October Hamas attacks and subsequent Israeli genocide on Gaza, Germany’s official commitment to Holocaust memory was mobilized to silence criticism of Israel and delegitimize pro-Palestinian protest (Çıdam, 2023a). Protests faced bans and heavy policing; intellectuals and artists expressing dissent were marginalized, censored, or threatened with loss of institutional support. Exhibitions such as Candice Breitz’s were canceled, the Oyoun cultural center in Berlin had its funding withdrawn, and scholars who signed open letters critical of the official stance were vilified in public debate (Çıdam, 2023b). Memory, in this context, became less a tool of reflection and accountability, and more a weapon to police dissent.

As Assmann (2010) emphasizes in her work on cultural memory, the active participation of civil society is crucial for keeping memory alive and ensuring that it serves as a tool for justice rather than a weapon of division. However, it should not be ignored that studying the role of German civil society in memory activism faces notable limitations, especially in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict post-October 7, 2023 (Çıdam, 2023a, 2023b). Germany’s historical responsibility for the Holocaust has profoundly shaped its collective memory and foreign policy, particularly its unwavering support for Israel. However, this prioritization often sidelines broader conversations about international human rights violations, including those in Gaza. Long before October 7, Dirk Moses (2021) have been arguing that Germany’s Holocaust memory framework risks being instrumentalized, suppressing dissenting voices advocating for Palestinian rights while amplifying accusations of antisemitism against those critical of Israel’s actions. This has been evident in the German government’s crackdown on pro-Palestinian demonstrations and a broader reluctance to address severe human rights violations in Gaza, as genocide. The public

opinion in Germany illustrates the challenges of balancing historical accountability with universal principles of justice. Its focus on Holocaust remembrance can overshadow global solidarity and intersectional advocacy in memory activism. This context exposes the risks of privileging one historical atrocity to the exclusion of others, complicating the role of memory activism as a transformative tool. The dynamics highlight the need for civil society to adopt more inclusive frameworks that can transcend predominant narratives and address global injustices equitably and fairly.

Despite these developments, Germany remains crucial for understanding memory activism because its history demonstrates both the possibility and fragility of civic engagement in shaping public remembrance. In the decades after 1945, official silence was widespread, and the state did not take the lead in reckoning with the Nazi past. It was civil society activists documenting local Nazi crimes, survivors pressing for recognition, communities building grassroots memorials that laid the groundwork for the “memory culture” Germany now claims as central to its identity. Wüstenberg emphasizes that this was not linear progress: civic initiatives had to overcome indifference, denial, and active resistance to force open spaces for dialogue (Wüstenberg, 2020: 127–150). This legacy is instructive precisely because it shows that remembrance is not guaranteed by state institutions alone but relies on continuous contestation by citizens.

Today, however, the same culture of remembrance risks becoming ritualized and depoliticized. Commemorations can be deployed to affirm Germany’s moral superiority “we have learned from our past” while suppressing uncomfortable debates about present injustices. Çıdam warns that remembrance has been mobilized as part of a new *Staatsräson*, where Germany’s commitment to Israel becomes unquestionable and criticism is equated with disloyalty or antisemitism (Çıdam, 2023b). This narrowing of acceptable speech marks a profound shift: from remembrance as an open and contested space to remembrance as a tool of state legitimacy. Civic actors who try to resist this instrumentalization through protest, cultural work, or scholarship face delegitimization and institutional pressure.

The importance of studying Germany’s case lies precisely in this contradiction. On the one hand, Germany represents one of the most extensive experiments in memory activism, showing how civil society can transform silence into accountability and embed historical reckoning into national identity. On the other hand, the current

illiberal turn demonstrates how quickly these gains can be undermined, how remembrance can be appropriated for exclusionary politics, and how fragile civic spaces remain under conditions of populism and racism. The rise of the far right, visible in electoral successes of Alternative for Germany (AfD) and in broader political discourse, directly threatens the liberal and self-critical culture of remembrance built over decades. Populist rhetoric reframes remembrance as excessive guilt, weaponizing resentment against minorities and immigrants while downplaying historical responsibility. This populist backlash reveals that memory cultures are not once-and-for-all achievements but ongoing battlegrounds.

For these reasons, Germany continues to offer vital lessons. First, it shows the centrality of civil society in keeping remembrance alive: without grassroots actors, the Holocaust could easily have been marginalized in public discourse, reduced to ceremonial anniversaries, or remembered selectively. Second, it illustrates the dangers of over-institutionalization: once remembrance is monopolized by state institutions, it risks becoming an empty ritual or a political tool. Third, the German case highlights the need to guard memory activism against appropriation whether by far-right revisionists who seek to relativize Nazi crimes or by liberal elites who instrumentalize Holocaust memory to foreclose present critiques.

Studying Germany thus means examining both its successes and its failures. Its civic initiatives provide a model of how societies can face historical violence, yet its current trajectory shows how fragile such cultures are under pressure from illiberal politics, racism, and geopolitical instrumentalization. For scholars of memory activism, Germany remains indispensable: not because it offers a perfect model, but because it demonstrates that the work of remembrance is never finished, always contested, and always dependent on the vitality of civil society.

In relation to the main argument of the thesis, it is significant to look closer at the memory activism in Germany because it demonstrates a remarkable epistemic transformation of the public memory with the help of civil society actors into a more inclusive and democratic memory. Jenny Wüstenberg analyzed the memory activism in postwar Germany, from 1945 onwards; the diverse memory work in question, included the remembrance of the Holocaust and other Nazi massacres, Germans' memories of war and the oppression under the German Democratic Republic (GDR). She argued that memory activists changed remarkably the memory culture in Germany; however, in the literature their role is undermined. Although there were

tensions between state representatives and memory activists, Wüstenberg insists that civic memory activism managed to play a significant role not only to democratize the memory politics but also to democratize Germany.

Jenny Wüstenberg's (2020) analysis concentrates on "contentious politics of memory"; she observed several memorials to understand how memory activists got involved with official actors and with each other, to promote a new "democratic content of memory" (13). Her chronological study distinguishes four periods through the evolution of public memory, in postwar Germany. In all of these periods there was a continuous tension between memory activists and the state; however, the role of left-wing activists was undeniably influential in the evolution of public memory (74).

The first period is the immediate postwar years that lasted from 1945 to 1960s. In the West Germany, the state supported activists who focused on commemorating German soldiers and civilians; the narrative about the Holocaust was absent in the public sphere. Many Holocaust memorials were put in place by victims of Nazi oppression or by their descendants. Those memory activists "with a critical perspective" were not yet influential in the memory politics (33). In the East Germany, until 1980s, the state very strictly controlled and instrumentalized the memory politics; only memorials serving to the regime's official narrative were allowed. This narrative was constructed around the glorification of Communist resistance to National Socialism. The second evolutionary phase of public memory is in between 1960s and late 70s; this period was marked by the student movement and the fragmentation of the left that led to the development of critical memory in the West Germany. The society has started to come to terms with its Nazi past by means of social movements; however, there was a limited inauguration of memorials. Critical memory activism came on the scene significantly in the third period that started in the late 1970s until the fall of the Berlin Wall. New social movements cultivated an increasing curiosity towards memory and history that gave way to the memory boom. Wüstenberg argues that this is the period when memory activism was transformed in "quantitative and qualitative" respects (34). Since 1980s, victims of the Nazi rule sought to commemorate the dead and honor them; however, "the political opportunity structure" was not supporting their cause (80). This led to a limited recognition without an institutional structure. In the 1980s, the political climate has changed under the leadership of Helmut Kohl's government; their attempts to come to terms with the past coexisted with increasing number of civic

initiatives. In addition, there was also a remarkable increase in the number of memorials that were put in place.

The last period started with the fall of Berlin Wall and it is still continuing. In this phase, the memory of the Nazi past has come to be “representative” in German history; both the public and the state embraced this memory. After the fall of Berlin Wall, demands for the remembrance of memories of victims of GDR have become visible; however, the diversification of memories of the East and West Germany brought alone competition within these memories. The competition was for “public space, recognition and resources, as well as -in a- renegotiation of the norms about democratic memory” (74). Especially, the memory of the Holocaust took a distinguished place in the public memory but memory activists challenged its prominence by forcing constantly the society to commemorate diverse historic tragedies.

Wüstenberg observed several movements and civic initiatives that have significant impact on the evolution of critical memory in postwar Germany. The first one is the Memorial Site Movement that marked the German memory culture in the 1980s; this movement was composed of different group of activists “with a vibrant collection of union, church and youth organizations” (80). They had the objective to transform the sites of Nazi terror into places where critical memory can be developed; in this way, these sites could be integrated into the memory culture. The Memorial Site Movement was composed of diverse local initiatives that concentrated on both well-known and “forgotten” sites of terror (91); and “forgotten victims of National Socialism including Sinti and Roma, gays, the disabled and chronically ill, slave laborers (...) deserters from the Wehrmacht” (92). Those memory activists who participated into the Memorial Site Movement and to History Movement were reactionary against the resistance of the previous generation to come to terms with the Nazi past; they desired to “to work in more concrete terms than the student activists of the 1960s” and therefore, they focused on concrete sites of terror (100-101).

In the Memorial Site Movement, Wüstenberg studied the initiative of the Active Museum that turned into an institution called The Topography of Terror. The Active Museum was the civic initiative of memory activists with the aim of transforming the previous site of Nazi power center in Berlin. It was founded in 1983 by different parties to realize “the idea of participatory museum” that would facilitate “the constructive confrontation of the recent German past (...) as well of the neofascist tendencies of the present” (105-106). This initiative underlined the importance of an institution for the

development of critical history and memory. Eventually, activists; by constantly putting pressure on official authorities and raising awareness in the public sphere, managed to transform this civic initiative into an institution called The Topography of Terror. This story of success demonstrates that civic initiatives can “shape the institutional landscape of memorialization” and these initiatives can transfer marginalized memory places into the official “memorialization agenda” and into the center of public debate (125-126).

Wüstenberg elaborated another civic initiative as well, that is the History Movement. At first, this initiative was concentrating on memory works like “researching, exhibiting and commemorating history” (130). The guiding intellectual background of the movement was leftist with the emphasis put on democracy. The goal was not to include marginalized groups’ memories into the historical narrative but “to engage them and help them develop a new collective memory by defining their own history”; in this way, these groups could be “subjects” but not “objects” of memory works (168). The History Movement concentrated on “everyday life, ordinary people” with “an empathetic understanding of historical decision- making” (170). In contrast to the Memorial Site Movement that focused on building large memory sites; the History Movement’s strategy was to focus on small memory places. For instance, since 1987; memory activists who were members of Berlin History Workshop manifested every year to rename a bridge after Rosa Luxembourg. In 2013, the bridge was officially renamed as Rosa-Luxembourg-Bridge (127).

“Dig where you stand” was the motto of the History Movement; they had the objective “to create opportunities for ordinary people to critically discuss history” (130). Once activists realized that memory works were not enough to create significant critical memory discussions, they changed their tactics and moved to the zone of memory protest; in other words, “the activists shifted from a focus on producing contentious content to publicizing that content through contentious means” (158). For example, The Marburg History Workshop constantly disturbed commemorative ceremonies of the local army unit Marburger Jäger which is the regiment that had committed war crimes during the Second World War (159).

There were two important debates within the movement: questions on professionalization and on relationship with official actors, especially on the issue of state funding. The conflict in between activists whether the movement needed professionalization or not and whether receiving state funding is acceptable or not were

major clashes of opinions that prepared the ground for decreasing power of the movement; finally, the movement's uneasiness to cope with memories of GDR's victims' sufferings (174) and "the difficulty of recruiting new, younger activists" prepared its end. For Wüstenberg, despite its decline, the History Movement was an important agency for "mainstreaming" the memory activism (170).

Wüstenberg argued that both the Memorial Site Movement and the History Movement played a significant role to transform German memory culture; she observed a common "aesthetic" in 1980s memory movements encircling around four "memorial principles" (182). First, the memory landscape was decentralized; memorials were situated in different and already existing areas and memory movements focused on these diverse areas "in everyday spaces" (183). Moreover, there was no central institution to administer those civic initiatives; movements were operating from below. The second principle is authenticity; memory activists worked hard to find "the physical evidence of what is left of local history" and they insisted on locating memorials while "relating the design to that location aesthetically" (188). The third principle is antimonumentality; memory activists argued that former monuments were "unidirectional" and they were not leading to any reflexivity and participation to discuss a critical memory (193). Therefore, they insisted on dialogic commemoration methods as in the case of the Active Museum. The last principle is specificity and diversity in commemoration; activists insisted on finding and disseminating specific historic information about diverse groups including forgotten victims.

The memorial principles had become "part of a consensus in Germany on what palatable public memory should look like a consensus that has shaped not only memorialization of the Nazi past since 1989, but also that of other 'pasts'" (205). For Wüstenberg, memory movements owed their success of not only changing the memory culture but also determining how to challenge the memory culture to the "gradual institutionalization" of their ideas, projects and memorial principles (205).

The last case study of Wüstenberg is the Leistikowstrasse Memorial in Potsdam, that is a site of former Soviet prison; this case shows the change in memory politics after the fall of the Berlin Wall. At that time, civic memorial initiatives had already been institutionalized and the close cooperation in between the civil society and the state had already been established. The remembrance of memories on GDR had challenged the existing normative regime of remembrance; however, it was operated by terms and principles of this regime (260).

In contrast to memory activists who participated in the History and the Memorial Site Movements, activists of GDR memory were “fundamentally different in terms of their political beliefs, socialization and style”; there were victims’ associations, former opponents to the GDR regime who were not victims of the regime but worked to raise awareness on sufferings of victims, “pragmatics” who contributed to “memorial initiatives with experience, personal reputation and level-headed intervention” (226) and “for-profit organizations” that were both after the recognition of GDR memory and economic benefits (215).

GDR memory activists combined the memory work with the memory protest (238); since the “existing memory structure” (260) favored this combination, actors from both the state and the civil society were able to participate into the process (244). However, for some memory activists this was problematic because of their mistrust against officials. During memory works on building the Leistikowstrasse Memorial in Potsdam, some activists felt “the sense of the loss of control over the memory of the Leistikowstrasse and over the governance of the site itself” (259). Wüstenberg argued that the focus should not be “the opposition between activists and government, but the process of shaping memory through their complex interaction” (260). Tensions in between the civil society and the state and in between “the memory establishment” and new mnemonic demands will determine the democratic extent of Germany’s memory culture in the future as well (261).

Wüstenberg remarks that her conceptualizations rather than her conclusions can be used in studying the grassroots memory activism in another context than Germany (6). For Wüstenberg the democratic memory should be representative and it should include the “norms of tolerance and self-critique”; with only representative and normative components merged together, the memory can be democratic (263). Such a combination is infrequently observed in different settings; hence, instead of connecting the memory to democratic ideals, it may be more appropriately linked to the concept of justice.

The trajectory of memory activism in postwar Germany demonstrates how grassroots interventions can reshape public knowledge and contribute to epistemic justice. While state narratives often reproduced silences or instrumentalized history, civic actors worked to uncover marginalized memories, diversify public remembrance, and hold official institutions accountable. These practices not only advanced justice for excluded groups but also cultivated epistemic virtues across society. In particular,

memory activism in Germany exemplifies the development of epistemic humility, intellectual curiosity/diligence, and open-mindedness.

Epistemic humility involves recognizing one's own epistemic limitations and being open to correction. German civil society provided fertile ground for this virtue through the persistent uncovering of uncomfortable truths. The Memorial Site Movement in the 1980s offers a clear example. By insisting that sites of Nazi terror often ignored or hidden be transformed into places of public reflection, activists forced local communities to confront their own complicity. Their work on behalf of forgotten victims such as Roma, Sinti, gays, disabled people, and deserters from the Wehrmacht demanded that German society acknowledge histories it had long preferred to forget (Wüstenberg, 2017: 91–95). Such recognition required collective humility by abandoning narratives of heroic resistance or exclusive victimhood, and admitting responsibility for systemic persecution.

The Topography of Terror, which began as a civic initiative by the Active Museum in 1983, further illustrates humility in action. Activists reclaimed the former Gestapo headquarters in Berlin not to erase or monumentalize it, but to confront its history transparently. By converting a symbol of Nazi power into a participatory museum, they enabled the public to face uncomfortable evidence of state terror (Wüstenberg, 2017: 105–126). This institutionalization of humility acknowledging the darkest chapters of one's national history was the achievement of persistent civic pressure rather than state initiative.

Another virtue fostered by German memory activism is intellectual curiosity and diligence. Fricker's virtuous hearer is expected to check her biases diligently (Fricker, 2007: 91–96), but Medina stresses that such virtues require "epistemic friction," where confrontation with unfamiliar perspectives stimulates critical inquiry (Medina, 2013: 46–52). German civic initiatives cultivated precisely this friction through their investigative practices. The History Movement's motto "dig where you stand" epitomized epistemic diligence. Rather than accepting inherited narratives, activists researched everyday life, local histories, and the experiences of ordinary people. They created small exhibitions, oral history projects, and public commemorations that foregrounded forgotten aspects of the past (Wüstenberg, 2017: 130–170). Their efforts to rename a Berlin bridge after Rosa Luxemburg, sustained annually from 1987 until the official renaming in 2013, reflected not only persistence but a deep curiosity about suppressed socialist and feminist legacies (Wüstenberg, 2017: 127). By working

patiently at the micro-level, activists modelled habits of thorough inquiry and attention to detail that reshaped public discourse.

Another striking example comes from the Marburg History Workshop, which protested local army commemorations that honored regiments implicated in war crimes. By persistently raising these uncomfortable facts, the group disrupted sanitized narratives and insisted on epistemic diligence in historical remembrance (Wüstenberg, 2017: 159). These interventions show how civic activism demands intellectual labor: researching archives, gathering testimonies, curating exhibitions. Through such work, memory activism cultivated a culture in which citizens were expected to seek out neglected knowledge rather than rely passively on state-endorsed accounts.

Open-mindedness, understood as willingness to entertain alternative perspectives, was also central to German memory activism. For Medina, this virtue is bound up with cultivating a kaleidoscopic sensibility seeing from multiple standpoints simultaneously (Medina, 2013: 305–310). Civil society's interventions pluralized memory, ensuring that remembrance was not monopolized by a single narrative. The inclusion of marginalized victims in the Memorial Site Movement illustrates this virtue. By insisting that Sinti and Roma, homosexuals, disabled people, and forced laborers be remembered alongside Jewish victims, activists expanded the social imagination of who counted as a legitimate subject of memory (Wüstenberg, 2017: 92). This required society to open itself to unfamiliar stories and integrate them into a shared narrative of past injustices.

The Leistikowstrasse Memorial in Potsdam, a former Soviet prison, provides another case. Here, civic initiatives after reunification demanded recognition of the victims of GDR repression. While tensions arose between activists and state actors, the process ultimately created space for multiple, sometimes competing memories to coexist: Nazi atrocities, GDR crimes, and the broader war experience (Wüstenberg, 2017: 244–260). This pluralization exemplifies open-mindedness at the societal level, requiring Germans to hold diverse and sometimes conflicting perspectives in tension rather than collapsing them into a single frame.

The cultivation of humility, diligence, and open-mindedness by German civil society directly contributed to epistemic justice. Fricker identifies testimonial injustice where prejudice undermines credibility and hermeneutical injustice where interpretive gaps disadvantage marginalized groups as central problems (Fricker, 2007: 10–12). Memory activism in Germany addressed both. By amplifying marginalized voices and

insisting on their inclusion in public memory, activists countered testimonial injustice. By creating new interpretive frameworks—such as recognizing the persecution of Roma or the repression under the GDR they remedied hermeneutical gaps. In doing so, they democratized the epistemic environment, ensuring that knowledge production was not monopolized by the state or dominant groups.

Medina's emphasis on echoability helps explain the broader societal impact. Acts of civic remembrance whether exhibitions, protests, or memorial campaigns reverberated through networks, inspiring further initiatives and reinforcing virtuous dispositions (Medina, 2013: 249–252). The transformation of the Active Museum into the Topography of Terror shows how small civic interventions can echo into national institutions (Wüstenberg, 2017: 105–126). The persistence of the History Movement, despite internal tensions, exemplifies how curiosity and diligence in local initiatives can ripple outward to shape national culture.

Wüstenberg's theoretical approach will prove useful in investigating the contribution of civic initiatives to the development of public memory through the promotion of epistemic virtues. In a context like Turkey, where public memory is shaped by dominant national narratives and the majority remains indifferent to its troubled past, the development of a critical memory culture aligned with democratization is particularly challenging. Notably, even during periods of democratic reform, such initiatives often face significant resistance. For instance, the 2005 Istanbul conference titled “Ottoman Armenians During the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy”, held at Bilgi University, encountered considerable obstacles. Following its announcement, proponents of the official denialist narrative surrounding the Armenian Genocide actively sought to block the event. This underscores how, in contexts like Turkey, connecting memory to justice offers a means to analyze efforts that foster critical memory practices grounded in values like tolerance and self-critique.

Among Wüstenberg's case studies, the History Movement is particularly relevant for comparison with grassroots memory activism in Turkey. Emerging in the late 1970s and 1980s, the German History Movement deliberately concentrated on small-scale memory sites and the everyday lives of ordinary people, with the slogan “dig where you stand.” Its members sought to democratize historical inquiry by encouraging citizens to investigate local histories, recover neglected voices, and question sanitized narratives of the Nazi past (Wüstenberg, 2017: 130–170). This bottom-up approach is

strikingly pertinent to Turkey, where public memorialization remains sparse, fragmented, and often subject to active suppression by state institutions. In the absence of large memorials or state-supported commemorative projects, memory activists in Turkey have turned toward similarly modest and localized strategies. They address issues such as entrenched nationalism, structural racism, the denial of the Armenian Genocide, and the prevalence of hate speech in public discourse.

Organizations like Hrant Dink Foundation exemplify this approach. Rather than erecting large monuments, they create spaces for civic engagement through academic and educational programs, international workshops, digital archives, exhibitions, and seminars. Initiatives such as the 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory, the KarDes mobile application for mapping multicultural heritage, and the Asulis Discourse, Dialogue, Democracy Laboratory work as micro-level interventions that collectively broaden public awareness. These activities resonate with the History Movement's insistence on making marginalized communities the "subjects" rather than the "objects" of historical work, encouraging them to articulate their own perspectives and claim space in the public memory landscape.

This comparison illuminates how, in restrictive environments, memory activism tends to gravitate toward smaller, participatory, and dialogic forms of commemoration. Both the German and Turkish cases show that when state institutions are unwilling or hostile, civil society must carry the burden of remembrance by cultivating dispersed initiatives that keep critical memory alive. From the perspective of epistemic justice, such initiatives also foster epistemic virtues. In Turkey, as in Germany, small-scale activism encourages epistemic humility, by compelling society to recognize the limits of dominant narratives; intellectual curiosity/diligence, by stimulating independent research, archiving, and critical inquiry into silenced histories; and open-mindedness, by exposing citizens to plural perspectives and alternative experiences. Wüstenberg's analysis of the History Movement thus provides a valuable framework for exploring how grassroots activism in Turkey, despite facing stronger political constraints, can contribute to democratizing public memory and cultivating the epistemic dispositions necessary for resisting denial and fostering justice. Before moving on to a closer examination of the Hrant Dink Foundation, however, it is important to situate the Turkish case within a broader transnational landscape. The following section therefore turns to other emblematic examples of memory activism around the world, namely Zochrot in Israel, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, and the Youth

Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) in Serbia, in order to highlight the different modes and strategies through which civil society actors seek to confront painful pasts.

3.6 Different Cases of Memory Activism

Examining different examples of memory activism worldwide is crucial for understanding the phenomenon of epistemic frictions in collective memory. Memory activism involves efforts by individuals or groups to challenge dominant historical narratives, often by emphasizing marginalized or silenced perspectives. These efforts inherently generate epistemic frictions, in other words points of contestation between competing understandings of the past. Such frictions are multidirectional, reflecting diverse ways histories are remembered, contested and reframed across cultural, political and social contexts.

By examining a range of cases, such as grassroots movements advocating for transitional justice in post-conflict societies or campaigns addressing the legacies of slavery and apartheid, we can see how memory activism transcends borders, fostering cross-cultural dialogue and contestation. These frictions create opportunities for rethinking historical accountability and forging more inclusive narratives. Analyzing such examples reveals the dynamics of power, resistance and reconciliation embedded in memory work and highlights the transformative potential of confronting competing historical perspectives. This global lens underscores the importance of understanding memory not as an evolving, contested terrain, shaped by diverse voices and ongoing struggles for justice and recognition.

Studying civic initiatives such as Zochrot in Israel, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) in Serbia provides a rich comparative framework for understanding how remembrance fosters epistemic virtues. These initiatives, despite their different scales and orientations, illustrate how memory activism cultivates virtues while adapting to specific historical and political contexts.

Zochrot exemplifies small-scale, space-based memory activism. Through activities like memory walks and workshops, Zochrot encourages Israelis to confront the Nakba, the forced displacement of Palestinians in 1948. These localized, participatory events foster curiosity and humility, challenging participants to question dominant national narratives and engage with the silenced histories of dispossession. This grassroots

approach demonstrates how small and reflective acts of remembrance can nurture empathy and critical engagement.

In contrast, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo represent large-scale, justice-oriented memory activism. Their weekly protests in Buenos Aires publicly demand accountability for the forced disappearances during Argentina's dictatorship. This direct and visible approach cultivates open-mindedness, compelling society to confront the ethical imperatives of remembrance and the collective responsibility for justice.

In Serbia, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights adopts a perpetrator-oriented focus, organizing interventions to confront denial and impunity for war crimes in the Balkans. Their activities, such as interventions in public exhibitions and trials observation, promote epistemic disruption, encouraging society to challenge entrenched narratives and face the ambiguities of guilt and accountability. Together, these initiatives illustrate how diverse forms of memory activism foster epistemic virtues, bridging individual reflection and collective action across different socio-political contexts.

One of the remarkable examples of memory activism can be found in contemporary Israel. As the German memory scholar Aleida Assmann (2018) remarks, the commemorative activities of an Israeli civic initiative, Zochrot, aim to raise awareness of the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948 (the Nakba) among Israelis. Zochrot organizes memory tours to places where there existed Palestinian villages in the past. The purpose of these tours is to create a culture of remembrance so that the destruction of villages and the forced immigration of Palestinians from these areas can be recalled to public memory. Put differently, such memory walks aim "to change perceptions for the vision of a common future in a shared geographical space" (Assmann, 2018: 294). All this does not mean that such civic initiatives immediately transform the character of the prevailing memory regime in a particular country. Such an immediate transformation occurred neither in Germany nor Israel. Let us, however, recall once again that the limited success of these civic initiatives can be observed in the epistemic frictions they produce among the privileged (Medina, 2013):

All this does not mean that such civic initiatives immediately transform the character of the prevailing memory regime in a particular country. Such an immediate transformation occurred neither in Germany nor Israel. Let us, however, recall once again that the limited success of these civic initiatives can be observed in the epistemic frictions they produce among the privileged (Medina, 2013).

Similarly, Yifat Gutman (2017: 29) analyzed Zochrot and underlined its significance for memory activism. He argued that in contrast to the use of memory tour as a tool for Zionist education, Zochrot's "activist utilization of the tour carries dilemmas, tensions, contradictions and ironies"; once again, we see how memory activism complicates the narrative and disrupts the clear-cut nature of conflicting national memories by introducing ignored or unacknowledged recollections, leading to a more ambiguous understanding of public memory.

"There is something strong emotionally in those places; to see these ruins, it does something [to you]," Ron, a staff member of an international human rights organization from Jerusalem told me as we were walking on a half-marked trail toward the end of one of Zochrot's tours (2008)." (Gutman, 2017: 39)

"Either way, Jewish Israeli participants who joined Zochrot report that the tour had successfully transformed their views on pre-1948 Palestinian life and made them "see the whole country differently"—a recurrent statement made by many interviewees (for example interviews with Dalit, Nathan and Ron in 2008; and with Batia, Frank and Ariella in 2009)." (Gutman, 2017: 37)

The epistemic friction created through memory activism makes hearers question their prejudices or ignorance. In this way, the hearer becomes vulnerable as Medina (2013) argues and only in this vulnerable, ambiguous state of mind she becomes ready to develop certain epistemic virtues. As Gutman quotes from interviewees, those who participated to the tour revisited their national memories and started to develop new perspectives towards public memory.

Another example of memory activism could be mothers' activism that can be found in different contexts and as a case study underscores the transformative power of memory activism in challenging dominant historical narratives and fostering social justice. Movements such as the Madres de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, the Saturday Mothers in Turkey and other mother-led initiatives across the globe exemplify the unique role of maternal activism in the pursuit of truth, justice and collective memory. These groups, often emerging in contexts of state violence, repression and enforced disappearances, demonstrate how personal grief can evolve into a potent force for societal change.

The Madres de Plaza de Mayo, for instance, mobilized against Argentina's military dictatorship by publicly demanding accountability for their "disappeared" children, challenging a regime that sought to erase these atrocities. Similarly, the Saturday Mothers in Turkey gather weekly in silent protest, seeking answers about loved ones who vanished during periods of political turmoil in 1990s, confronting the state's narratives of denial and impunity. These movements not only resist the erasure of individual stories but also expose broader structures of injustice and silence.

Mothers' activism embodies several epistemic virtues and moral responsibility, demonstrating the power of ordinary individuals to disrupt hegemonic narratives and demand societal reckoning. By centering their struggles, memory activism gains a profound human dimension that emphasizes the intersection of private loss and public accountability. Studying these movements collectively highlights how memory activism, driven by mothers, fosters a global ethic of remembrance, accountability and the ongoing fight against epistemic injustice.

Including the Madres de Plaza de Mayo as a case study highlights the critical role of memory activism in fostering epistemic virtues within society to challenge and revisit predominant memory narratives. Emerging during Argentina's brutal military dictatorship (1976–1983), the Madres exemplify how marginalized voices can disrupt official silences and denials surrounding state violence (Arditti, 2002; Bosco, 2006). Their relentless activism, centered on uncovering the truth about the "disappeared" and demanding justice, showcases the epistemic virtue of persistence in seeking knowledge in the face of repression. Moreover, their movement cultivates collective critical reflection, an essential epistemic virtue that prompts society to question dominant narratives that often serve the interests of those in power. By defying official narratives that sought to erase evidence of human rights abuses, Madres exposed the epistemic injustices inherent in suppressing victims' voices. Their work emphasizes the importance of inclusive memory practices that honor marginalized experiences and ensure diverse epistemic contributions. As a case study, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo illuminates how memory activism can inspire societal capacities for empathy, accountability and ethical engagement with the past. Their example demonstrates that fostering epistemic virtues is vital for society's ability to confront uncomfortable historical truths. This process not only destabilizes dominant narratives but also builds a foundation for transformative justice and reconciliation, making the inclusion of the

Madres' activism indispensable to understanding the broader significance of memory work.

In his 2023 work, José Medina characterizes the activism undertaken by The Madres De Plaza de Mayo as not merely a political endeavor but also as a form of epistemic activism. This distinction arises from their courageous resistance against the pervasive epistemic oppression, which can be understood as the deliberate silence surrounding the tragic fates of their missing children. By transforming their profound acts of inquiry regarding the whereabouts and circumstances of their loved ones into highly visible and public demonstrations, they have effectively turned their grief and questioning into a powerful demand for justice. This transformation highlights their relentless pursuit of truth and accountability in the face of systemic denial and neglect.

“Although the Mothers’ protests were first and foremost political actions, their activism also had an important epistemic dimension: it unmasked the communicative injustice of a silence that covered over human rights violations and it prompted others to criticize and fight against the communicative and epistemic limitations of the public sphere produced by enforced silencing.

The Mothers’ testimonial protests through public grieving transformed the epistemic economy of the public sphere, changing what is visible and imaginable, credible and justified. They developed not only political agency, but also a collective voice with epistemic authority, a collective voice that persistently offered public group testimony that could powerfully resist the active ignorance about human rights violations that the military authorities fabricated: they knew that their children had been kidnapped and were not going to remain silent about the atrocities being committed. It is in this sense that the protest acts of the Madres were a form of epistemic activism that forcefully resisted the communicative injustice of an enforced silence. (Medina, 2023: 218-219)

At times, memory activism can be strategically aimed at specific individuals or groups who are currently reaping the benefits of their unpunished actions. This scenario often arises from the aftermath of historical injustices, where a process of normalization tends to obscure and downplay the severity of numerous crimes committed by various actors. When individuals attempt to resume their daily lives, it becomes increasingly challenging to coexist with those who were once perpetrators of such acts. In certain instances, these individuals may even receive unwarranted recognition, as the discourse surrounding war crimes can be inadvertently glorified within dominant

political narratives. A thorough examination of memory activism in Serbia serves as a particularly illustrative example of this complex dynamic.

In the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars, dominant political and cultural discourses in Serbia have often glorified individuals convicted of war crimes, portraying them as national heroes while minimizing or denying the atrocities they committed. This selective remembrance marginalizes the voices of victims, especially those from ethnic groups targeted during the conflict, thereby silencing their experiences and excluding them from the collective memory. Such glorification distorts historical truth, enabling a denialist culture that prevents society from fully reckoning with its past. From an epistemic perspective, this practice denies victims and survivors the right to be heard and acknowledged, perpetuating systemic injustice through the erasure of their truths. Memory activism in Serbia, such as the work of organizations like Women in Black, the Humanitarian Law Center and Youth Initiative for Human Rights challenge these dominant narratives by demanding accountability, recognition of war crimes and justice for victims. These activists confront the epistemic injustices embedded in state-sanctioned memory practices, often at great personal and political risk. Their efforts underscore the need to center marginalized voices and challenge glorification that perpetuates harm. By reframing public understanding of war crimes and advocating for inclusive memory practices, these activists illuminate the dangers of selective memory and its broader implications for societal healing and reconciliation.

In her insightful study, Orli Fridman (2022) meticulously examined a variety of memory activism practices, including digital ones, that have emerged in Serbia. These practices encompass a wide range of civic initiatives, such as organized memory tours and various commemorative events. There exists a rich tapestry of memory activism that have been actively undertaken, all aimed at grappling with and reconciling the complex and often painful memories associated with Serbia's tumultuous wartime history. Fridman (2022: 123) highlights particularly the novelty of second generation's memory activism against returned the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) convicts. In 2016-2017, former ICTY offenders have been "receiving state-sponsored ceremonies to welcome them home" and were given a prominent and highly visible platform to express themselves publicly. As a reaction, memory activism of the second generation developed civic initiatives that are more than commemoration but rather like intervention.

In April 2016, young activists targeted an event at the Belgrade Youth Center that aimed to promote a book by Momčilo Krajišnik, a former Bosnian Serb politician convicted by the ICTY for crimes against Bosniak and Croat civilians. Krajišnik, who was sentenced to twenty years, was released in September 2013 after serving two-thirds of his term. Memory activists felt the need to intervene.

“As Anita Mitić, the YIHR director at the time, explained: ‘We were literally witnessing the revision of history in front of our own eyes as war criminals were being welcomed back home as heroes ... we felt we needed to send a message against it’ (interview by author, August 2016).” (Fridman, 2022: 123)

Activists disrupted this public event by blowing whistles as Krajišnik began to speak. Outside, another group protested with banners that read “Home of the Criminals of Belgrade”, opposing the event’s location that is named as the Belgrade Youth Center. Activists also sent a newsletter in which they clarified their message as follows:

“We consider the interrupting of the lecture and promotion of the book written by Momčilo Krajišnik, a convicted war criminal and the protest against the glorification of crimes our civic duty and the defense of the symbol which the Youth Center represents. Since its founding this institution has been the place of critical discussion and thought for the youth and not a place of denial ... and promotion of criminals. (YIHR 2016c, 38)” (Fridman, 2022: 123-124)

The glorification of individuals who have been convicted of war crimes has significantly contributed to the continuous evolution and innovation of digital memory activism practices among the younger generation of activists (Fridman, 2022: 125). This is particularly evident in their increasingly dynamic and engaged online memory activism surrounding the complex issues of war crimes and former perpetrators with the strategic use of specific hashtags like #NisuNašiHeroji #NotOurHeroes.

In the following chapter, the focus will shift to civic initiatives in Turkey, with particular emphasis on the memory work of the Hrant Dink Foundation, to explore how their memory activism fosters the cultivation of epistemic virtues. As a cornerstone of memory activism in Turkey, the Hrant Dink Foundation operates within a deeply polarized and contested socio-political landscape, addressing the silenced histories of the Armenian Genocide and the broader marginalization of minorities. By

engaging in activities that challenge dominant narratives, promote inclusive dialogue and preserve marginalized histories, the foundation provides a compelling case for understanding how remembrance practices can cultivate epistemic virtues.

3.7 Does Memory Activism Contribute to Epistemic Justice?

Memory activism has become a remarkable practice in the pursuit of epistemic justice, particularly in societies grappling with histories of violence, repression, or systematic silencing. More than commemorative practice, memory activism constitutes a form of epistemic resistance: it challenges dominant narratives, amplifies silenced voices, and reconfigures the frameworks through which societies understand their past. In doing so, it cultivates essential epistemic virtues necessary for fostering inclusive and democratic knowledge cultures.

In the German context, Jenny Wüstenberg's work on civic memory initiatives underscores the critical role of grassroots movements in shaping the country's postwar memory landscape. While the state's institutional engagement with Holocaust remembrance is well documented, Wüstenberg highlights how local memory activists have been instrumental in generating 'critical memory.' These movements, including local memorial site initiatives and alternative history projects, bring attention to overlooked victims of Nazism and challenge predominant national narratives. Their work represents a direct intervention into epistemic injustice: by insisting on inclusive remembrance, they restore testimonial credibility to marginalized groups and press society to confront uncomfortable truths. In the process, these initiatives also encourage epistemic humility a willingness to recognize historical complicity and cultivate curiosity about hidden or forgotten pasts. This civic effort contributes not only to knowledge diversification but also to democratic reflexivity, where the public is urged to reassess inherited assumptions about identity, history, and responsibility.

Similarly, Zochrot in Israel embodies a radical form of memory activism aimed at breaking the national silence surrounding the Nakba. Zochrot organizes memory walks, publishes testimonies, and creates educational programs to make erased Palestinian narratives visible in Israeli society. In doing so, it performs epistemic resistance by contesting hegemonic historical accounts and restoring testimonial justice to Palestinians. The epistemic virtues cultivated through Zochrot's work include open-mindedness: participants are invited not only to listen but to re-evaluate their own positionality in relation to past and ongoing injustices. By challenging the

epistemic exclusion embedded in Israeli national identity, Zochrot's activism fosters the possibility of cohabiting memory spaces ones in which conflicting historical truths can coexist.

In Argentina, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo represent a powerful example of how long-term, public memory work can transform epistemic memoryscapes. In the face of state denial and fear following the military dictatorship, the Madres demanded truth about their disappeared children. Their persistent activism helped shift silence into public discourse, ultimately influencing transitional justice efforts and national reckoning. Their struggle epitomizes testimonial justice: they asserted their right to be heard as credible witnesses and created platforms for other survivors to speak. In doing so, they helped reconfigure public understanding of truth and justice.

Lastly, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) in Serbia demonstrates the role of younger generations in countering post-conflict historical revisionism. In a region still fractured by competing nationalist narratives, YIHR works to document war crimes, promote regional reconciliation, and educate youth on the need for historical accountability. By collaborating across ethnic and national lines, the initiative fosters epistemic virtues by mutual recognition and dialogical engagement. Their transnational approach challenges the insulation of national memory regimes and seeks to establish a shared epistemic space where different memories can be acknowledged rather than weaponized. In resisting epistemic oppression and promoting inclusive remembrance, YIHR contributes directly to the broader aim of epistemic justice in post-conflict societies.

Across these diverse cases, memory activism proves to be a crucial site for the development of epistemic justice. Whether confronting genocide, colonial dispossession, dictatorship, or civil war, memory activists challenge hegemonic narratives and create platforms for marginalized voices. Their work not only helps rectify testimonial injustice but also initiates the difficult work of cultivating epistemic virtues in public life. Through sustained civic participation, intergenerational dialogue, and emotional resilience, these movements model a different way of knowing—one that is slower, more inclusive, and oriented toward collective learning and transformation. As such, memory activism deserves greater recognition not only as a form of political resistance but also as a profound contributor to epistemic justice.

3.8 Conclusion

The discussion of this chapter has sought to illuminate how memory activism, understood as the civic mobilization of remembrance practices, contributes to the cultivation of epistemic virtues that are indispensable for resisting epistemic injustice. Drawing on Fricker's analysis of epistemic injustice, Medina's emphasis on epistemic virtues and resistance, Assmann's conceptualizations of cultural and dialogic memory, and Wüstenberg's account of civil society activism and slow memory, the argument advanced here is that memory activism is not simply symbolic or commemorative. It is an epistemic practice: one that generates friction, pluralizes narratives, and nurtures civic sensibilities that sustain democratic knowledge-making.

Fricker's distinction between testimonial and hermeneutical injustice provided the conceptual entry point. Testimonial injustice occurs when prejudice leads hearers to discredit the words of marginalized speakers, while hermeneutical injustice arises when collective interpretive resources are insufficient to render marginalized experiences intelligible (Fricker, 2007: 1–9). In societies marked by histories of violence, persecution, and silencing, both forms of injustice are acute. Survivors' voices are often dismissed, and communities lack the hermeneutical tools to interpret their suffering. Memory activism intervenes directly in this space. By amplifying silenced voices, activists counter testimonial injustice, as seen in Germany, where Roma, Sinti, disabled, and LGBTQ+ victims were integrated into public memory not by state decree but through persistent civic action (Wüstenberg, 2017: 91–95). At the same time, when activists create new categories, narratives, and commemorative practices to make sense of erased experiences such as the Madres de Plaza de Mayo's insistence on "the disappeared" as a collective category they remedy hermeneutical injustice by providing interpretive resources for the community as a whole.

This perspective demonstrates that epistemic injustice is not only an individual harm but a distortion of the entire epistemic environment. Fricker's framework points toward individual virtues such as testimonial justice, but as Medina argues, resistance to epistemic injustice must be collective and socially embedded (Medina, 2013: 30–35). His notions of epistemic friction and kaleidoscopic sensibility capture the dynamics of memory activism particularly well. Activist interventions produce epistemic friction by disrupting settled narratives, introducing uncomfortable truths, and forcing societies to engage with perspectives they would rather ignore (Medina, 2013: 46–52). The kaleidoscopic sensibility that emerges from such practices is the cultivated ability to see from multiple, shifting perspectives at once, an ability that is

indispensable for pluralistic societies (Medina, 2013: 305–310). Memory activism, by juxtaposing conflicting accounts and insisting on multiplicity, creates precisely these conditions.

The cultivation of epistemic virtues through memory activism can be traced across three interrelated dispositions. Epistemic humility is fostered whenever communities are compelled to acknowledge uncomfortable truths about their own pasts. The Active Museum's transformation of the Gestapo headquarters into the Topography of Terror forced Berliners to confront complicity in state terror, rather than displacing responsibility or indulging in narratives of victimhood (Wüstenberg, 2017: 105–126). Zochrot's insistence on naming and visiting the destroyed Palestinian villages brings similar humility into Israeli public discourse, requiring recognition of a silenced history that unsettles the dominant narrative (Assmann, 2011: 45–47). Humility in this sense is not self-abasement but a recognition of epistemic limitation, an openness to truths that are difficult to accept yet necessary for justice.

Alongside humility, memory activism cultivates intellectual curiosity and diligence. German local history workshops exemplified this virtue through their meticulous research into archives, the discovery of overlooked evidence, and the production of exhibitions that brought hidden histories to light (Wüstenberg, 2017: 130–170). Their motto of “dig where you stand” symbolized not only a research strategy but an ethical commitment to epistemic labor. The Madres de Plaza de Mayo's decades-long vigils likewise illustrate diligence. Week after week, they returned to the Plaza de Mayo, demanding recognition of the disappeared, refusing closure, and demonstrating that persistence itself is a form of epistemic engagement (Assmann, 2020: 380–383). These practices embody Medina's insistence that epistemic resistance requires effort, repetition, and a willingness to unmask ignorance and denial (Medina, 2013: 46–52). Finally, memory activism nurtures open-mindedness by creating spaces in which multiple and even conflicting narratives can coexist. In Germany, the pluralization of remembrance to include different victim groups forced society to acknowledge that the Nazi past cannot be reduced to a single narrative but must be seen as layered and multifaceted (Wüstenberg, 2017: 92). In the Balkans, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights fosters dialogue across divided communities, cultivating what Medina terms a kaleidoscopic sensibility: the capacity to recognize multiple perspectives simultaneously (Medina, 2013: 305–310). Open-mindedness in this sense is more than tolerance; it is the willingness to reconfigure one's own understanding in light of

others' experiences. Through pluralistic commemorations, mnemonic protests, and dialogic spaces, memory activism sustains open-mindedness as a civic virtue.

The theoretical contributions of memory studies deepen these insights. Assmann's distinction between monologic and dialogic memory clarifies what is at stake in memory activism. Monologic memory simplifies the past into heroic or nationalistic narratives, closing off plural voices. Dialogic memory, by contrast, sustains contradiction and complexity, allowing multiple perspectives to coexist (Assmann, 2011: 37–39). Civic initiatives invariably push memory toward dialogic forms, ensuring that remembrance remains contested rather than fixed. Zochrot's interventions, the Madres' commemorative gatherings, and YIHR's dialogues exemplify this dialogic mode, showing how civil society resists closure and insists on plurality.

Wüstenberg's research contributes further by foregrounding the activist turn in memory studies. By shifting focus from states and institutions to civil society, she highlights the centrality of grassroots agency in shaping memory culture (Wüstenberg, 2017: 6). Her case studies show that German memory politics, often cited as exemplary, were decisively transformed not by government policy but by civic persistence. Civil society actors were not marginal supplements but epistemic agents in their own right, uncovering silences and institutionalizing critical memory. This activist turn underscores that the pursuit of epistemic justice requires not only theoretical reflection but sustained civic labor.

In addition, Wüstenberg's later elaboration of the concept of slow memory highlights the temporal dimension of these practices (Wüstenberg & Sierp, 2020). Slow memory describes mnemonic practices that are incremental, enduring, and often unspectacular: annual vigils, local campaigns for memorials, community oral history projects. Their epistemic significance lies precisely in their slowness. Through repetition and persistence, slow memory cultivates virtues that cannot be produced in moments of rupture alone. The Madres' weekly gatherings epitomize this logic, showing how endurance and persistence reshape collective imaginaries over time. Medina's concept of echoability, the way acts of resistance reverberate across networks, finds resonance here (Medina, 2013: 249–252). Slow memory ensures that resistance is not forgotten but carried forward, creating chains of action that amplify epistemic transformation. When these perspectives are combined, a coherent picture emerges. Memory activism resists testimonial and hermeneutical injustices by amplifying marginalized voices and

generating new interpretive frameworks. It cultivates epistemic humility by requiring confrontation with painful truths, intellectual curiosity and diligence through persistent research and commemoration, and open-mindedness through pluralistic remembrance. It fosters dialogic memory, re-centers civic agency, and demonstrates the epistemic power of slow, cumulative practices. The empirical cases surveyed Germany, Israel, Argentina, Serbia illustrate these dynamics vividly, but they are not exceptions. Rather, they point to a general insight: memory activism functions as an epistemic practice wherever civic actors mobilize remembrance to democratize knowledge.

The implication is that justice in the realm of memory cannot be reduced to legal or institutional remedies. It must also include the cultivation of epistemic conditions in which plural voices are heard, silences are broken, and societies learn to reckon with complexity. Memory activism provides the civic infrastructure for this task. By embedding justice in practices of remembrance, it grounds epistemic virtues in everyday life and sustains them across generations. In doing so, it ensures that memory remains a site not of closure but of ongoing dialogue.

To return to the core argument: memory activism should be understood as a privileged site for cultivating epistemic virtues. It is in these civic practices that humility, curiosity, diligence, and open-mindedness are not only theorized but lived. They are enacted in vigils, protests, workshops, and commemorations; they are transmitted through archives, oral histories, and counter-monuments. These virtues make epistemic justice possible, and they are the indispensable contributions of memory activism to democratic life.

Having established the theoretical connections between memory activism and epistemic virtues, the analysis now turns to a specific context in which these dynamics can be observed in practice. The next chapter examines the case of Hrant Dink Foundation in Turkey, a civil society initiative that has become one of the most significant agents of memory activism in the region. The Foundation's projects demonstrate how epistemic virtues are cultivated through sustained mnemonic practices in a society marked by deep historical silences and entrenched denialism. By situating the Hrant Dink Foundation within the broader theoretical framework developed in this chapter, the discussion will show how memory activism in Turkey not only resists epistemic injustice but also contributes to the cultivation of epistemic virtues that are essential for democratic renewal.

CHAPTER 4: THE CASE OF HRANT DINK

FOUNDATION: EPISTEMIC VIRTUES AND MEMORY

ACTIVISM IN TURKEY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores Hrant Dink Foundation as a pivotal case for understanding the epistemic dimensions of memory activism in Turkey. To approach this case means more than narrating the activities of a single civil society organization. It entails situating the foundation within a contested landscape where questions of history, denial, and justice remain deeply entangled, and where collective memory serves as a crucial arena for shaping the conditions of public knowledge. In Turkey, deeply entrenched silences surrounding experiences of past trauma continue to operate as powerful, state-backed narratives and as culturally embedded forms of denial, rendering the epistemic stakes of memory work unusually high. Hrant Dink Foundation positions itself precisely at this juncture, engaging both with the legacy of Hrant Dink himself and with the structural obstacles to recognition and reconciliation that remain firmly in place. The foundation's mission, programs, and public presence illuminate how memory activism can be theorized not only as a moral or political intervention, but also as a sustained effort to transform epistemic conditions in society. Hrant Dink Foundation emerged in 2007 as a civic response to the shock of Hrant Dink's murder and as a continuation of his intellectual and moral legacy. From its inception, it explicitly committed itself to principles of equality, justice, and cultural diversity. Yet what sets the foundation apart from many other civic organizations in Turkey is its persistent effort to intervene in the realm of knowledge: how the past is narrated, whose voices are heard, which silences are broken, and what epistemic virtues are cultivated in the process. This orientation toward knowledge and its ethical dimensions makes the foundation an especially compelling case for thinking about the role of civil initiatives in combating epistemic injustice. Its activities, ranging from research and publications to cultural heritage projects, educational programs, and international awards, seek not only to commemorate experiences of historical injustice and trauma but also to reconfigure the epistemic environment in which these experiences are remembered, contested, or ignored. In doing so, the foundation illustrates how memory activism can foster dispositions such as humility before

inconvenient truths, curiosity toward marginalized perspectives, and openness to alternative historical narratives.

The chapter opens a conceptual discussion of epistemic injustice in Turkey, with particular emphasis on silencing as a form of misrecognition. The framework of epistemic injustice, as developed by Miranda Fricker (2007), proves especially fruitful for analyzing this context. Denial is not simply a matter of incorrect historical claims; it is a complex practice of exclusion and discrediting that produces testimonial injustice by systematically undermining the credibility of marginalized voices, and hermeneutical injustice by obstructing the conceptual resources needed to understand and articulate experiences of collective trauma. The persistence of such denial constitutes a paradigmatic example of epistemic injustice (Oranlı and Altanian, 2021): it damages not only those whose histories are silenced but also the broader society, which is deprived of the epistemic capacities required to confront its past honestly. Within this environment, memory activism can be understood as a practice of epistemic resistance, challenging entrenched silences and generating new interpretive resources that make alternative understandings possible.

The chapter then situates Hrant Dink Foundation within the broader landscape of memory activism in Turkey. Although the civic sphere has long been constrained by authoritarian practices, censorship, and nationalist pressures, memory activism has nevertheless taken diverse forms, ranging from local history initiatives to human rights organizations addressing political violence and repression. What distinguishes the foundation is the scope of its interventions and the clarity with which it addresses the epistemic dimension of memory. By organizing conferences, publishing reports, developing cultural heritage programs, and curating the 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory, the foundation creates spaces where dominant narratives can be questioned and silenced experiences can find articulation. These efforts are not isolated cultural gestures but are embedded in a broader project of democratic deepening, in which acknowledging past wrongs becomes inseparable from cultivating the epistemic dispositions necessary for a more just political future. To situate the foundation in this landscape is to recognize it as part of a transnational wave of memory activism while also appreciating its distinctive response to persistent practices of denial in Turkey.

Building on this contextual and conceptual foundation, the chapter devotes substantial attention to analyzing how the foundation's work fosters epistemic virtues. Here the theoretical framework of José Medina (2013) is especially illuminating. Medina

identifies epistemic humility, intellectual curiosity or diligence, and open-mindedness as virtues necessary for resisting epistemic injustice and building more inclusive epistemic communities. Each of these virtues can be traced in the foundation's initiatives. Epistemic humility emerges in the recognition that dominant narratives are partial and that confronting the past requires listening to marginalized voices and acknowledging uncomfortable truths. Intellectual curiosity is fostered through programs that invite engagement with neglected histories, minority cultures, and silenced archives. Open-mindedness is cultivated through dialogical initiatives, such as the Asulis Discourse, Dialogue, Democracy Laboratory, which bring together actors from different backgrounds to engage with contentious historical and political questions. By linking these practices to epistemic virtues, the chapter highlights the epistemic significance of memory activism as a form of civic engagement that contributes not only to political change but also to the cultivation of ethical modes of knowing.

In its final part, the chapter offers a new classification of the foundation's epistemic interventions into direct and indirect pathways. Direct interventions include explicit engagements with denial, hate speech, or nationalist distortions—initiatives that clearly name and resist epistemic injustice. Indirect interventions, by contrast, may appear less confrontational but are no less significant: projects that preserve cultural heritage, support minority rights, or foster intercultural dialogue. These indirect strategies expand the epistemic environment gradually, creating conditions in which alternative knowledge can take root and endure. The argument advanced here is that while direct interventions are indispensable for challenging denial in explicit terms, indirect interventions may be more sustainable in cultivating epistemic virtues over time, as they reshape habits of thought, modes of recognition, and everyday epistemic practices. This classification captures the dual strategy through which the foundation operates, balancing immediate epistemic challenges with long-term investments in epistemic transformation.

Taken together, the sections of this chapter demonstrate how the Hrant Dink Foundation contributes to cultivating an ethical and pluralistic engagement with the past in a context marked by entrenched denial and historical amnesia. The foundation's work is not reducible to commemoration or advocacy; it is best understood as an epistemic project aimed at reshaping how history is known, narrated, and valued. By situating the foundation within the conceptual framework of epistemic injustice

(Fricker, 2007) and analyzing its practices through the lens of epistemic virtues (Medina, 2013), the chapter shows how memory activism in Turkey can be theorized as a form of epistemic resistance. In a society where denial has long functioned as an epistemic closure, Hrant Dink Foundation exemplifies how civil society can open new pathways of knowing, remembering, and living together.

4.2 Epistemic Conditions of Silencing and Ignorance in Turkey

To study memory activism in Turkey is to inevitably confront the epistemic conditions in which such activism unfolds. The context is marked by a long and layered history of epistemic oppression, stretching from the Ottoman Empire through the early Republican era and continuing with various forms of state violence—from the suppression of student movements to the post-1980 military regime. By examining how the silencing of marginalized memories as epistemic harms, this analysis aims to reveal how the Foundation's efforts contribute not only to remembrance, but also to the broader recovery of Anatolia's multicultural heritage. Through this lens, Hrant Dink Foundation's initiatives emerge as a form of epistemic resistance that challenges dominant narratives and creates space for marginalized histories to be acknowledged and re-integrated into public memory.

To begin with, it is essential to examine the structural and historical conditions that have fostered epistemic vices and sustained forms of epistemic injustice in Turkey. Nationalist ideologies have played a significant role in shaping unequal epistemic relations, producing forms of epistemic oppression that continue to limit possibilities of coming to terms with difficult pasts (Oranlı, 2021). Since the late nineteenth century, dominant narratives of nationhood have tended to construct political community through hierarchical and exclusionary imaginaries that place certain identities in a privileged epistemic position vis-à-vis others (Toprak, 2020). These narratives resonate with what Anderson (1991) famously described as the nation as an “imagined community,” imagined as both “limited” and “sovereign.” Such imaginaries have contributed to durable inequalities between those who benefit from privileged forms of belonging and those who remain epistemically marginalized (Ünlü, 2018).

The violent and disruptive founding moments of the Republic constitute another crucial backdrop. These moments have posed long-term obstacles to the formation of a pluralistic political and epistemic vision, not only because multiple communities were subjected to displacement and violence, but also because the fractures and

injuries produced by these events were never fully acknowledged or publicly processed (Levene, 1998; Kolluoğlu, 2005; Kechriotis, 2012; Gönlügür and Sezer, 2021). As a result, selective forgetting became embedded within nation-building narratives, aligning with Renan's (2018) observation that forgetting can function as a constitutive element of national unity.

The effects of these processes have unfolded across political, cultural, and social domains. As Oranlı (2021) shows, official institutions have played a central role in sustaining these dynamics, not necessarily through explicit repression alone but through practices of standardization, homogenization, and epistemic closure. Although citizenship was formally defined in inclusive terms, dominant interpretations of belonging often demanded cultural and linguistic uniformity, limiting the recognition of plural identities and experiences. Restrictions on cultural expression, publishing, and education in minority languages further constrained epistemic agency and curtailed the circulation of alternative historical narratives (Ekmekçioğlu, 2021; Aktar, 2021). Suciyan's (2016) work documents how such restrictions operated through censorship, closures, and selective exclusion of pre-republican cultural materials, reinforcing long-term epistemic silencing.

These practices were reinforced by broader nation-building projects aimed at producing a coherent and uncontested historical narrative. Institutions devoted to history-writing played a pivotal role in establishing what Çınar (2015) terms an "organicist historical narrative," one that rendered troubling aspects of the past unintelligible or irrelevant (Chorbajian, 2016; Turan and Öztan, 2018). This process did not simply erase alternative memories but relegated them to epistemic inferiority. Even where marginalized groups adopted dominant markers of belonging, they were often denied full epistemic recognition, remaining situated in an ambiguous position of conditional inclusion (Ünlü, 2018). Such hierarchies of recognition have been subject to sustained scholarly critique (Theriault, 2009; Erbal and Suciyan, 2011).

Over time, these founding narratives and institutional practices have cultivated epistemic vices—such as closed-mindedness, epistemic laziness, and active ignorance—that shape collective sensibilities to the present day. As several studies have shown, those who experienced historical violence and displacement were often keenly aware that there were limited spaces willing to receive or acknowledge their testimonies. Cultural expressions, including poetry and oral traditions, frequently voiced this sense of unheard suffering and epistemic abandonment (Nichanian, 2009;

Aktar, 2020). The recurring question of to whom such experiences could be addressed reveals an enduring condition of testimonial exclusion.

At the level of public discourse, scholars have identified important shifts over time. Elmas (2016) notes a transformation from near-total silence to patterns of irritation, dismissal, and strategic ignorance in media representations of contested histories. Rather than opening spaces for critical engagement, these shifts often reconfigured denial and deflection in more adaptive forms, enabling dominant narratives to maintain legitimacy while marginalizing dissenting voices.

From the 1990s onward, however, critical interventions by intellectuals, artists, and civil society actors began to challenge epistemic closure. Göçek (2003) describes the emergence of post-nationalist narratives that questioned homogeneous conceptions of identity and emphasized the plurality of social experience. These interventions did not simply contest historical claims but sought to reframe epistemic responsibility by encouraging reflexivity, critical self-examination, and openness to silenced perspectives.

The epistemic injustice literature provides a powerful analytical framework for understanding these dynamics. Drawing on Fricker's (2007) account of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, as well as Medina's (2013) analysis of epistemic vices and privileges, scholars have increasingly examined how dominant memory regimes generate systematic epistemic harms (Altanian, 2021; Altanian and El Kassar, 2021; Oranlı, 2021). Within this framework, denial and silencing are understood not merely as failures of recognition but as structured practices that distort who can be heard, what can be said, and which interpretive resources are socially available.

Oranlı (2021) characterizes these dynamics as a regime of epistemic injustice, emphasizing how epistemic privilege shapes perception, credibility attribution, and interpretive horizons. Drawing on Ünlü's analysis of privilege, she shows how dominant forms of belonging limit social vision in epistemically significant ways, fostering forms of active ignorance sustained by both internal dispositions and external constraints such as censorship and restricted imagination. These conditions slow processes of reckoning with the past and reinforce entrenched epistemic hierarchies. Similarly, Altanian (2021) analyzes testimonial injustice and testimonial smothering to show how marginalized groups are prevented from contributing knowledge under conditions where speech is dismissed, misunderstood, or punished (Dotson, 2011).

Such systematic deprivation of epistemic recognition undermines trust relations essential for testimony and impairs capacities for self-understanding and resistance.

Altanian's more recent work further systematizes these insights by showing how denial and silencing penetrate the epistemic fabric of social life, extending beyond legal or political disputes to shape collective understanding itself (Altanian, 2024). Denial, in this account, is not merely disagreement over facts but an active practice of ignorance production that consolidates domination. It deprives societies of interpretive resources necessary to make sense of historical injustice and inhibits the development of epistemic virtues such as humility and openness.

Complementary analyses in memory studies reinforce this perspective. Gönlügür and Sezer (2020) demonstrate how urban heritage projects enact forms of selective amnesia that align with dominant narratives of progress while erasing traces of displaced communities. Orhon's (2021) study of memory sites highlights how intersubjective and dialogical memory practices can reopen epistemic space by restoring testimonial credibility and hermeneutical intelligibility. Merzifonluoğlu and Hamarat (2022) extend the analysis to education, showing how curricula may reproduce epistemic injustice by privileging dominant perspectives and excluding alternative historical understandings.

Taken together, these studies reveal that epistemic injustice in Turkey is sustained through long-term, institutionalized, and culturally embedded processes. Denial and silencing function as epistemic strategies that normalize ignorance, marginalize dissent, and shape the sensibilities of successive generations. From this perspective, addressing difficult pasts requires more than formal recognition or policy change; it calls for epistemic reparation through the expansion of interpretive resources, the cultivation of epistemic virtues, and the creation of spaces where marginalized knowers can be heard.

It is in this context that the epistemic resistance of memory activism becomes analytically salient. Memory activism in Turkey responds to deeply institutionalized epistemic oppression and widely shared epistemic injustices by challenging dominant narratives and disrupting habits of active ignorance. This resistance is particularly significant because memory activists often confront their own implication within these structures and seek to relinquish the epistemic benefits associated with privilege (Rothberg, 2019). How such actors cultivate epistemic virtues, develop counter-memories, and design commemorative practices capable of fostering epistemic

transformation constitutes the focus of the following section, which turns to memory activism as a site of sustained epistemic intervention.

4.3 Memory Activism in Turkey

Contemporary memory activism in Turkey is best understood as a structured field of contestation in which official historiography, media institutions, legal norms, and civic actors struggle over the legitimacy of narrating past violence, naming harms, and assigning responsibility. In this field, remembrance is never only about what happened; it is equally about what can be publicly said, what can be institutionally sustained, and which pasts may become actionable in the present. The political stakes of memory are therefore epistemic as much as moral or symbolic: memory practices shape who is recognized as a credible knower, which vocabularies of harm are permitted, which archives remain accessible, and what interpretive frames can circulate without sanction.

The background conditions of this memory-scape are layered. Across different trajectories, the dominant institutional pattern has not been a stable forgetting but a managed form of public memory: some pasts are elevated as foundational myths, others are relegated to private grief, and still others are treated as securitized topics whose discussion becomes socially stigmatized or legally risky. The result is a public sphere in which memory can be simultaneously ubiquitous and constrained, intensively present as a political instrument yet limited as a democratic resource. This combination produces a distinctive epistemic environment: knowledge about difficult pasts is not simply absent but unevenly distributed, differentially credible, and often filtered through interpretive schemes that pre-empt accountability.

Within such an environment, memory activism cannot be approached as an optional cultural add-on to politics. It constitutes a civic intervention into the epistemic infrastructure of society. It contests dominant narratives, builds counter-archives, translates marginalized experiences into public intelligibility, and creates spaces where difficult knowledge can be encountered without immediate foreclosure. Yet the very need for these interventions also indicates the fragility of the conditions that allow them. Over the last decade in particular, the contraction of civic space, the securitization of dissent, and the penalization of speech framed as denigration or insult have altered what becomes institutionally feasible. Memory work in Turkey therefore often carries juridical and existential dimensions, not only interpretive ones, because

the act of naming historical violence can become entangled with surveillance, coercion, or public hostility.

Constraints do not eliminate memory activism; they shape its tactics, temporalities, and forms. Many initiatives have increasingly turned toward indirect, long-term, and culturally mediated memory practices, forms that create epistemic openings without always relying on confrontational politics. This shift is visible in the rise of professionalized documentation projects, digital archives, exhibitionary politics, and slow journalistic work, as well as in the cultural ecosystem. At the same time, the persistence of long-running civic performances of remembrance, such as vigils for enforced disappearances, shows that direct forms of memory activism continue to exist and to accumulate symbolic and epistemic force through repetition, presence, and moral insistence.

Memory activism in Turkey can be traced to the 1990s, when a proliferation of civic initiatives, associations, and cultural actors began to revisit episodes of political repression, mass violence, and social exclusion that had long been omitted from official history. These initiatives have addressed enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings during the 1980s and 1990s, political persecution in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup, and other marginalized or silenced histories. Their interventions demonstrate that memory activism operates at the intersection of social movements, human rights struggles, and the politics of knowledge, often mobilizing counter-archives, public commemorations, and artistic practices to produce new narratives of the past.

One of the most significant strands of memory activism has been carried by human rights organizations that document enforced disappearances, impunity, and patterns of state violence. The Human Rights Association (İHD) has been working systematically to collect testimonies, map cases, and build archives that transform dispersed and often discredited experiences into collectively intelligible knowledge claims. Projects such as (Truth Justice Memory's project) Unspoken Truths (Göral et al., 2013) exemplify how digital platforms can function as epistemic resources: they stabilize testimony, provide material traces, and contest the erasure or marginalization of violence within dominant accounts. These efforts illustrate a form of memory activism that resembles transitional justice infrastructures even in the absence of a formal transition, prefiguring truth-seeking and accountability through documentation, oral history, and litigation. Their epistemic significance lies not only in preserving information but in

reshaping credibility economies by insisting that victims' families and marginalized communities are reliable knowers of what they have experienced.

Parallel to documentation-centered practices, memory activism in Turkey has also taken performative and embodied forms. Saturday Mothers, gathering weekly since 1995 in Istanbul's Galatasaray Square, exemplify a practice that is simultaneously protest and mourning. Drawing inspiration from Madres de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, they have insisted on visibility for the disappeared by holding photographs of missing relatives and demanding truth and accountability. The long-term persistence of this civic performance, despite repression and periodic criminalization, demonstrates how memory can operate as a form of civic resistance that refuses to be silenced. From an epistemic perspective, such gatherings contest credibility deficits imposed on victims of political violence while also revealing the limits of what kinds of public knowledge are institutionally tolerated. They show how remembrance is sometimes permitted as mourning but resisted as accountability, thereby clarifying the boundary between acceptable grief and unacceptable knowing.

Another dimension of memory activism emerges in struggles over urban space, heritage, and the material landscapes through which histories become visible or invisible. Scholars have emphasized how nation-building and modernization projects often suppressed or erased traces of minority communities and alternative pasts from public spaces (Göçek, 2015, pp. 11–14). This erasure has generated new forms of civic activism around urban memory. Gönlügür and Sezer's study of İzmir's Kültürpark demonstrates how narratives of national progress can be built upon spatial transformations that occlude the displacement and erasure of prior communities (Gönlügür and Sezer, 2020, p. 396; pp. 400–403). Contemporary civic groups and artists have intervened to expose these absences through exhibitions, public art, and memory walks, reframing urban space as a repository of contested histories and as a site of epistemic struggle. Such interventions highlight that the politics of heritage is also a politics of epistemic justice, because it determines which histories are rendered legible and which remain unintelligible or unmentionable in everyday life.

Cultural production has been particularly prominent in Turkey's memory activism precisely because aesthetic and curatorial forms can sometimes bypass immediate political closure by opening indirect routes to difficult knowledge. Exhibitions, theatre, documentary practices, and literature have provided spaces to explore contested pasts, often by shifting the mode of address from accusatory claim-making to reflective

encounter. Özyürek's edited volume *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey* documents how artists and intellectuals have used cultural production to challenge dominant narratives and broaden critical awareness (Özyürek, 2007). From the standpoint of epistemic injustice, these cultural practices can be read as attempts to repair hermeneutical deficits by expanding interpretive resources and by enabling new vocabularies through which harm can be named, recognized, and discussed. They can also create what Medina calls epistemic friction, productive conflicts that disrupt settled narratives and cultivate epistemic virtues such as humility and open-mindedness (Medina, 2013, pp. 8–12).

In this wider cultural ecosystem, Anadolu Kültür represents an especially influential infrastructure for indirect memory activism. Founded in 2002, its mission has emphasized arts and culture as vehicles for dialogue across geographic and identity divides, including work with disadvantaged communities and those affected by conflict. Its significance for the memory-scape lies in its capacity to create spaces of encounter where difficult histories can be approached through cultural production. This approach matters because cultural initiatives can host themes that might trigger immediate repression if articulated as direct political claims. Art exhibitions, documentary projects, film screenings, and workshops enable sideways engagement with memory, approaches less easily dismissed as partisan provocation, yet capable of generating public reflection. Anadolu Kültür has also helped normalize the idea that memory work can be institutionally hosted: that dealing with difficult pasts and human rights themes can be curated, exhibited, discussed, and archived within legitimate cultural programming. The institutional model is long-term, professional, and networked, offering precedent and inspiration for other initiatives. At the same time, the highly visible legal persecution surrounding its founder, Osman Kavala, illustrates how cultural institutions themselves can become vulnerable when they are perceived as enabling pluralism, dissent, or transnational connections. This vulnerability is not external to the memory-scape but constitutive of what cannot happen now, because it produces chilling effects and undermines the durability of civic infrastructures for open debate.

Depo İstanbul further exemplifies how exhibitionary politics can serve as an indirect epistemic intervention. Operating as an exhibition and project space in a former warehouse in Tophane, Istanbul, Depo has curated exhibitions engaging themes of dealing with the past, politics of memory, human rights, and minority rights. In this

sense, it functions as a public pedagogy of memory. Research-based documentary projects and exhibitions can render histories intelligible in ways that neither legal archives nor academic texts can accomplish for wider publics, translating documents and testimonies into sensory encounter and narrative comprehension. Exhibitions also convene publics that might otherwise remain separated, forming temporary communities of interpretation among activists, artists, academics, students, and local residents. By treating the politics of memory as a legitimate curatorial theme, Depo contributes to normalizing difficult topics as public concerns rather than taboos. Certain exhibitions have explicitly linked exhibition-making to archiving and human rights documentation, thereby extending the epistemic reach of cultural institutions into the construction of durable memory infrastructures. In a constrained memory-scape, the exhibition form becomes strategic: it confronts audiences with evidence and interpretive frames that expand what can be thought and said, without always relying on direct political confrontation.

Beyond prominent institutions and nationally visible actors, the memory-scape is sustained by a wide range of smaller, localized initiatives that operate as civic micro-infrastructures of remembrance. These actors rarely aspire to large-scale visibility or institutional permanence. Their significance lies in the epistemic work they perform: sustaining testimonial practices, expanding interpretive resources, and preserving the social conditions under which marginalized histories can continue to circulate. In contexts of constraint, modest scale can become a condition of resilience.

Hafiza Merkezi exemplifies this micro-infrastructural mode. Through documentation, reporting, and legal advocacy, it transforms dispersed testimonies into collectively intelligible knowledge claims and stabilizes epistemic authority for those whose experiences have been dismissed as unreliable or dangerous to articulate. Saturday Mothers likewise illustrate how repetition and presence can resist epistemic erasure, refusing closure in the absence of truth and accountability and revealing the limits of tolerated public knowledge. Youth-based initiatives that connect memory to contemporary civic responsibility illustrate how intergenerational transmission can resist the compartmentalization of difficult pasts as merely communal or backward-looking, cultivating curiosity and open-mindedness among participants who encounter the past as an unresolved ethical and political problem. Local urban and heritage-oriented projects, including oral history collectives and independent publishing efforts, challenge homogenized spatial narratives by recovering erased histories embedded in

the urban fabric, reshaping what counts as legitimate historical knowledge of place. Feminist memory initiatives foreground women's testimonies of political violence, imprisonment, exile, and everyday repression, centering forms of knowledge often devalued within both official archives and oppositional politics and thereby challenging masculinized norms of historical authority. Digital platforms and small-scale online archives add another layer by preserving fragile knowledge under conditions where physical spaces can be monitored or closed, performing anticipatory epistemic work oriented toward future publics and future moments of political openness.

These practices illuminate how memory activism in Turkey operates across a spectrum of direct and indirect strategies. Direct forms include public vigils, commemorative gatherings, and explicit demands for accountability; indirect forms include cultural mediation, archival construction, journalistic translation, and institutional embedding. This strategic pluralism is not merely tactical; it reflects the shifting horizon of possibility produced by constraints on public speech, commemoration, and civic organization. Many initiatives aim to generate epistemic openings without immediately triggering closure, cultivating slow transformations in interpretive resources, credibility relations, and public sensibilities.

A range of civic initiatives has shaped Turkey's contemporary memory activism by intervening in difficult pasts through both direct and indirect epistemic strategies. These initiatives differ in visibility, tone, and medium, yet they share a common orientation toward expanding what can be known, said, and publicly processed about histories of violence, exclusion, and dispossession. Read through the analytical distinction between direct and indirect epistemic interventions, they can be understood as efforts that either confront dominant narratives and credibility hierarchies openly and immediately, or cultivate slower transformations in interpretive resources, public sensibilities, and infrastructures of knowledge.

The founding of the newspaper *Agos* in 1996 constitutes a key institutional intervention in this landscape. Established by Hrant Dink and his associates, *Agos* created a new communicative channel through which minority experiences, rights claims, and difficult histories could enter a wider public sphere. Its bilingual publishing model functioned as an indirect epistemic intervention by enabling civic translation across linguistic and communal boundaries and by widening the audience capable of encountering these issues as part of a shared political world. In this sense, the

community was “reaching out to others” (Cheterian, 2015: 15), not merely as a matter of representation but as an epistemic practice that contests the segregation of knowledge into private communal memory and public national discourse. Agos and Dink thereby contributed to what Elmas (2016: 190) describes as a process of “critical self-reflection” within intellectual circles, loosening epistemic pressures that had inhibited open discussion of contested histories and their contemporary implications. A different kind of epistemic intervention emerged through highly visible public-facing scholarly and civic events. The 2005 Istanbul conference organized at Bilgi University, for instance, functioned as a direct epistemic intervention insofar as it deliberately staged public and academic debate on a politically sensitive historical terrain and thereby challenged entrenched habits of denial and taboo. The controversy surrounding the conference and the intensity of public reaction underscored that epistemic disputes over the past are also struggles over legitimacy and collective identity. Precisely by producing public contestation, the event widened the space of speakability and helped normalize critical inquiry into difficult pasts within both progressive and conservative circles (Deringil, 2011; Bayraktar, 2016). The epistemic stakes of such initiatives lie not only in the content debated but in their capacity to reorganize credibility relations and to legitimate inquiry itself as a civic practice.

Educational and dialogical projects illustrate a more indirect but no less significant modality of intervention. The project *Acting Together*, carried out by DVV International with partner organizations and using adult education methods, sought to build bridges across communities by mobilizing journalism, eyewitness stories, and art as pedagogical resources (DVV, 2015). Even when articulated in the vocabulary of reconciliation, such projects operate epistemically by expanding interpretive resources and creating structured contexts in which difficult knowledge can be encountered without immediate polarization. A related initiative, *Speaking to One Another* (2009–2013), carried out with Anadolu Kültür and focusing on oral history, exemplifies how indirect epistemic interventions work through narrative form and interpersonal encounter. The publication of a book assembling personal memories from diverse backgrounds (Neyzi and Kharatyan-Araquelyan, 2010) illustrates the epistemic function of oral history as a method of making marginalized experiences publicly intelligible and of complicating homogenizing narratives through plural testimony.

Certain moments in Turkey’s evolving memory culture have combined direct confrontation with wide-scale civic mobilization. The assassination of Hrant Dink in

2007 triggered mass protests across multiple cities and became a major public rupture that reconfigured the landscape of memory activism (Gönlügür and Sezer, 2021; Akçam, 2021: 152–155). The protests operated as a direct epistemic intervention by making visible both the vulnerability of dissenting speech and the collective demand for accountability, while also generating a broader public confrontation with the conditions that render certain voices precarious. In the aftermath, digital interventions such as the 2008 “I Apologize” campaign illustrate how public figures sought to create moral and epistemic openings around a catastrophic episode of early twentieth-century mass violence and its long afterlives. Although the original text of the campaign was formulated in explicitly communal terms (İnsel, 2009), its broader epistemic significance can be understood as an attempt to challenge insensitivity, denial, and inherited indifference by publicly naming injustice and cultivating empathy as a condition of knowing otherwise. Such interventions matter because they reconfigure the affective and interpretive background against which knowledge claims about difficult pasts are received.

Taken together, these public interventions contributed to the cultivation of epistemic virtues by generating epistemic friction, unsettling settled narratives, and encouraging dispositions such as intellectual curiosity/diligence, open-mindedness, and humility (Medina, 2013). They also prepared fertile ground for associational and grassroots activism that expanded in subsequent years. Research on commemorative activism has highlighted how civic actors have adopted multiple framings when addressing difficult pasts, including gradual dissemination of knowledge, modes of witnessing that connect past violence to present responsibilities, and reconciliatory rhetorics oriented toward shared suffering (Özbek, 2021). Yet such analyses often do not foreground epistemic injustice or epistemic virtues as interpretive lenses, nor do they systematically differentiate between direct and indirect modes of epistemic intervention. The distinction developed in this thesis provides precisely this additional layer of conceptual clarity by allowing civic practices to be analyzed in terms of their epistemic mechanisms, temporalities, and risks.

More recent grassroots organizations further illustrate how memory activism is sustained through a dispersed ecology of indirect interventions that build infrastructures of remembrance, education, and dialogue. Beraberce, founded in 2017, reflects this orientation through projects that combine civic education with archiving and youth engagement, including a digital “Archive of Sites of Consciousness and of

Hope,” exchange programs that place young people in sites of memory, and the Beraberce Academy as a space for sustained discussion and learning (Beraberce, 2022). SEHAK, founded in 2015, similarly situates its work within a civic commitment to multicultural coexistence and focuses on countering hate, racism, and selective memory narratives through memory walks, exhibitions, conferences, and training initiatives designed to shift public awareness and expand interpretive resources (SEHAK, n.d.). Karakutu, founded in 2014, pursues a comparable horizon through programs oriented toward public memory, coming to terms with the past, and transcultural dialogue, including seminars, panels, cultural events, and memory practices that cultivate long-term epistemic engagement (Karakutu, 2019). These initiatives do not typically produce immediate political consequences; rather, they aim to secure durable epistemic effects by widening what can be known, shared, and interpreted in public culture.

This landscape of civic initiatives clarifies why the distinction between direct and indirect epistemic interventions is analytically useful for understanding memory activism in Turkey. Direct interventions such as public mobilizations, high-profile conferences, and explicit commemorative claims can create moments of visibility and confrontation, but they also face heightened risks of backlash and closure. Indirect interventions such as bilingual journalism, oral history projects, cultural programming, educational initiatives, and archival work cultivate slower transformations in epistemic conditions by expanding interpretive resources and enabling sustained encounter with difficult knowledge.

At the theoretical level, these dynamics can be read through the lens of epistemic injustice. Denial, selective amnesia, and distorted historiography generate hermeneutical deficits that prevent certain experiences from being publicly intelligible. The refusal to acknowledge difficult pasts and marginalized suffering produces testimonial injustice by discrediting speakers and by treating their accounts as politically suspect, emotionally excessive, or epistemically unreliable. In this setting, memory activism functions as a struggle for epistemic justice: it seeks to expand collective interpretive resources, redistribute credibility, and reshape the epistemic norms through which knowledge about the past is validated. The production of counter-archives, the staging of commemorations, the reclamation of urban spaces, and the use of cultural forms can therefore be understood not only as symbolic politics but also as interventions into the epistemic conditions of democratic life.

Yet memory activism in Turkey remains precarious. Legal repression, political hostility, and societal indifference can limit the reach of civic initiatives and constrain their institutional durability. In semi-authoritarian settings, struggles over history often become struggles over legitimacy, and memory work can be framed as destabilizing or divisive. Nevertheless, the persistence of activists, artists, and NGOs shows that memory cannot be entirely managed. Even under conditions of denial and repression, counter-memories circulate and accumulate, creating resources for future transformation.

Within this broader ecology, Hrant Dink stands as a particularly consequential figure for understanding both the risks and possibilities of memory activism in Turkey. His significance cannot be reduced to his assassination or to the symbolic place he occupies in public mourning. It lies, more fundamentally, in the civic practice he modeled: an ethics of address that combined moral clarity with a dialogical orientation. Dink persistently argued that democratization, minority rights, and confronting historical violence were mutually entangled, and he articulated these claims in a way that sought to disarm defensive reflexes while maintaining the epistemic demand for truth and accountability. His public writings and speeches repeatedly treated denial not merely as a factual disagreement but as a relational and affective posture bound up with identity, security, and moral self-understanding. His interventions operated at precisely this level, addressing not only institutions but also the sensibilities and interpretive habits of the public.

The assassination of Hrant Dink in January 2007 became a defining rupture in Turkey's public memory. It crystallized the risks attached to dissenting speech, exposed the fragility of protection for vulnerable voices, and generated mass mourning and mobilization across multiple cities (Gönlügür and Sezer, 2021; Akçam, 2021, pp. 152–155). At the same time, it reorganized a civic field around his absence, making memory itself into a political object and catalyzing new forms of institutional memory activism. In the years that followed, a series of public interventions by journalists, scholars, and civic actors contributed to widening the space for critical self-reflection and for public discussion of difficult pasts (Elmas, 2016). Certain moments, including high-profile academic gatherings and civic education projects, indicated how knowledge production and public dialogue could function as memory practices, generating epistemic friction and cultivating virtues such as curiosity, open-mindedness, and humility (Medina, 2013). Some campaigns took explicitly moral

forms, including public-facing statements of empathy and apology oriented toward a catastrophic episode of mass violence in the early twentieth century, signaling attempts to reconfigure public sensibilities even when legal or institutional recognition remained elusive.

This is also where the distinctive institutional role of *Agos* becomes visible. As a bilingual weekly newspaper founded in the mid-1990s by Hrant Dink and his associates, *Agos* opened a communicative channel that placed minority concerns, questions of rights, and difficult histories into a wider Turkish-language public sphere. Its bilingualism functioned as civic translation: it did not merely transmit information but rendered memory publicly intelligible across linguistic and communal boundaries. This translation has epistemic consequences because it challenges the division between internal minority memory and national public discourse, insisting that marginalized histories are constitutive of the polity rather than private matters. *Agos* also broadened the agenda beyond communal boundaries by linking memory to democratization, human rights, cultural heritage, and discriminatory discourse. In this sense, it has functioned as a civic memory institution that performs the slow work of keeping uncomfortable histories in circulation through daily editorial labor rather than through episodic commemorations.

Seen in this light, Hrant Dink's legacy forms a bridge between dispersed micro-infrastructures of memory and more durable institutional projects. His civic practice condensed many of the strategic features that characterize memory activism under constraint: dialogue instead of denunciation, ethical insistence without dehumanization, and a commitment to building long-term spaces where difficult knowledge can be encountered and debated. The institutional initiatives that emerged after his death, including the establishment of Hrant Dink Foundation, are inseparable from this transformation of personal voice into civic infrastructure.

4.4 Tracing the Beginnings of Hrant Dink Foundation

Hrant Dink Foundation (HDF) was established in 2007 in Istanbul (Karaköse, 2018), shortly after the assassination of the Armenian-Turkish journalist, editor, and human rights defender Hrant Dink. Dink had long been a prominent and courageous advocate for Armenian-Turkish reconciliation, minority rights, and freedom of expression in Turkey. As the founding editor-in-chief of the bilingual newspaper *Agos*, he sought to foster dialogue between communities divided by history, nationalism, and trauma,

especially concerning the long-denied Armenian Genocide. His public calls for mutual understanding and historical reckoning made him a target of nationalist hostility, culminating in his murder outside the offices of *Agos* on January 19, 2007. This assassination is broadly regarded as a political one and a result of state-supported nationalist discourse. The outpouring of shock and sorrow after his death sparked widespread protests, with thousands chanting, “We are all Hrant, we are all Armenians,” marking an extraordinary moment of unity that motivated Dink’s family, friends, and colleagues to create a foundation in his honor.

The history of the Hrant Dink Foundation (HDF) is inseparable from the story of Sebat Apartmanı in Istanbul’s Osmanbey district, a building that gradually became a landmark of conscience, memory, and civic struggle. Designed in the mid-1920s by Rafael Alguadiş, one of Turkey’s first reinforced-concrete engineers and a Jewish architect who himself suffered under the Wealth Tax (*Varlık Vergisi*) of 1942, the building carried in its very name the notion of persistence and perseverance. “Sebat” means not to abandon a promise or decision, to endure in the face of adversity, and this symbolic resonance proved prophetic (HDF, n.d.1). Alguadiş’s life marked by architectural achievements but also by displacement, forced sales of property, and the resilience of survival—foreshadowed how Sebat Apartmanı would later embody the struggles of minorities in Turkey, becoming both a literal and metaphorical site of endurance against injustice and silencing (Valansi, 2013).

The building became central to contemporary memory activism when *Agos* newspaper moved its offices there in 1999. *Agos*, founded in 1996 by Hrant Dink and his colleagues, was the first Turkish-Armenian bilingual newspaper to appear in the Republic era. From its inception, *Agos* was committed to democratization, minority rights, and a reckoning with history. It sought to make Armenian and other minority cultures visible, to highlight the injustices they faced, and to bring these issues into public debate in Turkey. By providing such a platform, it helped transform Armenians from passive citizens into active participants in public life, offering them a voice long absent from the public sphere. It also became a point of consultation and information, attracting researchers, students, journalists, and members of minority communities both from within Turkey and from the diaspora (Agos, n.d.1).

Agos played a catalytic role in expanding public consciousness about neglected and repressed topics. It insisted on talking about the Armenian Genocide, about the enduring trauma and dispossession that shaped generations, and about the experiences

of minorities more broadly. By surfacing these silenced issues, *Agos* performed epistemic resistance: it made visible what was hidden and contested hegemonic narratives. In doing so, it became a place where epistemic virtues were not merely abstract ideals but daily practices. Yet this role also made Hrant Dink a target. From 2004 onward, a series of court cases, defamation campaigns, and hostile media attacks brought him into the national spotlight. The controversy around the Sabiha Gökçen story, the eight-part series on Armenian identity, and his public statements on genocide all became the basis for legal persecution under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code (Çandar, 2017). Dink was convicted and harassed, vilified in radical nationalist press, and threatened by groups that gathered outside courtrooms and in front of the *Agos* offices. The campaign of hate culminated on 19 January 2007, when Hrant Dink was assassinated in front of Sebat Apartmanı. His murder shocked Turkey and the world, sparking protests where hundreds of thousands marched under the slogan “We are all Hrant, we are all Armenian”.

Sebat Apartmanı instantly became a space of conscience. The place of Dink’s murder was marked as a wound in the city’s fabric, later materialized through the installation of a memory stone placed on the very spot he fell (Karaköse, 2017). Annual commemorations held in front of the building transformed it into a civic gathering point where people from different identities and political positions came together to remember, to mourn, and to demand justice. Speakers addressing the crowd from the balcony above the murder site connected Dink’s story to ongoing violations of rights and dignity, turning these commemorations into an annual moral reckoning for Turkish society. For many, the avenue itself, officially named Halaskargazi, became “Hrant Dink Street,” as reflected in popular renamings, online campaigns, and symbolic acts of protest (Agos, 2014). The building and the street together entered the repertoire of counter-memory, asserting themselves as spatial markers of resistance to denial and erasure.

It was in this context that Hrant Dink Foundation was established later in 2007, conceived as an effort to carry forward Dink’s dreams and struggles. The foundation aimed to contribute to Turkey’s democratization, to the protection and development of human rights, minority rights, and cultural rights, and to support historical research free from nationalism and racism (Karaköse, 2017). From the outset, it defined itself not simply as a commemorative institution but as an activist one, committed to documenting and raising awareness of hate speech, challenging discriminatory

practices, preserving Armenian culture, and fostering dialogue. Crucially, the foundation began its activities within Sebat Apartmanı itself. The choice of location was deliberate: by situating itself in the very space where Dink's life was violently taken, the foundation symbolically declared that his vision could not be silenced. In this way, Sebat Apartmanı became not only a crime scene but also a seedbed for new memory practices, a place where the rupture of violence was answered with a commitment to truth, dialogue, and justice.

In the years that followed, Sebat Apartmanı drew visitors from inside and outside Turkey. Members of the diaspora, scholars, journalists, and activists came to pay homage, to learn about the work of *Agos* and the foundation, and to situate their own family histories in relation to this site of memory (Karaköse, 2017). The building thus acquired a transnational dimension, linking Turkey's present to the Armenian diaspora's global memory practices. Each January 19, its steps filled with many visitors, testifying to the persistence of memory even in the face of repression. By 2015, as the foundation's activities and archives expanded and *Agos* grew, both institutions relocated to the Anarad Hıçutyan Building, though Sebat Apartmanı itself was reimagined as a site of conscience, later inaugurated as the 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory (Karaköse, 2017). The continuity between the murder site, the foundation's early years, and the eventual establishment of a memory site illustrates how spatial, symbolic, and institutional dimensions of memory activism intertwine.

The founding process of the Hrant Dink Foundation therefore cannot be understood apart from the symbolic weight of Sebat Apartmanı and the trajectory of *Agos*. It arose directly out of a civic wound, but transformed that wound into an opportunity for dialogue, remembrance, and democratization. From its inception, the foundation framed its work in terms of knowledge and justice: confronting silences, challenging nationalist myths, creating space for suppressed voices, and cultivating epistemic virtues necessary for a pluralistic society. This background explains why the foundation's later articulation of its code of conduct, vision and mission, and governance should be read not as bureaucratic features but as extensions of its origins in epistemic struggle.

The foundation's code of conduct serves as a normative framework shaping both its internal practices and its public engagements. It emphasizes respect, equality, transparency, accountability, non-discrimination, honesty, sensitivity to differences, openness to dialogue, and non-violence (HDF, n.d.2). These values are not abstract

ideals; they serve as epistemic conditions that counter long-standing silences and distortions in Turkey's public sphere. Non-discrimination and respect help to combat epistemic marginalization by ensuring that minority voices, such as those of Armenians, Kurds, and other historically silenced groups, are treated as legitimate contributors to collective memory. Transparency and accountability mitigate the risks of epistemic opacity by making the foundation's decisions and practices open to scrutiny. Dialogue and openness are indispensable for epistemic justice, as they allow contestation and correction of dominant narratives and ensure that diverse experiences and perspectives can enter the public sphere. Sensitivity to differences and honesty reinforce the foundation's commitment to truth-telling in the face of denialism and selective memory. In this sense, the code of conduct does not simply regulate institutional behavior; it embeds epistemic virtues within the foundation's work, cultivating an environment where justice and knowledge production are inseparable. The vision and mission statements provide the purposive framework through which these values are enacted. The foundation's vision is to keep alive Hrant Dink's dreams, language, and heart in pursuit of a more just, free, and peaceful world. Its mission encompasses promoting dialogue, empathy, and peace; advancing the recognition and protection of cultural heritage; encouraging public and academic awareness of history, memory, and identity; defending minority rights; and building institutional infrastructures such as archives, research programs, and sites of memory (HDF, n.d.3). These objectives directly align with the requirements of epistemic justice. Protecting cultural heritage and defending minority rights restores suppressed repositories of knowledge and identity, which have historically been neglected or erased. Supporting research and archiving initiatives creates institutional spaces where neglected narratives can be preserved, validated, and shared. Promoting dialogue and empathy challenges the epistemic exclusion imposed by dominant nationalist myths, while raising public awareness broadens the epistemic space by shifting what is considered sayable, debatable, and legitimate. The emphasis on justice and freedom highlights the recognition that epistemic justice cannot exist without free expression, critical inquiry, and the ability to dissent from dominant narratives. The foundation's mission thus transforms memory into a practice of democratizing knowledge and enabling plural, contested, and dialogical accounts of the past.

The foundation's governance structure reinforces this mission by embedding epistemic responsibility within its institutional design. At the highest level, the Board of Trustees

defines general policies and oversees the work of the Board of Directors and the Audit Committee. The Board of Directors executes daily operations, designs and implements programs, and represents the foundation publicly. Oversight mechanisms such as the Audit Committee and legal advisors ensure transparency and accountability, safeguarding against misrepresentation and misuse of authority. Equally significant is the Advisory Board, composed of scholars, intellectuals, and activists whose expertise directly intersects with memory activism, minority rights, and cultural heritage. This governance structure balances executive functions with epistemic input, ensuring that the foundation's memory activism is informed by scholarly rigor, minority experiences, and activist engagement (HDF, n.d.4).

Taken together, the foundation's code of conduct, mission and vision, and governance generate a model of memory activism that is highly attentive to epistemic justice. They provide mechanisms for recovering marginalized knowledge, legitimizing suppressed voices, and ensuring that public dissemination and dialogue reshape societal norms of truth and recognition. They also institutionalize accountability, which is vital for sustaining trust in contexts where denial and distortion are entrenched. By cultivating pluralism and encouraging non-authoritarian approaches to knowledge, the foundation creates space for conflicting narratives to coexist without erasure. In this sense, memory activism becomes not an attempt to impose a new orthodoxy but to foster agonistic, dialogical remembrance.

Hrant Dink Foundation offers a striking example of how civil society institutions can operationalize epistemic justice through memory activism. Its ethical code, purposive mission, and pluralistic governance combine to ensure that remembrance is not simply commemorative but epistemic, aimed at producing a more just and truthful public memory. This foundation provides a fertile ground for exploring how memory activism can cultivate epistemic virtues, offering an institutional model that bridges moral responsibility, intellectual rigor, and public engagement. It also prepares the ground for the next step in analysis: the concrete ways in which HDF's projects—its research initiatives, cultural programs, and commemorative practices—cultivate epistemic humility, intellectual curiosity, and open-mindedness within Turkish society.

The Foundation's work combines research, education, digital archiving, public programming, and cross-border initiatives aimed at confronting historical injustices and enabling inclusive forms of remembrance. HDF's projects span a wide range of

areas: from combating hate speech in the media and fostering dialogue between Armenian and Turkish communities, to documenting lost cultural heritage and amplifying the voices of marginalized groups.

Through its initiatives, HDF serves not only as a cultural and educational institution but as a leading actor in Turkey's growing field of memory activism. HDF represents an important continuation of memory activism in Turkey that began in the 1990s (Özyürek, 2007: 2-3). The Foundation actively engages in oral history projects, hosts conferences, and organizes cultural programs that question dominant narratives and provide a platform for marginalized voices. The Hrant Dink Foundation remains one of the few organizations focused on memory activism in Turkey's tightening political atmosphere, making it an essential area of study for understanding how civil society actors deal with history, justice, and collective memory in the context of epistemic oppression and how their activism influences the development of epistemic virtues in society. Gönlügür and Sezer (2021: 412-413) highlight the significance of 'associational initiatives' in memory activism as they investigate artistic and public interventions in the memory landscape. They identify Hrant Dink Foundation as the first initiative aimed at preserving the multicultural heritage of Anatolia.

From the outset, HDF has explicitly defined itself as an organization engaged in memory work. Its mission statement clearly articulates its aim to support peace and justice through remembrance. Memory activism, in this context, is not a nostalgic exercise or a purely academic undertaking. Rather, it is a deliberate, political, and ethical intervention in how societies remember or choose not to remember past injustices.

“As it is the case for all activities conducted within the Hrant Dink Foundation, the Hrant Dink Foundation Bolis Institute works to develop an approach to history within a philosophical and ethical approach free of nationalism, racism and sexism; to transform history from a frozen, distant slice of time into a part of our modern-day consciousness; to encourage communities to become acquainted with each other; to face the past and create a common memory; to embrace and maintain all the different cultures on these lands, not as objects of nostalgia but as a richness still alive today that will be passed down from generation to generation; and to forge a future that is not dominated by slogans, but which rests upon conscience and the language of peace. The Hrant Dink Foundation Bolis Institute's goal is to research and reveal the history of interactions between Turkey's ancient people, and the cultural implications of these

interactions, within a scientific, interdisciplinary and participatory approach; and in this way, to contribute to a pluralistic and democratic historiography.” (HDF, n.d.5)

HDF's projects emphasize the recovery of silenced histories, particularly those relating to the Armenian Genocide and the broader repression of minorities in the late Ottoman Empire and modern Turkish Republic. The Foundation's digital memory maps, oral history archives, and exhibitions function as counter-narratives to the state's dominant historiography, offering tools and spaces for individuals to engage with the complexity and plurality of the past. This form of memory activism challenges historical denial and collective amnesia by promoting inclusivity, recognition, and dialogue.

Hrant Dink Foundation plays a vital role in shaping public memory in Turkey by aligning itself with contemporary currents in memory activism. In parallel with a key theoretical turn in memory studies that emphasizes non-violent dimensions of historical memory (Katriel 2016; Reading and Katriel 2015; Rigney 2018), the Foundation's initiatives focus not only on traumatic events such as the Armenian Genocide, but also crucially on the enduring absence and erasure of Armenian cultural heritage in Anatolia. This shift in focus reflects a broader move in memory studies away from an exclusive preoccupation with violence and victimhood, toward the exploration of loss, absence, and the transformative potential of cultural memory. By engaging with these underrepresented aspects of the past, the Foundation contributes to a forward-looking memory practice that seeks long-term, sustainable impact. Its diverse and increasingly institutionalized projects embody a structured and consistent approach, ensuring that memory work becomes a durable force for social awareness and change.

Choosing HDF as a case study allows us to see how memory activism operates as an epistemic practice one that resists ignorance, fosters intellectual and moral growth, and works toward a more inclusive and truthful public sphere. It is a continuation of the brave and difficult memory work that began in Turkey in the 1990s, but with institutional support and a global outlook. In its insistence on remembering the silenced, the forgotten, and the repressed, Hrant Dink Foundation exemplifies how memory can be a site not just of mourning, but of learning and, ultimately, of transformation.

4.5 Hrant Dink Foundation

“To notice an injustice is only possible with a struggle for justice.”¹
(Oranlı, 2015: 166)

Memory activism in Turkey cannot be fully understood without recognizing its epistemic dimensions how it reshapes the ways societies come to know, remember, and take responsibility for the past. Among the institutions working at the intersection of remembrance and knowledge, Hrant Dink Foundation stands out as a critical case for analyzing the epistemic contributions of memory activism. In a political and social landscape marked by entrenched denial, historical silences, and amnesia, HDF’s work promotes the cultivation of epistemic virtues. These virtues are essential for fostering a slow, sustainable process of coming to terms with the past. I argue that HDF’s memory activism operationalizes epistemic virtues through its carefully designed initiatives. By resisting reductive narratives, amplifying marginalized voices, and engaging the public in reflective dialogue and historical inquiry, the foundation contributes to a gradual but transformative reorientation in how Turkish society engages with its history. Rather than offering accusatory interventions, HDF encourages a dialogical approach rooted in ethical epistemic practices, an approach necessary for meaningful and lasting reconciliation with the past.

At the heart of HDF’s approach is the understanding that memory activism is not merely about preserving the past, but about changing how it is known, interpreted, and integrated into collective consciousness. This inherently epistemic dimension becomes particularly significant in the context of Turkey, where the denial of historical traumas has not only suppressed historical truth but also undermined the conditions for developing a pluralistic and self-critical public culture.

Epistemic injustice, as theorized by scholars such as Miranda Fricker (2007) and José Medina (2013), includes both testimonial injustice when marginalized groups are not believed and hermeneutical injustice when their experiences cannot be properly understood due to gaps in shared interpretive resources. The denial of historical traumas embodies both forms. By addressing these injustices through research, education, dialogue, and cultural preservation, HDF’s memory activism performs epistemic resistance.

¹ “Adaletsizliğin fark edilmesi sadece adalet mücadelesiyle mümkündür.” (translated by the author)

Among central initiatives of HDF is Asulis, a pioneering social sciences laboratory in Turkey that focuses on confronting discriminatory discourse and promoting inclusive forms of communication. Through its Media Watch on Hate Speech project, educational workshops, and the development of innovative tools such as an artificial intelligence program for detecting hate speech in Turkish, Asulis stimulates reflection on the boundaries of freedom of expression and the harmful effects of exclusionary narratives. In parallel, the Bolis Institute provides a platform for independent and interdisciplinary research in history, sociology, and cultural studies, encouraging scholarship free from nationalist or exclusionary frameworks. The institute also coordinates the Minority Rights Academy, develops the KarDes mobile application that introduces users to the multicultural heritage of cities, and carries out archival projects that document community structures, religious sites, schools, and personal testimonies. By digitizing oral histories, documents, and photographs, it contributes to the preservation and accessibility of collective memory (HDF, n.d.6).

Another cornerstone of the foundation's work is the 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory, located at the symbolic site of the Agos newspaper office where Dink was assassinated. This space functions as a site of remembrance and dialogue, offering exhibitions, archival materials, and public programs that reflect on Dink's life and legacy as well as on the broader struggles of minorities in Turkey. It has been internationally recognized, receiving the Kenneth Hudson Award in 2023 for institutional courage and professional integrity. The foundation also confers the International Hrant Dink Award annually on September 15, honoring individuals and organizations, both within Turkey and internationally, that act with courage in the struggle for human rights, peace, and justice (HDF, n.d.6).

In addition, the Turkey–Armenia Relations Program seeks to dismantle both mental and physical borders between the two countries. It provides travel grants, fellowships, and dialogue platforms that enable professionals, academics, and civil society actors to collaborate across the closed border. These exchanges are designed to foster mutual understanding and highlight the everyday consequences of geopolitical divides (HDF, n.d.6).

Taken together, these initiatives reflect a holistic vision in which memory work, research, dialogue, and cross-border connections converge. They embody the foundation's commitment to creating a more inclusive, empathetic, and democratic

society. In the following part, I will analyze these activities in terms of their capacity to produce epistemic virtues and to contribute to epistemic justice.

4.5.1 Bolis Institute

Bolis Institute, as one of the central initiatives of Hrant Dink Foundation, constitutes a unique site of memory activism that addresses Turkey's contested past while simultaneously engaging in projects that have a broader regional and international resonance. Its declared mission is to serve as a hub for research, dialogue, and knowledge production in the fields of history, cultural heritage, arts, minority rights, and Western Armenian language, aiming to develop spaces where multiple narratives of the past can coexist and interact (HDF, n.d.5). From the perspective of epistemic justice and epistemic virtues, the Institute's contribution can be understood as an effort to correct systematic silencing, exclusion, and distortion of knowledge that have long marked Turkey's historical and political landscape. Drawing on Miranda Fricker's (2007) conceptualization of epistemic injustice as the harm done to individuals in their capacity as knowers, and José Medina's (2012) notion of epistemic resistance and the cultivation of epistemic virtues, Bolis Institute's activities can be read as a sustained attempt to create beneficial epistemic friction and foster virtues such as humility, open-mindedness, and intellectual diligence.

The foundational idea of the Bolis Institute reflects a rejection of monolithic, state-centered narratives of history. By explicitly promoting independent, plural, and interdisciplinary research, the Institute resists the epistemic arrogance that arises when only dominant groups' perspectives are granted legitimacy. In this sense, its mission directly aligns with the cultivation of epistemic humility, understood as the recognition of one's own situatedness and the limits of one's perspective. The Bolis Institute provides a structural framework that allows marginalized voices, particularly those of ethnic and religious minorities, to be heard and preserved within the broader cultural memory of Turkey (HDF, n.d.5). By supporting projects on cultural heritage, oral histories, and minority rights, the Institute challenges testimonial injustice the discrediting of speakers because of prejudice against their social identity by restoring credibility to communities historically denied epistemic authority.

The Institute's Cultural Heritage Program is a particularly clear example of this orientation. Through its efforts to document, map, and make accessible the physical and intangible cultural heritage of diverse communities, including Armenians, Greeks,

Jews, and Assyrians, the program resists the erasures produced by decades of nationalist historiography and urban transformation. By creating online platforms such as the Türkiye Cultural Heritage Map, which catalogues thousands of religious and cultural sites, the program not only produces new knowledge but also democratizes access to it, thereby correcting hermeneutical injustice—the gap in collective interpretive resources that prevents certain groups from making sense of their social experiences (HDF, n.d.7). In Fricker’s terms (2007), hermeneutical injustice arises when structural prejudices render some experiences unintelligible; the Bolis Institute’s systematic documentation work provides resources that help fill these interpretive gaps. Moreover, from the perspective of Medina’s emphasis on epistemic friction (2012), these projects invite majority society to confront histories and spaces it has long ignored, generating the discomfort necessary to cultivate humility and openness. The History Program further extends this logic by encouraging scholarly research into silenced or distorted historical episodes. By offering grants and organizing conferences, it creates a platform where younger scholars can pursue research free of ideological constraints and disciplinary taboos (HDF, n.d.8). This not only contributes to intellectual diligence—through rigorous inquiry that resists easy simplifications—but also to open-mindedness, by inviting multiple disciplinary and methodological approaches to the study of the past. Medina (2012) argues that intellectual virtues are not just individual traits but are cultivated within epistemic communities; Bolis Institute’s creation of scholarly networks exemplifies such community-level cultivation of virtue. The very act of sustaining academic discussion in a context where certain historical questions remain politically sensitive embodies epistemic courage, even if not explicitly framed as such in Fricker’s or Medina’s categories.

The Minority Rights Academy, run under the Bolis Institute’s umbrella, shows another dimension of its epistemic interventions. By providing educational programs and resources on minority rights for young people, civil society actors, and professionals, the Academy enhances awareness of legal frameworks and democratic practices that are often marginalized in mainstream political discourse (HDF, n.d.9). Here the epistemic contribution lies in resisting the normalization of ignorance about minority rights, which perpetuates structural injustice. Through workshops, lectures, and training, participants are encouraged to critically reassess entrenched assumptions, thereby cultivating the virtue of open-mindedness.

Equally significant is Bolis Institute's commitment to language preservation through its Western Armenian Program. Language, as Fricker (2007) highlights, is central to hermeneutical resources: without linguistic tools, experiences and memories cannot be properly articulated. The program's initiatives to support teaching, learning, and creative production in Western Armenian represent not only cultural preservation but also an epistemic intervention that resists the silencing of a community's interpretive framework (HDF, n.d.10). By publishing materials, organizing courses, and supporting artistic projects in Western Armenian, the Institute restores the epistemic agency of a language community under threat of extinction, reinforcing the link between epistemic justice and linguistic justice.

Bolis Institute's Culture and Arts projects add yet another layer to its epistemic role. By supporting artistic expression across different media, these projects provide non-traditional avenues for confronting contested histories and silenced voices. Art here functions as a vehicle of epistemic resistance: by creating imaginative spaces that disrupt official narratives and provoke reflection, artistic projects cultivate epistemic virtues indirectly but powerfully (HDF, n.d.11). Medina (2012) emphasizes the importance of counter-narratives and alternative imaginaries in challenging hegemonic ignorance, and the Institute's support for cultural production exemplifies this principle. Exhibitions, performances, and collaborations funded by the Institute often foreground themes of coexistence, plurality, and memory, thereby expanding the horizons of public understanding and challenging entrenched prejudices.

In addition to its programs, Bolis Institute organizes conferences, talks, and panels that bring together scholars, artists, activists, and the general public. These events function as arenas of epistemic exchange, where diverse perspectives collide and interact, often producing the friction necessary for epistemic growth. By cultivating an ethos of dialogue rather than consensus, these gatherings echo Anna Cento Bull and Hans Hansen's (2016) idea of agonistic memory, which resonates with Medina's pluralist epistemology. Rather than suppressing conflict, the Institute encourages debate and negotiation, fostering an environment in which humility and open-mindedness can flourish.

Finally, the Institute's publications, library, and archival work consolidate its epistemic contributions by ensuring that knowledge generated through its programs is preserved and disseminated. Hrant Dink Foundation Library and Archive provide crucial resources for researchers and the general public, granting access to documents, oral

histories, and rare collections that would otherwise remain inaccessible (HDF, n.d.12; n.d.13). The act of making these materials publicly available directly addresses hermeneutical injustice, as it equips society with the interpretive resources to understand marginalized histories. It also exemplifies intellectual curiosity/diligence, since archival work requires meticulous effort to ensure accuracy and inclusivity. By maintaining these repositories, the Institute institutionalizes epistemic virtues, embedding them into the very fabric of research infrastructures.

One of the most important ways the Bolis Institute operationalizes its mission is through its system of research grants. These grants are offered to encourage young scholars and independent researchers to undertake projects in fields such as history, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and political science. The intellectual significance of this support cannot be overstated. In a context where certain historical topics remain politically sensitive or marginalized, financial and institutional support functions as a form of epistemic empowerment. It ensures that those who might otherwise be excluded from academic production gain credibility as knowers and producers of knowledge. In Fricker's terms (2007), this combats testimonial injustice, since it resists the credibility deficit imposed on researchers who deal with politically inconvenient or minority-focused subjects. By placing institutional resources at the disposal of such scholars, the Institute not only corrects epistemic wrongs but also cultivates intellectual diligence within the academic community, as grant recipients are compelled to pursue rigorous, innovative work that contributes to more plural and critical understandings of Turkey's past (HDF, n.d.14).

The Institute's conferences, talks, and panels extend this epistemic contribution into the public sphere. By providing open platforms for exchange between academics, artists, journalists, and civil society representatives, these events democratize access to dialogue about contested issues (HDF, n.d.15). Medina (2012) argues that epistemic resistance requires the creation of spaces where marginalized voices are not only tolerated but actively invited to reshape dominant epistemic frameworks. The Institute's public events exemplify this principle. They bring audiences into contact with perspectives often absent from mainstream debate, thereby creating what Medina calls "beneficial epistemic friction." This friction destabilizes complacent ignorance and cultivates the virtues of humility and open-mindedness, as participants are confronted with uncomfortable but necessary knowledge. Importantly, these events resist the drive toward consensus by embracing plurality and disagreement, echoing

the agonistic model of memory that allows conflicting narratives to coexist in a dialogic rather than antagonistic manner.

The cultural heritage mapping project, accessible through the Türkiye Cultural Heritage Map online platform, provides concrete and innovative illustration of the Institute's epistemic work (HDF, n.d.16; n.d.17). The platform documents thousands of religious, cultural, and community sites across Turkey, including churches, synagogues, schools, and hospitals that once belonged to minority communities. By making this database publicly available, the Institute directly addresses hermeneutical injustice, since the erasure of these sites from public consciousness has long deprived minority groups of the interpretive resources needed to articulate their historical experiences. The map thus provides both majority and minority communities with tools to reconstruct forgotten or suppressed pasts. From an epistemic virtue perspective, engaging with the map requires intellectual diligence to interpret the evidence, humility to acknowledge previously neglected histories, and open-mindedness to situate these stories within broader narratives of Turkey's multicultural past.

The cultural heritage map also reveals the transformative potential of epistemic friction. For many in majority society, encountering the scale and scope of erased or repurposed minority institutions is profoundly unsettling, as it undermines dominant narratives of national homogeneity. Medina (2012) reminds us that epistemic virtues often grow out of discomfort rather than consensus; the map functions precisely in this way by unsettling epistemic complacency. Moreover, the collaborative nature of the project, which involves local communities, researchers, and volunteers, underscores the communal dimension of virtue cultivation. Intellectual humility is not only a personal disposition but a collective practice fostered through shared engagement with difficult truths.

The Institute's commitment to organizing panels and thematic conferences around this cultural heritage work further amplifies its epistemic contribution. These events provide forums where new data, such as the mapping results, are discussed in connection with broader historical and cultural debates. By situating empirical findings within interpretive frameworks, the Institute combats hermeneutical injustice at another level: not only are the sites documented, but they are contextualized within narratives that restore their significance to cultural memory. This act of

contextualization also demonstrates intellectual curiosity/diligence, since it resists simplistic or instrumental uses of historical data and insists on nuanced understanding. Another aspect of the Institute's work that warrants close attention is the way its grants and conferences foster cross-disciplinary and cross-generational dialogue. The cultivation of epistemic virtues is not restricted to individual scholars or activists but extends to epistemic communities. By bringing together historians, architects, artists, sociologists, and human rights defenders, the Institute creates an epistemic environment in which diverse perspectives challenge one another productively. This interdisciplinarity fosters open-mindedness, since participants must navigate unfamiliar conceptual frameworks, and humility, as no single discipline can claim epistemic authority over the complexities of cultural memory and minority rights.

The archival and library resources maintained by the Institute play an essential role in sustaining these processes. Hrant Dink Foundation Library and Archive provide access to a wealth of documents, personal testimonies, photographs, and rare collections that allow researchers to pursue questions often neglected by mainstream institutions (HDF, n.d.12; n.d.13). From the perspective of epistemic justice, this is a crucial intervention. Hermeneutical injustice is not only about the absence of interpretive frameworks but also about the lack of access to raw materials needed for interpretation. By opening these resources to scholars and the public, the Institute creates the conditions for new frameworks to emerge. Intellectual curiosity/diligence is again foregrounded here, as archival work requires sustained commitment to accuracy and inclusivity. The act of preservation itself reflects epistemic humility, as it acknowledges the limits of current knowledge and the need to keep resources available for future reinterpretations.

The publication program of the Institute ensures that knowledge generated in these various domains does not remain confined to academic circles but is disseminated widely. Reports, edited volumes, and other publications allow findings from research projects, conferences, and archival work to enter public debate (HDF, n.d.18). This dissemination is crucial for resisting epistemic injustice, as it prevents valuable knowledge from remaining siloed among experts. Instead, it allows wider publics to engage with contested histories, thereby broadening the epistemic community. Medina (2012) emphasizes that epistemic resistance requires not only the production of counter-knowledge but also its circulation; the Institute's publications fulfil precisely

this role. By translating complex research into accessible formats, they cultivate virtues of open-mindedness and humility among non-specialist audiences.

At a deeper level, the very institutional design of Bolis Institute embodies a commitment to epistemic justice. Its mission statement emphasizes independence from nationalist frameworks and ideological constraints, making clear that its purpose is to provide a platform for multiple voices and narratives (HDF, n.d.5). In a political climate where knowledge is often instrumentalized for partisan purposes, this independence is itself a form of epistemic resistance. It models the virtues of humility and intellectual curiosity/diligence by recognizing the provisional and contested nature of historical knowledge and by committing to ongoing dialogue rather than definitive conclusions.

Taken together, the grants, conferences, panels, cultural heritage mapping, archival resources, and publications of Bolis Institute form a coherent epistemic project. They do not simply produce knowledge in the narrow academic sense but actively reshape the epistemic environment in Turkey and beyond. By addressing testimonial injustice, the Institute restores credibility to marginalized voices. By addressing hermeneutical injustice, it expands the interpretive resources available to society. By cultivating humility, open-mindedness, and intellectual curiosity/diligence, it strengthens the epistemic virtues necessary for democratic coexistence. Medina's (2012) emphasis on the transformative power of epistemic friction finds clear resonance in the Institute's activities: by generating spaces of discomfort and dialogue, it compels both individuals and communities to grow in their epistemic capacities.

4.5.2 *Asulis*

Asulis, the Discourse, Dialogue, and Democracy Laboratory of HDF, was established as Turkey's first social sciences laboratory dedicated to confronting discriminatory discourse, producing inclusive language, and creating public spaces for dialogue. Its mission explicitly states that it aims to reduce discrimination and polarization by transforming harmful speech into inclusive and democratic communication, thereby making the conditions for coexistence more sustainable (HDF, n.d.19). From the perspective of epistemic justice, Asulis can be seen as a direct institutional response to the epistemic harms that arise when prejudiced discourse undermines the credibility and voice of marginalized groups. By positioning itself at the intersection of media, law, education, art, gender, and conceptual studies, Asulis generates interventions that

not only expose testimonial injustice but also work toward cultivating the epistemic virtues that Miranda Fricker and José Medina identify as crucial for democratic life. Fricker's (2007) account of testimonial injustice is particularly relevant in understanding the significance of Asulis's Media Watch on Hate Speech project. For over a decade, this initiative has systematically monitored Turkish media outlets, identifying patterns of hate speech against minorities and vulnerable groups. The reports produced by Media Watch highlight how prejudicial language discredits the testimony of groups by framing them as untrustworthy, dangerous, or inferior (HDF, n.d.20). By documenting and analyzing this language, Asulis restores epistemic credibility to those targeted by hate speech and equips the wider public with interpretive resources to recognize prejudice where it operates subtly. From Medina's (2012) standpoint, this kind of intervention constitutes an act of epistemic resistance. It produces what he calls "epistemic friction" by forcing the majority audience to confront the normalization of discriminatory discourse in everyday media. Such friction, while uncomfortable, is essential for cultivating humility and open-mindedness, since it compels individuals to reconsider entrenched interpretive habits. Beyond documentation, Asulis moves into constructive spaces through projects such as *Towards a New Discourse and Dialogue*. This initiative creates workshops and forums where civil society actors, academics, and media professionals develop alternative discourses that promote pluralism and empathy (HDF, n.d.21). The theoretical importance of such work lies in its recognition that epistemic justice is not achieved merely by identifying injustice but also by producing new interpretive frameworks. Fricker (2007) argues that hermeneutical injustice arises when marginalized experiences are excluded from the collective interpretive repertoire. By fostering collaborative processes that generate inclusive narratives, Asulis addresses this gap directly. In doing so, it cultivates intellectual diligence, since participants must work carefully to craft discourse that is both accurate and respectful, and humility, since it requires acknowledging the insufficiency of dominant narratives.

The project *Empowering Civil Society Organizations and Sparking Change* illustrates another dimension of Asulis's contribution. By equipping grassroots organizations with tools and training to recognize and counter discrimination, the initiative extends epistemic agency to actors who may otherwise lack the resources to resist epistemic oppression (HDF, n.d.22). Medina emphasizes that epistemic virtues are cultivated not only within individuals but also across communities. Civil society organizations

function as epistemic communities, and by strengthening their capacity to challenge ignorance and prejudice, Asulis fosters a distributed cultivation of virtues such as open-mindedness and courage. These organizations, once empowered, become localized agents of epistemic resistance, carrying forward the work of Asulis into diverse contexts and multiplying its transformative potential.

In recent years, Asulis has also explored the role of digital technologies in shaping discourse, exemplified by its project *Utilizing Digital Technology for Social Cohesion, Positive Messaging and Peace*. This initiative develops collaborative tools and platforms to spread inclusive messages and counter harmful speech online (HDF, n.d.23). In the digital sphere, where anonymity and virality amplify epistemic harms, the cultivation of virtues such as intellectual curiosity/diligence and humility becomes even more urgent. The project seeks to transform digital spaces into arenas of epistemic justice by creating infrastructures that make inclusive discourse more visible and accessible. From a theoretical perspective, this work highlights how epistemic justice must adapt to new communicative environments. Fricker's categories of injustice remain relevant, but Medina's emphasis on resistance and creativity becomes particularly crucial, since online spaces require constant innovation to resist new forms of epistemic oppression.

Asulis's engagement is not confined to media and technology. Its educational programs play a vital role in cultivating epistemic virtues among younger generations. By developing workshops such as *Democracity*, which introduces children and youth to concepts of democracy, participation, and diversity, Asulis fosters intellectual curiosity and open-mindedness at formative stages of development (HDF, n.d.24). These interventions recognize that epistemic virtues must be nurtured through sustained practice and that early exposure to pluralism and dialogue equips individuals to resist epistemic injustice later in life. Even small acts of questioning prejudiced narratives in everyday settings can contribute to wider structural transformation. By training young people to recognize and resist prejudice, Asulis prepares them for such acts of resistance.

The legal dimension of Asulis's work is equally significant. By analyzing the intersections of hate speech, freedom of expression, and anti-discrimination law, Asulis contributes to the refinement of legal interpretive resources that shape public discourse (HDF, n.d.25). Hermeneutical injustice often arises when legal categories fail to capture the lived experiences of marginalized groups. By facilitating debates

and producing analyses that clarify the boundaries between free speech and hate speech, Asulis expands society's interpretive toolkit. This process requires intellectual curiosity/diligence to navigate complex legal terrains and humility to balance competing rights and perspectives. Importantly, by situating these discussions within a democratic framework, Asulis underscores that epistemic justice is inseparable from legal justice.

Another noteworthy field of engagement is art. Asulis recognizes art as a medium of discourse and supports artistic projects that challenge discrimination and promote inclusive narratives (HDF, n.d.26). Artistic interventions provide imaginative resources that destabilize hegemonic discourses and open up new ways of seeing. Medina (2012) highlights the importance of counter-imaginaries in resisting oppressive epistemic regimes, and Asulis's use of art exemplifies this principle. By commissioning exhibitions, performances, and collaborative projects, Asulis fosters open-mindedness and humility through aesthetic experience, encouraging audiences to reflect on perspectives beyond their own.

Gender constitutes a central focus of Asulis's conceptual work, as discriminatory discourse often intersects with patriarchal structures. By examining how gendered narratives reinforce epistemic injustice, Asulis provides interpretive resources that address both testimonial and hermeneutical harms faced by women and LGBTQ+ communities (HDF, n.d.27). Workshops, publications, and dialogue events on gender broaden the interpretive horizon of society, making visible the epistemic oppression embedded in everyday language. Cultivating epistemic virtues in this domain involves not only intellectual humility but also the courage to confront deeply ingrained norms, demonstrating how epistemic justice requires both critical analysis and practical engagement.

Asulis further amplifies its mission of fostering epistemic justice and cultivating epistemic virtues through its organization of talks, panels, and workshops that bring together academics, activists, media professionals, lawyers, and artists. These events create vital spaces of exchange where differing perspectives meet and clash, generating precisely the kind of epistemic friction that José Medina identifies as necessary for democratic knowledge practices. By refusing to reduce disagreements to consensus and instead valuing plurality and dissent, these gatherings provide conditions under which humility, open-mindedness, and intellectual curiosity/diligence can flourish. They force participants to listen across difference, to recognize the limits of their own

assumptions, and to practice the intellectual courage required to confront uncomfortable truths. The thematic range of the panels demonstrates Asulis's understanding that discriminatory discourse is not confined to one sphere but permeates law, media, gender relations, art, and education. Each panel therefore performs a double function: on the one hand, it makes visible the epistemic harms generated by exclusionary discourses; on the other hand, it nurtures epistemic virtues by modelling practices of inclusive dialogue.

The workshops organized by Asulis carry this dialogic approach into more participatory formats. These sessions invite students, journalists, NGO representatives, and educators to engage directly in exercises designed to unmask discrimination in language and to practice alternative modes of expression. By engaging participants in activities rather than lectures, the workshops cultivate intellectual diligence in the sense that participants must do the work of self-reflection and analysis rather than passively receiving knowledge. Such exercises often generate the discomfort that comes from realizing one's own complicity in perpetuating harmful speech, but Medina (2012) insists that precisely this discomfort is the seedbed of epistemic growth. Workshops create controlled environments in which such discomfort can be processed collectively, allowing humility and open-mindedness to develop not only as individual dispositions but also as shared virtues of epistemic communities.

The conferences Asulis convenes extend these efforts to a larger scale, attracting international participants and situating Turkey's struggle with discriminatory discourse within wider global conversations. By creating transnational dialogues, these conferences challenge the epistemic isolation that often afflicts national debates and instead open them to comparative perspectives and solidarities. In doing so, they embody Fricker's insistence that epistemic injustice is not only an interpersonal wrong but a structural phenomenon requiring collective remedies. International conferences expand the collective hermeneutical resources available to address injustice by incorporating experiences from other contexts. For instance, sessions on media responsibility, minority rights, or the use of digital technology in combating hate speech place Turkey's challenges alongside global patterns, underscoring both the uniqueness of local dynamics and their embeddedness in broader structures of discrimination. By listening to and learning from international colleagues, participants cultivate humility recognizing that their national frameworks are partial and open-mindedness, by incorporating new approaches into their practices.

Publications represent another crucial means by which Asulis ensures that its work does not remain confined to ephemeral events but instead enters broader intellectual and public circulation. Reports such as the annual *Media Watch on Hate Speech* volumes are widely read and cited, serving as resources for scholars, journalists, policymakers, and activists. From the perspective of epistemic justice, the importance of these publications lies in their dual function of documenting injustice and providing interpretive resources to contest it (HDF, n.d.28). They combat hermeneutical injustice by supplying the vocabulary and analytical categories needed to name and resist discrimination. Without such resources, individuals often cannot make sense of the harms they experience or witness. By producing and disseminating them, Asulis performs the work of expanding the collective interpretive repertoire.

Moreover, the act of publication demonstrates intellectual diligence in a very concrete way. Systematically reviewing media content, categorizing hate speech, and presenting the findings in accessible formats requires careful, methodical labor. This diligence is itself a virtue, as it resists the temptation of superficial judgments and instead insists on evidence-based analysis. At the same time, these publications embody humility, since they present findings not as final truths but as contributions to an ongoing dialogue. Each report acknowledges its limits while inviting further discussion and research, thereby modelling the openness that epistemic justice requires.

Panels, workshops, conferences, and publications together create a feedback loop that continually reinforces epistemic virtues. Insights generated in panels are tested and expanded in workshops; findings from workshops feed into conference discussions; outcomes from conferences are captured and disseminated in publications; and publications provide resources that enrich subsequent panels. This cyclical structure ensures that epistemic virtues are not cultivated sporadically but through sustained, iterative practices. Medina (2012; 2023) emphasizes the importance of echoability that through repeated engagement across time and contexts an epistemic resistance may be arisen, and Asulis exemplifies this dynamic by maintaining continuity between its different modes of activity.

Importantly, these activities also contribute to the empowerment of marginalized groups. Panels on gender, for example, foreground women's and LGBTQ+ voices that have historically been silenced in public discourse. Workshops often prioritize the participation of minority representatives, ensuring that epistemic authority is redistributed rather than monopolized by dominant groups. Conferences deliberately

invite international minority organizations to share their experiences, thereby embedding Turkey's struggles within a global community of resistance. Publications highlight the perspectives of those targeted by hate speech rather than merely analyzing discriminatory language from an abstract standpoint. In all these ways, Asulis directly resists testimonial injustice by restoring credibility to voices that prejudice would otherwise discredit.

The epistemic significance of these interventions is magnified when one considers the broader political context in which Asulis operates. Public discourse in Turkey has often been polarized, with nationalist and exclusionary narratives dominating mainstream arenas. Within such an environment, simply creating a platform where diverse voices can be heard constitutes a profound act of epistemic resistance. Medina (2012) reminds us that epistemic virtues are often cultivated through acts of courage that resist entrenched ignorance. Panels and workshops where minority voices challenge majority prejudices enact such courage, modelling it for participants and encouraging its wider adoption. The cumulative effect is a slow but steady shift in the epistemic landscape, in which virtues of humility, open-mindedness, and diligence become more widely distributed.

Another critical element is accessibility. Asulis ensures that many of its panels and talks are available online, its publications are freely downloadable, and its reports are disseminated widely through social and traditional media. This commitment to accessibility is not merely practical but epistemic: it ensures that the interpretive resources it generates reach as wide an audience as possible. Hermeneutical injustice is perpetuated not only by the absence of resources but also by their restricted circulation. By breaking down barriers to access, Asulis extends epistemic justice to those who might otherwise remain excluded from critical conversations.

The methodological openness of Asulis's work also deserves emphasis. Rather than privileging one disciplinary approach, its events and publications bring together diverse methodologies, from content analysis of newspapers to ethnographic fieldwork, from legal studies to artistic performance. This interdisciplinarity mirrors the epistemic virtues it seeks to cultivate. Intellectual curiosity is required to navigate multiple methods responsibly; humility is necessary to recognize the limits of one's own disciplinary training; open-mindedness is essential to integrate insights across fields. By institutionalizing interdisciplinarity, Asulis not only models these virtues but also creates epistemic environments where they can take root more deeply.

In sum, the panels, workshops, conferences, and publications of Asulis function as interconnected mechanisms of epistemic justice. They identify and document epistemic harms, create interpretive resources to resist them, redistribute epistemic authority to marginalized groups, and cultivate virtues necessary for democratic coexistence. Their impact is cumulative, iterative, and enduring. By embedding these practices in Turkey's civic landscape, Asulis ensures that epistemic virtues are not confined to individual moral improvement but become woven into the fabric of public discourse.

4.5.3 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory

23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory offers a powerful illustration of how memory activism can function as an epistemic project: it does not simply conserve the past but actively shapes how knowledge, recognition, and moral reflection circulate in the present. Because of its unique positionality that is, its physical location in the former Agos office building where Hrant Dink was assassinated and its design as an interactive, dialogic space, 23.5 is especially suited for cultivating epistemic virtues among visitors and for redressing epistemic injustice in public culture. The story, the preparatory phase, and the ongoing programming of 23.5 reveal a careful sensitivity to the risks of memory sites (such as ossification or instrumentalization) and an ambition to keep memory alive through critical engagement and co-interpretation.

The narrative of the site itself begins with an intention to bear witness to silenced voices and to transform a scene of violence into a site of reflection and possibility. The "Story" page conveys that 23.5 is named after Dink's (1996) article "23.5 April," which he described as a kind of pendulum between pain and hope "a pledge between past and future" (HDF, n.d.1). The memory site is thus conceptualized not as a static monument but as an ongoing conversation between memory and possibility. From the standpoint of epistemic virtue, this orientation is already significant: humility is implied in the recognition that memory is unfinished and contested; open-mindedness is implied in the willingness to entertain multiple narratives; and intellectual curiosity/diligence is implied in facing painful histories rather than hiding them.

The preparatory phase report for 23.5 is a foundational text for understanding how the site intends to operate as an epistemic space (Karaköse, 2018). The report documents visits to memory sites in various countries, consultations with local and international experts, dialogues with designers, architects, memory practitioners, minority

communities, and potential visitors. In this consultation phase, the Foundation solicited expectations, dreams, criticisms, and cautions from diverse voices. This reflexive, deliberative process reflects a commitment to epistemic justice: by inviting multiple stakeholders including those who might otherwise be excluded to participate in shaping the memory site, the project resists top-down imposition of narrative and instead seeks co-creation of interpretive frameworks. The parallels with Medina's idea of epistemic resistance are clear: by fostering friction in the design process, the foundational team forced themselves to question assumptions, revise plans, and remain responsive to critique. This cultivated humility, intellectual diligence (through careful incorporation of feedback), and open-mindedness (through willingness to revise and adapt).

When 23.5 opened and began to host visitors, it translated this preparatory ethos into spatial and experiential practice. The Sebat Building, preserved in its architectural form, functions as a palimpsest of memory, presence, and absence; visitors traverse its corridors, enter the balcony where Dink once stood, and confront juxtaposed artifacts, visual displays, and multimedia installations (HDF, n.d.1). The visitor experience is designed to be dialogic: multimedia stations often present voices in questioning form, prompting visitors to reflect before they read or listen. Visitors may write on cards with words like "memory," "justice," "truth," or "hope," leave reflections, and engage in what the site frames as "thinking with Dink" (HDF, n.d.1). The site fosters epistemic agency: rather than passively consuming curated narratives, visitors are invited to respond, to question, to inhabit uncertainty. Such agency is vital for virtue cultivation: humility requires openness to being challenged; open-mindedness requires willingness to consider and integrate new perspectives; intellectual curiosity/diligence is manifested in the care with which visitors may engage with archival materials, testimonies, contradictions, and silences.

In a society where many facets of recent history remain politically contested or worse, suppressed the very act of preserving or marking a memory site is an act of epistemic resistance. 23.5 claims space for remembrance and demands that public culture reckon with the assassination of a journalist, the struggle for minority rights, and the ongoing trial of Dink's case, which has remained unresolved. In this sense, the site intervenes in the public epistemic order: it insists that certain histories be recognized, narrated, and pondered. This intervention helps correct testimonial injustice: Dink's own voice, as a public intellectual who challenged majoritarian narratives, risked being silenced

not only in life but in memory; 23.5 restores his epistemic presence and invites the public to continue hearing him. More generally, by foregrounding minority and critical voices, the site demands that groups historically marginalized Armenians, dissenting journalists, human rights defenders continue to have presence, recognition, and credibility in collective memory.

But testimonial recognition is only one dimension. The project also addresses hermeneutical injustice in a deeper way. Many visitors lack the interpretive tools with sufficient historical framework, linguistic categories, or ethical vocabulary to make sense of political violence, enforced forgetting, minority exclusion, or contested urban transformations. The memory site functions as an interpretive scaffold: it presents archival documents, letters, photographs, audio recordings, testimonies, and curated commentaries, helping visitors navigate complex and painful histories. In so doing, it expands the hermeneutical resources available to society. Without such materials, many experiences of marginal groups would remain unintelligible to broader audiences or even to themselves. The preparatory report's reflexivity, discussing comparative memory sites and challenges, contributes further to the hermeneutical infrastructure of the project (Karaköse, 2018). By anchoring local silences in global memory discourse, the project helps bridge gaps in interpretation. Through memory activism of this kind, epistemic justice advances: marginalized groups gain not only recognition but the very concepts needed to articulate their experiences.

One of the additional virtues that a site like 23.5 can foster is intellectual courage. The public confrontation with painful historical events the assassination, suppression of free speech, official impunity requires visitors to bear witness to trouble, to reckon with complicities, and to reflect on moral responsibility. The site does not shy away from difficult questions: for example, about the responsibilities of the state, the failures of legal institutions, the role of civil society, and the ongoing trial (Karaköse, 2018). Engaging such questions demands courage the willingness to acknowledge uncertainty, to face moral discomfort, and to live with tensions. Over time, this courage can strengthen a person's capacity for moral and epistemic risk-taking, where one is willing to speak and listen even when doing so may provoke backlash.

Another virtue nurtured by the memory site is a sustained humility toward history. The site's design avoids presenting a single closed narrative; instead it layers multiple voices, conflicting accounts, open questions, and blank spaces (HDF, n.d.1). Visitors encounter not only curated narrative but silences, absences, and contested gaps. Such

design resists any illusion of total knowledge and encourages humility accepting that memory remains incomplete, that historical knowledge is contingent and contested. This teaches visitors that historical understanding must remain provisional, subject to revision, and open to critique.

Open-mindedness is likewise central. The memory site's juxtaposition of different narratives, testimonies, and temporalities invites visitors to shift perspective. A visitor who enters with comfortable assumptions about authority or state narratives may be unsettled by testimonies from minority voices, photographs of abandoned heritage, or stories of refusal. The site also encourages visitors to engage with the words and memories of narrators (associates, colleagues, family) who provide intimate glimpses into Dink's personality, convictions, and struggles. This pluralism invites reflection across difference, challenging visitors to reconsider assumptions. Over repeated visits, such encounters can habituate open-mindedness habitual readiness to hear surprising or uncomfortable stories.

Intellectual curiosity/diligence is woven into nearly every dimension of the site. The preparation of the exhibits, the research underlying archival material, the curatorial choices, the translation of documents, the multimedia installations all require careful intellectual labor. Visitors are invited to engage with materials photographs, documents, audio, testimonies and to draw connections, detect tensions, and ask further questions. The site encourages slow reading, reflective listening, revisitation, and returning to memory with renewed questions over time. In doing so, 23.5 resists the superficial consumption of memory that can accompany many memorials. The site requires effort, attention, and repeated engagement—qualities intrinsic to diligence.

Beyond the built site, 23.5 extends its epistemic influence through programming—talks, panels, workshops, learning programs—that link the memory site to broader civic and intellectual life. The Foundation's activities listings show numerous talks and panels under its "talks / panels" heading, many of which engage themes of memory, justice, minority rights, artistic reflection, and civic education (HDF, n.d.29). Similarly, workshops and learning programs under HDF's umbrella often intersect with memory and civic reflection (HDF, n.d.15). These public programs bring 23.5 out of its walls into conversation, catalyzing critical reflection in broader audiences and reinforcing the virtues cultivated on site. Participants in panels may discuss contested histories, legal justice, collective memory, or future reconciliation; workshops might invite educators to integrate memory reflection in their curricula or enable younger

participants to narrate their own family histories. These events serve as epistemic bridges, connecting the embodied experience of the memory site to discursive networks of scholarship, activism, and pedagogy.

From a methodological perspective, 23.5 demonstrates how memory activism can serve as a laboratory for epistemic virtue development. Unlike purely discursive interventions (such as journals or panels) or archival projects (such as document digitization), the memory site combines spatial, material, symbolic, and pedagogical elements. Visitors move through space, confront artifacts, interact with narratives, write reflections, and perhaps revisit later. This embodied engagement often bridges the gap between abstract critique and moral empathy, making virtues more tangible. Thus, 23.5 reveals that memory activism may have a unique capacity for virtue cultivation: it engages senses, emotions, and intellect together—encouraging humility, open-mindedness, courage, and diligence in ways that purely discursive or textual interventions may not.

In the broader landscape of my dissertation, 23.5 is especially valuable because it highlights the dialectic between memory and future orientation. The site does not merely memorialize what happened; it constantly gestures toward unresolved justice, ongoing trials, civic responsibility, and the future of coexistence. This temporal tension helps resist closure and promotes ongoing epistemic vigilance. Memory activism anchored in contested space such as 23.5 encourages the habitual disposition to question dominant narratives, to reconsider “received” histories, and to cultivate civic humility. Over time, repeated contact with such a site may help generate communities of memory that sustain epistemic virtues among citizens, civil society actors, and scholars alike.

In conclusion, 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory exemplifies how memory activism, when designed reflexively and dialogically, can serve as a powerful engine of epistemic transformation. It restores testimonial recognition to suppressed voices, fills hermeneutical gaps by offering interpretive infrastructure, and distributes epistemic authority beyond curators to visitors and participants. Simultaneously, it cultivates humility, open-mindedness, intellectual curiosity, and diligence through spatial, aesthetic, and pedagogical design. Because it bridges experience, reflection, and discourse, 23.5 is particularly important in studying how memory activism can do more than commemorate: it can nurture epistemic virtue and foster epistemic justice in societies wrestling with difficult histories.

4.5.4 International Hrant Dink Award

International Hrant Dink Award, presented annually since 2009 on Hrant Dink's birthday, 15 September, represents one of HDF's most visible and globally resonant initiatives. Designed to honor individuals and organizations who take personal risks to promote human rights, peace, freedom of expression, and diversity, the award is at once a commemoration of Dink's legacy and an intervention into contemporary struggles for justice (HDF, n.d.30). As such, it operates not only as a symbolic recognition but as a form of memory activism with distinct epistemic significance. By bringing attention to courageous acts of resistance against discrimination, violence, and authoritarianism, the award corrects epistemic injustices by amplifying marginalized voices, creating hermeneutical resources for interpreting injustice, and cultivating epistemic virtues among both the laureates and the audiences who witness their recognition.

The structure of the award reflects its epistemic mission. Its jury changes each year and includes human rights defenders, journalists, academics, artists, and public figures with diverse backgrounds. This diversity ensures that the selection process resists narrow or homogenizing criteria and instead incorporates multiple perspectives on what constitutes epistemic courage and integrity. The award acknowledges that no single authority has the monopoly on identifying virtue and justice. By rotating jury members and maintaining diversity, the process itself embodies open-mindedness and diligence, since the jury must carefully evaluate nominations from around the world, often across cultural and political contexts that are not immediately familiar. In this sense, the award not only rewards epistemic virtues but practices them in its very procedure.

The laureates, whether individuals or organizations, are chosen for embodying the courage to confront injustice, resist silencing, and persist in truth-telling under adverse conditions. Recent recipients illustrate this principle vividly: journalists exposing corruption and violence, NGOs defending minority rights, artists challenging social prejudices, activists supporting refugees, and organizations resisting authoritarian regimes (HDF, n.d.31). Each laureate represents an epistemic intervention: by insisting on truth, resisting denial, or creating new interpretive resources, they act as agents of epistemic justice. Recognizing them through the award amplifies their voices, counters

testimonial injustice, and makes their interpretive frameworks available to broader publics, thereby addressing hermeneutical injustice.

The nomination process itself reflects a participatory and democratizing ethos. Members of the public are invited to nominate individuals or organizations they believe embody Dink's spirit of courage and commitment to human rights (HDF, n.d.32). This practice diffuses epistemic authority, granting ordinary citizens the capacity to contribute to the identification of epistemic exemplars. In contrast to elitist recognition systems that rely solely on expert committees, this openness enhances epistemic justice by broadening who can be heard in the evaluative process. It also cultivates virtues among nominators and the broader community, encouraging reflection on what constitutes courage, justice, and truth. Such reflection requires humility, since nominators must consider values beyond their own interests, and diligence, since they must carefully articulate the grounds on which their nominee deserves recognition.

Each year on 15 September, the ceremonies are held in Istanbul and broadcast to a wide audience. Ceremonies feature performances, speeches, and presentations that situated the laureates' struggles within broader discourses of justice and peace. They combine artistic expression, testimonies, and public recognition, creating affective and intellectual spaces where audiences are invited to reflect on injustice, courage, and responsibility. These ceremonies cultivate epistemic virtues in their audiences: humility, by confronting spectators with the extraordinary courage of ordinary individuals; open-mindedness, by exposing them to struggles in distant contexts; and intellectual curiosity/diligence, by encouraging them to research further or to act in solidarity. The ceremonial format combines narrative, performance, and witness, engaging both emotions and intellect, making virtues tangible and memorable.

The award also serves as a counter to silencing mechanisms that often afflict human rights defenders and minority voices. Many laureates operate in hostile environments where their testimony is discredited, their work is ignored, or their movements are criminalized. By granting them international recognition, the award corrects testimonial injustice: it restores credibility to their voices in both local and global contexts. Furthermore, it generates hermeneutical resources by highlighting categories of struggle—such as anti-racism, refugee solidarity, or minority rights—that may otherwise remain invisible in dominant public discourse. When audiences learn about these laureates, they not only hear their voices but also acquire interpretive frameworks

to understand similar struggles elsewhere. In this way, the award becomes a educational tool for cultivating epistemic justice at scale.

It is crucial to underline the importance of the International Hrant Dink Award for studying memory activism's role in the development of epistemic virtues. While other forms of memory activism, such as memory sites or research programs, focus on preserving and disseminating historical knowledge, the award demonstrates how memory can function performatively to identify, support, and amplify agents of epistemic virtue in the present. By institutionalizing remembrance in the form of an annual award, HDF ensures that Dink's legacy remains dynamic: each year new individuals and organizations are linked to his memory, and his name becomes a vehicle for celebrating epistemic courage globally. This dynamic connection illustrates how memory activism can generate virtues such as humility, diligence, and courage not only in those remembered but in those honored and those who witness the honoring.

The epistemic dimension of the award also extends into its aftermath. Laureates often gain increased visibility, resources, and networks, which enable them to continue their work with greater impact. This extension of their epistemic agency has ripple effects: their testimonies reach new audiences, their interpretive frameworks are adopted by broader communities, and their courage inspires others to act. In this sense, the award produces epistemic virtues not only at the individual level but at the communal and structural level. It creates conditions for epistemic courage to be modeled, imitated, and diffused across societies.

In theoretical terms, the International Hrant Dink Award exemplifies José Medina's (2012) concept of "epistemic heroism." The laureates represent individuals or groups who persist in speaking truth, resisting ignorance, and generating new interpretive possibilities under conditions of oppression. By recognizing and amplifying their work, the award nurtures epistemic resistance across communities. At the same time, the award resonates with Fricker's (2007) framework: it provides institutional mechanisms for correcting testimonial and hermeneutical injustice by amplifying marginalized voices and expanding collective interpretive repertoires. Crucially, however, the award shows that memory activism can institutionalize such correction in an ongoing, annual format. Memory thus becomes a living practice: Dink's memory is not sealed in the past but continually invoked to highlight and support epistemic exemplars today.

The broader significance of the award lies in its capacity to connect local memory activism in Turkey to global struggles. The laureates come from different countries and contexts, showing that the principles Dink embodied courage, dialogue, truth-telling—are universally relevant. This transnational dimension contributes to epistemic justice by creating solidarities across borders, enabling communities to learn from each other’s struggles, and generating global interpretive resources for resistance. For Turkish society, seeing international laureates recognized alongside local actors reinforces the universality of minority rights, democracy, and free expression. For global audiences, the award ties their struggles back to the memory of Dink, making his story a point of connection and solidarity. Thus, the award exemplifies how memory activism can transcend national borders, producing epistemic virtues across cultures.

In conclusion, the International Hrant Dink Award is far more than a commemorative gesture. It is an epistemic institution that corrects injustice, amplifies marginalized voices, creates interpretive resources, and cultivates virtues such as humility, open-mindedness, diligence, and courage. By honoring epistemic exemplars annually, it ensures that memory remains dynamic and connected to present struggles. The award’s structure, jury diversity, nomination process, laureates’ testimonies, and ceremonial pedagogy all contribute to its role as a site of memory activism that cultivates epistemic virtues. Its importance lies precisely in demonstrating that remembrance can be forward-oriented, producing virtues and justice in the present and future. For any study of memory activism’s role in cultivating epistemic virtues, the International Hrant Dink Award provides a paradigmatic case: it shows how honoring the memory of one truth-teller can inspire and amplify many others, creating an ongoing cycle of epistemic courage and justice.

4.5.5 Direct and Indirect Pathways to Memory Activism in Turkey

In this last part of the thesis, I propose a classification of the Hrant Dink Foundation’s memory activism into two categories: direct and indirect epistemic interventions. This distinction is not merely analytical but also strategic. While direct interventions such as using the term “Armenian Genocide” in commemorative campaigns or public discourse clearly confront official denial and invite public debate, indirect interventions tend to work more subtly by promoting inclusive historical understanding and fostering epistemic virtues like curiosity, humility, and open-

mindedness. These include projects on multicultural heritage, academic research, hate speech monitoring, and public education. Indirect interventions often remain overlooked in discussions of memory activism because their effects are less immediate or confrontational. However, I argue that they are no less political. On the contrary, indirect epistemic interventions have the potential to reshape dominant memory narratives in a slow and sustainable way, cultivating the epistemic dispositions necessary for long-term societal transformation. This classification allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how memory activism operates on different registers to resist denial, deepen historical consciousness, and advance epistemic justice.

HDF's direct interventions are characterized by their explicit engagement with the Armenian Genocide, a subject that remains highly contentious in Turkey. By using the term "Armenian Genocide" in its activities, the Foundation directly challenges the state's longstanding denial and encourages public discourse on this historical atrocity. One notable example is the Foundation's media monitoring reports, which analyze representations of Armenians and other minorities in Turkish media. These reports not only document instances of hate speech but also highlight the media's role in perpetuating denial and prejudice. By bringing these issues to light, HDF fosters critical awareness and encourages more responsible journalism.

The *Media Watch on Hate Speech* project (HDF, n.d.20), has been monitoring media content since 2009. The project's findings are widely disseminated through social media and shared with NGOs, media organizations, and professional associations, as well as published on its dedicated website, *nefretsoylemi.org*. Since 2013, this systematic research has included detailed case studies on discriminatory discourse, offering a nuanced critique of how historical events are framed in the media. Notably, the seventh report (Firat, Derya et. al., 2016) which examines coverage from 1995 to 2015, focuses on representations of Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day. It analyzes media content that both reinforces official denialist narratives and, conversely, contributes to a more reflective engagement with the past. In doing so, Asulis's media monitoring connects memory activism with the broader struggle against epistemic injustice, revealing how public discourse can either entrench or challenge dominant forms of historical knowledge.

Commemorative events organized by HDF also serve as direct interventions. For instance, the Foundation's involvement in the centennial commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in 2015 included the *Today in 1915* Twitter campaign, which

shared daily posts recounting events from that year. This initiative aimed to educate the public and honor the memory of the victims. However, it also provoked backlash from nationalist circles, leading to the creation of the *Facts of 1915* Twitter account, which disseminated counter-narratives denying the genocide and portraying Turks as victims. This reaction underscores the challenges faced by direct interventions in a polarized society.

In addition to direct approaches, HDF engages in indirect interventions that focus on Turkey's multicultural heritage without explicitly referencing the Armenian Genocide. These initiatives aim to create a more inclusive historical narrative by highlighting the contributions of various ethnic and religious communities.

Academic and cultural projects play a significant role in this regard. For example, the Foundation's conference series on the social, cultural, and economic history of different regions in Turkey sheds light on the diverse communities that have shaped the nation's past. The planned 2019 conference on Kayseri (Bianet 2019; Agos, 2024), which was to explore the city's multicultural history, faced significant obstacles. Initially banned by the Kayseri Governorship, the event was relocated to Istanbul, only to be prohibited again by the Şişli District Governorship just hours before its scheduled start. The Constitutional Court later ruled that the bans violated the Foundation's rights to assembly and free speech, emphasizing the importance of open discourse on historical issues.

A significant example of indirect epistemic intervention is the KarDes mobile application (HDF, n.d.33; n.d.34), which serves as a digital archive of Anatolia's multicultural heritage. By mapping and documenting overlooked Armenian cultural sites, KarDes confronts dominant historical narratives and invites users to engage with marginalized and suppressed histories. Between 2020 and 2024, the app attracted more than 35,000 users, reflecting a growing public interest in alternative memory practices. It currently offers 34 memory tours across cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, with additional content in development. The steady increase in downloads and user engagement signals KarDes's meaningful epistemic contribution to reshaping public memory and promoting historical awareness beyond nationalist frameworks.

Both direct and indirect interventions by HDF have elicited strong reactions from nationalist circles. The cancellation of the Kayseri conference, despite its focus on multicultural heritage rather than the genocide, illustrates the sensitivity surrounding discussions of minority histories in Turkey. Similarly, the backlash against the "Today

in 1915” Twitter campaign demonstrates the resistance faced by efforts to confront denial directly. These reactions highlight the challenges inherent in memory activism within a polarized society. They also underscore the importance of strategic approaches that balance the need for truth-telling with the goal of fostering inclusive dialogue.

While both direct and indirect interventions are vital for promoting epistemic justice, indirect approaches may offer a more sustainable path toward societal transformation in Turkey. By emphasizing shared heritage and fostering inclusive narratives, these initiatives can gradually reshape public understanding without provoking immediate backlash. However, the courage and clarity of direct interventions remain essential for challenging denial and affirming the experiences of marginalized communities. Together, these strategies contribute to a more nuanced and comprehensive engagement with Turkey's complex history.

4.6 From Memory Activism to Epistemic Virtues: Participant Reflections

A central claim of this thesis is that the memory activism carried out by Hrant Dink Foundation contributes to the cultivation of epistemic virtues under conditions of entrenched silencing and epistemic oppression. While the earlier chapters developed this claim primarily through theoretical analysis and institutional examination, this section offers a complementary justification by drawing on participants’ reflections from the Foundation’s public activities. These reflections, shared in a testimonial video produced by the Foundation, provide insight into how individuals experience HDF’s memory practices as epistemically formative encounters rather than merely symbolic or informational interventions.

The video analyzed here documents participant feedback from Hrant Dink Foundation’s organized activity that is designed as dialogical, reflective, and educational spaces addressing difficult pasts, contested narratives, and civic responsibility. Importantly, the aim of this section is not to treat these participant statements as exhaustive sociological evidence, but to interpret them as indicative experiential traces of epistemic transformation—precisely the kind of indirect, long-term epistemic effects that this dissertation argues are central to memory activism in politically constrained contexts.

The video (YouTube, 2025) was recorded during an educational program organized by HDF within the scope of its Minority Rights Academy. Designed as a two-stage

initiative combining face-to-face and online components, the program brought together participants for an intensive in-person seminar held in Istanbul in 23-26 May 2025. During this phase, participants engaged with foundational questions concerning minority concepts, the historical evolution of minority rights, their treatment within international and domestic legal frameworks, comparative policy approaches, and strategies of rights-based advocacy. The program aimed to foster critical reflection and informed dialogue by providing participants with conceptual tools and legal perspectives relevant to minority rights and civic engagement.

Participants' reflections from the event repeatedly point to experiences of epistemic humility, understood as a disruption of overconfident or inherited interpretive frameworks. One of the participants draws particular attention to the significance of gaps in knowledge; she becomes aware of these gaps through the event.

"There are so many things we don't know, especially the perception of Turkishness that was constructed during the Ottoman period before the Republican afterwards."
(Yasemin Soydan)

Such statements closely resonate with virtue-epistemological accounts that identify humility as an awareness of one's epistemic fallibility and situatedness. Rather than presenting historical knowledge as a set of correct propositions to be internalized, the Foundation's practices appear—through participants' own testimony—to foster an orientation of epistemic self-restraint and openness. This is particularly significant in a context where dominant narratives often reward epistemic certainty aligned with nationalized memory frameworks. The participant's emphasis on realizing limits, reconsidering one's position, or being unsettled signals a movement away from epistemic closure and toward reflective openness.

A second recurring theme is the cultivation of open-mindedness through sustained exposure to plural perspectives and dialogical formats. Participants describe being encouraged not merely to hear alternative narratives, but to remain with discomfort, ambiguity, and disagreement:

"It was very eye-opening and productive experience for me." (Şükran Demir)

"An environment that enabled us to see each other more closely, not from a distance."
(Can Terbiyeli)

This kind of experience aligns with the conception of open-mindedness developed in the epistemic virtues literature as a disposition to engage seriously with alternative viewpoints without immediate dismissal. Crucially, the participants do not describe

persuasion or conversion as the primary outcome. Instead, they emphasize learning how to listen, how to withhold premature judgment, and how to coexist with unresolved tensions—outcomes that support the thesis’s argument that HDF’s memory activism prioritizes epistemic transformation over consensus-building.

Similarly, intellectual curiosity/diligence can be seen as cultivated disposition. Several participants highlight the way the event motivated them to seek further information, reconsider their prior learning, or continue engaging with difficult histories beyond the immediate setting:

“I realized it sparked curiosity about things I didn’t know. There were things I went home and took notes on. I’m going to do a lot of book shopping in the coming days.”
(Merve Bakdur)

These reflections illustrate how HDF’s activities function as epistemic catalysts rather than closed pedagogical interventions. Intellectual diligence here does not manifest as mastery of historical content, but as a sustained willingness to inquire, to re-read, and to remain engaged with complexity over time. This is particularly important given the indirect nature of epistemic interventions identified in this dissertation: rather than producing immediate cognitive shifts, memory activism cultivates habits of inquiry that unfold gradually and persist beyond the event itself.

Taken together, the participant testimonies provide experiential support for the argument that Hrant Dink Foundation cultivates epistemic virtues through its memory practices. While limited in scope and not intended as comprehensive qualitative evidence, these reflections demonstrate how participants themselves articulate changes in epistemic orientation—toward humility, open-mindedness, intellectual curiosity/diligence. These shifts align closely with the virtue-theoretical framework developed in earlier chapters and corroborate the claim that memory activism operates as an epistemic practice under conditions of constraint.

Importantly, these outcomes must be interpreted within the broader political and epistemic context of Turkey, where increasing repression, shrinking civic space, and heightened epistemic oppression constrain the visibility and immediacy of civic impact. In such conditions, the cultivation of epistemic virtues through resilient, long-term memory practices becomes not only analytically significant but normatively crucial. The participant voices examined here thus do not merely illustrate individual learning experiences; they point to the fragile yet persistent capacity of civic initiatives

like the Hrant Dink Foundation to sustain epistemic resistance through virtue cultivation, even as overt forms of public intervention face growing backlash.

4.7 Conclusion

The case of Hrant Dink Foundation demonstrates how memory activism can serve not only as a form of historical reckoning but also as a sustained epistemic project. This dual character is what makes the foundation's work particularly illuminating for debates in both memory studies and epistemic injustice. Historical reckoning, understood narrowly, might be framed as the attempt to restore silenced histories to the public record or to memorialize victims who have been neglected in official narratives. Yet the work of HDF shows that reckoning with the past cannot be achieved merely by adding forgotten stories to the historical ledger. It requires a transformation of the epistemic environment: the cultivation of the virtues, practices, and institutional conditions through which societies come to know and recognize their pasts. By addressing silenced histories, challenging dominant narratives, and fostering pluralistic remembrance, HDF demonstrates that memory activism is as much about reshaping how we know as it is about what we remember.

In Turkey this epistemic dimension is especially vital. Collective memory has been shaped for decades by nationalist historiography. Denial is not only a political stance but also an epistemic condition—it distorts testimonial credibility, restricts interpretive resources, and reproduces ignorance as a form of social capital. In such a setting, memory activists like HDF play an indispensable role in reopening discursive spaces, generating counter-memory, and enabling civic participation grounded in truth-seeking and mutual recognition. Their interventions help counter the epistemic injustices identified by Fricker (2007): the testimonial injustice of silenced witnesses and the hermeneutical injustice of marginalized interpretive frameworks. In the Turkish case, these injustices have been deeply institutionalized, making the task of memory activists all the more urgent. HDF's work shows that epistemic repair requires not only recognition of silenced voices but also a sustained practice of cultivating virtues that allow society to engage with those voices responsibly.

As the chapter has shown, the activities of HDF promote epistemic transformation through two distinct but complementary pathways: *direct* and *indirect epistemic interventions*. This classification helps clarify both the variety and the depth of memory activism. *Direct interventions* include explicit confrontations with denial and

hate speech, efforts to expose historical distortions, and projects that name genocide openly in defiance of institutional taboos. *Indirect interventions*, by contrast, focus on creating spaces, resources, and practices that allow silenced histories to circulate without always being labeled as such cultural heritage projects, intercultural dialogue, or educational initiatives that gradually shift the terrain of understanding. Both pathways share the same ultimate goal: confronting epistemic injustice and advancing a more inclusive, pluralistic understanding of the past. Yet they operate differently in terms of visibility, resonance, and sustainability.

The conceptual distinction between direct and indirect epistemic interventions reveals the multifaceted nature of memory activism. Truth-telling is not a singular event or a one-time act of revelation. It is a process that requires repeated engagement, creative strategies, and a willingness to adapt to changing conditions of receptivity in society. Academic research, public education, cultural preservation, artistic projects, and digital innovation all become part of this broader process. HDF's initiatives exemplify how activism can move across this spectrum, sometimes naming denial explicitly, at other times cultivating the background conditions necessary for future acknowledgment. This multi-modality makes the foundation's work particularly instructive for thinking about how epistemic resistance can be both immediate and long-term, both confrontational and generative.

Ultimately, the work of Hrant Dink Foundation shows that coming to terms with the past is not only a political or moral imperative it is also an epistemic one. A society marked by historical trauma and state denial cannot move forward without developing the virtues necessary to acknowledge wrongs, listen to silenced voices, and revise entrenched narratives. The epistemic virtues discussed earlier humility, intellectual curiosity/diligence, and open-mindedness (Medina, 2013) are not abstract ideals but concrete dispositions that memory activism can help to cultivate. Humility is needed to recognize that dominant historical narratives are partial and often complicit in silencing. Curiosity is essential for seeking out marginalized archives, oral histories, and alternative perspectives. Open-mindedness allows dialogue across deep divides, creating the possibility of mutual recognition. By fostering these virtues, HDF demonstrates that the task of memory activism is inseparable from the cultivation of epistemic justice.

At the same time, this conclusion must acknowledge the challenges and limits of such efforts. *Direct interventions* carry the ethical weight of naming injustice, but they also

risk immediate backlash, legal sanction, or social polarization in a context where denialism remains entrenched. Indirect interventions, while more sustainable, can sometimes appear less urgent or too cautious, leaving the impression that they avoid confrontation. Yet rather than seeing these approaches as competing, the framework advanced here shows that they are mutually reinforcing. *Direct interventions* remind society of the ethical imperative to name past wrongs, while *indirect interventions* build the epistemic ground on which such naming can eventually take root. In this sense, HDF's dual strategy reflects a deep understanding of the long temporality of epistemic change. Reckoning with the past is not a single event but an ongoing struggle, one that requires different registers of activism operating in concert.

It is also important to stress that HDF's contributions resonate beyond the Armenian question narrowly conceived. By engaging with multicultural heritage, combating hate speech, and fostering spaces of dialogue, the foundation demonstrates how memory activism can address multiple forms of exclusion simultaneously. This broad focus not only strengthens its position in Turkish civil society but also enriches its epistemic interventions by connecting the Armenian Genocide with wider struggles against racism, nationalism, and authoritarianism. In doing so, HDF affirms that epistemic virtues cultivated through one struggle can spill over into broader public culture, making society more receptive to pluralism and more resistant to epistemic injustice across contexts.

The influence of Hrant Dink Foundation extends beyond its own initiatives by creating what José Medina (2012; 2023) calls *echoability*, the capacity of epistemic interventions to reverberate across social contexts and inspire further acts of resistance. Through its sustained activities in education, public dialogue, and the monitoring of hate speech, the Foundation not only challenges illiberal memory politics directly but also provides models of practice that other civil society organizations can adapt. By institutionalizing memory work in Turkey's restrictive political climate, the Foundation has shown that direct epistemic interventions—such as generating counter-archives, offering alternative educational resources, and holding conferences that pluralize narratives—can endure even under authoritarian conditions. At the same time, its indirect interventions, which cultivate epistemic virtues of humility, curiosity, and open-mindedness among diverse audiences, generate conditions where memory activism becomes more broadly conceivable. Hafıza Merkezi (n.d.1) exemplifies this echoing effect. Established to document enforced disappearances, political violence,

and human rights abuses, Hafiza Merkezi has developed projects of documentation and advocacy that mirror the epistemic commitments priorly demonstrated by Hrant Dink Foundation. Like the Foundation, it seeks to repair testimonial injustice by giving credibility to voices systematically excluded from public discourse, and it counters hermeneutical injustice by expanding interpretive frameworks to understand experiences of loss and repression. The two institutions differ in focus—the Foundation emphasizes minority rights and genocide remembrance, while Hafiza Merkezi centers on state violence and accountability—but both exemplify how epistemic interventions can resonate across organizational boundaries, reinforcing each other’s impact. This dynamic of echoability not only multiplies the sites where denialist narratives are contested but also sustains a civic culture where memory activism is normalized, shared, and strengthened through interconnected practices of epistemic resistance.

The case of HDF thus provides a broader lesson for the study of memory activism as a whole. Too often, memory activism is understood primarily in moral or political terms as an effort to honor victims, demand recognition, or push for institutional reform. While these dimensions are undeniably important, focusing solely on them risks overlooking the epistemic stakes of memory activism. The example of HDF shows that such activism must also be evaluated for its role in reshaping how societies know, how they attribute credibility, how they interpret events, and how they remain open to revising entrenched beliefs. When seen in this light, memory activism is not only about justice for the past but also about creating the epistemic conditions for justice in the present and future. It is a practice of knowledge transformation, in other words remembering differently.

While I argue that *indirect interventions* may offer greater potential for sustainable epistemic transformation in Turkey precisely because of their capacity to work beneath the surface, foster engagement without immediate polarization, and reshape the epistemic terrain over time I also fully acknowledge and respect the importance of *direct interventions*. They are irreplaceable in carrying the ethical weight of naming injustice and asserting the dignity of those whose suffering has been denied. Together, these two pathways exemplify the power of memory activism not only to reckon with the past but also to cultivate the epistemic virtues necessary for a more just and reflective society. By situating HDF’s initiatives within this dual framework, this

chapter underscores the foundation's significance not only as a civic actor but also as an epistemic agent.

In conclusion, the case of Hrant Dink Foundation teaches us that memory activism cannot be reduced to symbolic commemoration or narrow political demands. It is, at its core, a transformative epistemic practice. It works on the deep structures of how societies come to know themselves, how they face uncomfortable truths, and how they imagine their future together. In the Turkish context, where denial has long functioned as an epistemic closure, HDF opens pathways toward humility instead of arrogance, curiosity instead of indifference, openness instead of dogmatism. It shows that memory activism is not only about preserving the past but about cultivating the epistemic conditions of justice. And it affirms that the struggle against denial is not simply a fight over history it is a struggle over how we know, how we recognize one another, and how we build a society capable of facing its truths.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The persistence of injustice across time is inseparable from the persistence of ignorance. When societies deny or forget the wrongs they have committed, they perpetuate harm not only through silence but through the reproduction of epistemic asymmetries. The denial of atrocity, as Imge Oranlı (2018) argues, is a “ideologically supported political lie” that is both a moral and epistemic failure (Oranlı 2018, p. 45). This systematic distortion of knowledge prevents collective understanding and obstructs moral learning. To come to terms with such legacies, societies must not only remember but learn to know differently. This dissertation has sought to demonstrate that justice after atrocity depends on cultivating *epistemic justice*: the restoration of fair epistemic relations through which silenced histories can once again be heard, trusted, and integrated into public life.

The preceding chapters have explored how epistemic injustice operates in contexts of denial, how memory activism challenges these injustices, and how Hrant Dink Foundation exemplifies the cultivation of *epistemic virtues*—humility, courage, diligence, and open-mindedness—in Turkey’s post-denialist landscape. Drawing on Miranda Fricker’s (2007) account of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, and José Medina’s (2013) conception of epistemic resistance, the dissertation has proposed that remembrance is not simply an ethical duty but a mode of epistemic repair. The denial of historical atrocities constitutes a paradigmatic case of epistemic domination that devalues the testimonies of victims and restricts the conceptual tools needed to make sense of their suffering (Fricker, 2007). Such denial perpetuates what Fricker calls *hermeneutical marginalization*, a condition in which entire groups are excluded from the interpretive resources that structure collective understanding (Fricker, 2003). In the Turkish case, this dynamic has been evident since the founding of the Republic. As Meral Uğur Çınar (2015) demonstrates, the state’s model of citizenship was constructed through selective historical narratives that excluded minorities from the moral community of the nation. Through official history textbooks, commemorations, and public discourse, the state institutionalized a national identity that celebrated homogeneity while erasing the traces of multiethnic and multireligious coexistence. This erasure, as Lerna Ekmekçioğlu (2021) shows, placed the surviving Armenian community in a paradoxical position—legally tolerated but symbolically excluded,

forced to express loyalty to a nation built upon their dispossession. Jennifer Dixon's (2018) comparative study *Dark Pasts* clarifies how such practices constitute a form of *governed ignorance*: an intentional strategy by which states regulate collective memory to preserve legitimacy. Through the control of education, diplomacy, and commemoration, governments calibrate acknowledgment and denial to maintain social cohesion, thereby producing structured epistemic inequality.

This political management of knowledge sustains what Jeff Spinner-Halev (2007) terms *enduring injustice*: a form of harm that originates in historical wrongdoing but continues because it is embedded in contemporary social and epistemic structures. In the Turkish context, the denial of historical atrocities is not simply a historical issue but an ongoing system of epistemic exclusion. It distorts public understanding, isolates the descendants of victims, and perpetuates ignorance as a civic virtue. As Susan Sontag (2004) observes, the failure to connect seeing with knowing and knowing with caring marks a broader crisis of moral perception. Images, narratives, and testimonies alone cannot generate understanding unless accompanied by the epistemic virtues that enable empathy and reflexivity.

Miranda Fricker (2013) argues that epistemic injustice undermines not only truth-seeking but also the capacity for collective self-determination. When marginalized groups are denied credibility or interpretive authority, they are also denied participation in the democratic shaping of shared meanings. Epistemic justice, therefore, is a precondition for freedom: without epistemic inclusion, political equality remains hollow. The act of acknowledging historical wrongs thus becomes an act of restoring freedom—an expansion of who counts as a contributor to the collective understanding of the past and the moral direction of the future.

From this standpoint, memory activism can be understood as a deliberate form of epistemic resistance. Yifat Gutman and Jenny Wüstenberg (2023) describe memory activists as “moral entrepreneurs of remembrance” who seek to reshape collective understandings of the past by introducing new moral vocabularies, symbolic practices, and interpretive frameworks. Memory activism confronts epistemic injustice not only by restoring silenced truths but by cultivating the dispositions necessary for just knowing.

Imge Oranlı's (2018) analysis helps clarify why memory activism is necessary. Genocide denial, she argues, operates as a “second-order evil,” distinct from the original atrocity but reproducing its moral structure through epistemic means. Denial

is not merely a refusal to acknowledge the past; it is a continuation of violence through the systematic suppression of knowledge and the maintenance of ignorance as a political resource. Memory activism, therefore, disrupts the structures of silence and ignorance that sustain injustice. By transforming remembrance into public pedagogy, it heals what Fricker calls “epistemic wounds”—the cumulative injuries inflicted upon the credibility, intelligibility, and agency of the oppressed.

Hrant Dink Foundation’s initiatives illustrate how this process operates in practice. Its Media Watch reports expose how hate speech functions as a daily mechanism of epistemic exclusion, shaping who can be heard and who remains invisible. By quantifying and publicizing these discursive patterns, the Foundation performs an act of epistemic transparency, returning visibility to those rendered voiceless. Similarly, 23.5 Site of Memory offers a physical and symbolic space for epistemic repair. By combining testimonies, artifacts, and reflective installations, it transforms mourning into learning. Visitors are invited not only to witness but to question their own positions within the web of denial—a process akin to Medina’s (2013) *epistemic friction*, which enables moral growth through discomfort.

This transformation from ignorance to understanding parallels what Spinner-Halev (2007) describes as the shift from historical to enduring injustice. While historical injustices refer to past wrongs, enduring injustices persist because the underlying epistemic and moral structures remain unaltered. Memory activism targets precisely these structures. It seeks to ensure that remembrance is not an isolated ritual but a sustained process of epistemic cultivation. By linking acknowledgment to virtue development, it transforms remembrance from a static act of commemoration into an ongoing practice of democratic renewal.

As Sontag (2004) warns, the representation of suffering risks becoming superficial when divorced from self-reflection. The challenge, then, is not merely to show or to tell but to learn to know differently. Hrant Dink Foundation’s pedagogy of remembrance achieves this by connecting knowledge to responsibility. Its activities compel participants to see the past not as a distant tragedy but as a living question about how to live together after violence. In this way, the Foundation enacts what Fricker (2013) calls the *freedom of the epistemic subject*—the capacity to participate in shaping the shared meanings through which a society understands itself.

The significance of these practices extends beyond the Turkish context. As Gutman and Wüstenberg (2023) note, memory activism is part of a broader transnational

movement toward “grassroots moral responsibility,” in which civil actors, rather than states, take the lead in confronting dark pasts. Hrant Dink Foundation’s model resonates with similar initiatives elsewhere—such as Zochrot in Israel/Palestine, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in the Balkans, or the ESMA Museum in Argentina—all of which transform remembrance into epistemic resistance against denialist or authoritarian regimes. Together, they reveal that epistemic justice is not a static end-state but a collective and ongoing practice of moral imagination.

The broader philosophical implication is that epistemic virtue is not an individual disposition alone but a social capacity. It is cultivated through institutions, practices, and interactions that encourage reflexivity and empathy. Memory activism, by providing such contexts, serves as both a school of virtue and a laboratory of justice. Through sustained engagement with difficult histories, it teaches societies to tolerate ambiguity, to recognize multiple truths, and to remain open to moral transformation. In this way, epistemic virtues become public virtues—dispositions that sustain the fragile conditions of democratic coexistence.

This thesis has examined the epistemic contributions of memory activism through the case study of Hrant Dink Foundation, arguing that memory activism can cultivate key epistemic virtues in societies. Grounded in the conceptual framework of epistemic injustice and the corresponding development of epistemic virtues especially epistemic humility, intellectual diligence or curiosity, and open-mindedness this work has offered a philosophical, political, and empirical reflection on how civil society actors can reconfigure public understandings of the past. In doing so, the thesis has shown that memory activism is not merely about preserving or commemorating historical events; it is a profoundly epistemic endeavor, one that challenges dominant knowledge regimes and promotes the conditions under which critical self-reflection, recognition, and justice become possible.

Chapter 2 outlined the theoretical foundation of epistemic injustice, drawing from scholars such as Miranda Fricker, José Medina, and Charles Mills. It also explored how recognition theory, feminist epistemology, and race theory have expanded our understanding of how epistemic harm operates structurally and relationally. These frameworks collectively demonstrate that injustice is not only a material or political phenomenon but also an epistemic one embedded in whose voices are heard, whose knowledge is valued, and whose histories are remembered. Crucially, the chapter also introduced the notion of epistemic virtues as corrective practices dispositions and

habits of mind that resist epistemic injustice. The cultivation of such virtues is essential for dismantling entrenched power hierarchies in knowledge production and transmission.

Chapter 3 developed this foundation by turning to the concept of memory activism as a space where epistemic virtues can be cultivated. Drawing on global case studies most notably in Germany it analyzed how civil society initiatives around historical injustice contribute to the formation of more epistemically just publics. The chapter argued that memory activism operates not only through institutional mechanisms of memorialization but also through decentralized civic efforts, which challenge erasure, silence, and denial. These practices often model and encourage the development of epistemic humility (recognizing one's ignorance or complicity), intellectual curiosity (seeking out neglected narratives), and open-mindedness (engaging with unfamiliar or uncomfortable perspectives). The relationship between memory activism and epistemic virtues, though under-theorized in much of the existing literature, is shown to be both close and consequential.

Chapter 4 brought these theoretical insights into dialogue with the Turkish context through an in-depth study of Hrant Dink Foundation. In a country where the denial of the Armenian Genocide continues to shape public discourse and historical consciousness, HDF stands as a courageous and innovative actor in the field of memory activism. By initiating commemorative acts, cultural preservation projects, media analysis, and platforms for dialogue, the Foundation embodies a commitment to resisting epistemic injustice and fostering alternative ways of knowing. The 23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory, the KarDes mobile application, the Media Watch on Hate Speech, and various public forums hosted by Asulis Discourse Laboratory all exemplify efforts to create spaces for pluralistic, inclusive, and critically engaged memory.

This final chapter brings the thesis to a close by highlighting three key insights. First, it reaffirms that memory activism can and does promote epistemic virtues in meaningful ways. Second, it situates Hrant Dink Foundation's contributions within broader frameworks of remembrance. Third, it reflects on the proposed classification of epistemic interventions into *direct* and *indirect* strategies, arguing that both are essential but that the often-overlooked indirect pathways may hold particular promise for long-term epistemic transformation.

The typology, *direct* and *indirect* interventions, helps to clarify the diversity of strategies employed by memory activists, as well as the different forms of risk, resistance, and transformation associated with each. Direct epistemic interventions, such as genocide commemorations or campaigns using the term “Armenian Genocide,” explicitly confront denial and silence. They seek to correct historical falsehoods and validate suppressed testimonies. These interventions are morally and politically necessary, often involving significant courage and social cost. However, they tend to generate polarized reactions and are susceptible to backlash, as illustrated by the nationalist counter-campaign “#Factsof1915” in response to HDF’s “#TodayIn1915” Twitter initiative. By contrast, indirect interventions work through less confrontational but equally significant routes. Projects like *KarDes*, which map and preserve multicultural heritage, or the *Media Watch on Hate Speech*, which exposes discriminatory narratives in the press, do not always invoke the genocide explicitly. Instead, they shift the epistemic terrain gradually by building curiosity, normalizing pluralism, and unsettling dominant assumptions. These initiatives cultivate epistemic virtues not by naming the wound outright, but by creating the cognitive and moral space in which acknowledgment can become possible.

It is important to underline the significance of these *indirect pathways*. In restrictive political contexts, where legal or cultural constraints limit what can be said, such strategies may offer more sustainable routes toward epistemic justice. They also allow for broader civic engagement, drawing in individuals who might initially resist more direct challenges to dominant historical narratives.

Hrant Dink Foundation stands as a compelling example of how memory activism can contribute to the cultivation of epistemic virtues. It demonstrates that remembrance is not only a matter of historical fidelity or moral duty, but also a practice of knowing otherwise. By challenging epistemic injustice and fostering a more inclusive historical consciousness, HDF models a form of civic engagement grounded in humility, curiosity, and openness. These virtues, in turn, are essential for the ethical and political renewal of societies struggling to reckon with painful pasts.

Hrant Dink Foundation’s memory activism can be fruitfully understood as contributing to an *agonistic mood of remembrance*, as articulated by Anna Cento Bull and Hans Hansen (2016) and rooted in Chantal Mouffe’s (2005) theory of agonism. Rather than striving for a singular, reconciliatory truth about the Armenian Genocide and the broader multicultural history of Anatolia, the Foundation creates spaces in which

contested narratives can coexist and be openly debated. Through its commemorative initiatives, such as the annual April 24 events and the *#Todayin1915* campaign, HDF explicitly disrupts the hegemonic state denial of the genocide. At the same time, through projects like *KarDes*, *Media Watch on Hate Speech*, and the *23.5 Hrant Dink Site of Memory*, it enables a dialogic engagement with Turkey's plural histories inviting multiple, often conflicting perspectives into the public sphere. This approach aligns with the agonistic model in that it does not aim to erase differences or produce consensus, but to cultivate democratic sensibilities by recognizing and legitimizing historical dissent. By fostering epistemic virtues such as humility, open-mindedness, and intellectual diligence, HDF's activism promotes not only a more inclusive understanding of the past but also a civic culture capable of sustaining ongoing disagreement without silencing marginalized voices.

The cultivation of epistemic virtues through memory activism is not an abstract theoretical possibility; it is an urgent, ongoing, and embodied practice especially in the context where there is a rise of illiberal memory culture. It requires courage, care, and creativity. Hrant Dink Foundation shows us how this work can be done—with dignity, with persistence, and with the hope that truth, however long denied, can still find its place in public life.

This thesis has several important limitations that also point toward productive avenues for future research. Empirically, the analysis concentrates primarily on the digital archives, publications, and publicly accessible memory practices of Hrant Dink Foundation. While this focus allows for a systematic examination of epistemic interventions and their contribution to transforming epistemic conditions, it inevitably leaves aside the experiential, affective, and dialogical dimensions of these practices. Future work could therefore complement this analysis with qualitative interviews and ethnographic methods to better capture how participants, visitors, and collaborators experience the foundation's memory work and how these encounters shape epistemic dispositions in everyday contexts. More broadly, the Turkish case itself poses significant analytical constraints. As epistemic oppression has intensified through heightened political pressure, shrinking civic space, and increasingly punitive regulatory frameworks, the conditions under which civic initiatives operate have become more precarious and resilient rather than openly transformative. Memory activism is thus often forced into forms of cautious persistence rather than visible intervention, complicating efforts to trace its epistemic effects. These constraints are

not merely methodological but reflect the very dynamics under study: the fragility of epistemic resistance in contexts where civic initiatives face direct backlash, including the cancellation of public events (Kayseri Conference) and sustained pressures on critical memory work. Acknowledging these limitations underscores both the difficulty and the necessity of analyzing memory activism as an epistemic practice under conditions of deepening silencing and constraint.

The work of the Hrant Dink Foundation demonstrates that even in political contexts where illiberalism dominates and denialist narratives remain deeply entrenched, memory activism can carve out fragile but enduring spaces of pluralism, recognition, and epistemic justice. Since its establishment, the Foundation has attempted to address the epistemic consequences of Turkey's culture of denial and exclusion. These efforts have not been limited to commemorating past injustices but have extended into sustained interventions that challenge the reproduction of epistemic injustice in contemporary society. In a climate where official history and memory culture are shaped by nationalist and authoritarian imperatives, the Foundation's educational programs, conferences, and systematic monitoring of hate speech in the media function as critical counter-practices. They not only contest illiberal narratives but also cultivate the epistemic virtues necessary for a more just memory culture.

One of the most significant dimensions of the Foundation's work lies in its educational programs. Through initiatives such as the Minority Rights Academy, youth trainings, and projects that connect students with cultural heritage, the Foundation nurtures an environment where participants can engage critically with history and memory. These programs directly counter the illiberal narrative that saturates mainstream education. By equipping new generations with interpretive resources to understand silenced histories, the Foundation combats hermeneutical injustice. Education becomes not merely the transfer of knowledge but a process of cultivating epistemic virtues. Students and participants are encouraged to develop epistemic humility in recognizing the limits of national narratives, intellectual curiosity in seeking out perspectives that have been excluded, and open-mindedness in engaging with plural experiences. In this way, the Foundation offers an alternative pedagogy that does not reproduce the dogmatism of illiberal memory politics but instead creates citizens capable of epistemic justice.

Conferences and workshops organized by the Foundation provide another space where epistemic resistance takes shape. These gatherings bring together academics, activists,

journalists, and community members to deliberate on issues of history, memory, minority rights, and democracy. In a climate where public space is increasingly constrained, such conferences create temporary but significant openings for dialogue across difference.. By convening diverse actors, the Foundation disrupts the homogeneity imposed by nationalist narratives and offers platforms where alternative stories can be voiced. These conferences are not only symbolic but also epistemic acts, as they reconfigure who counts as a credible knower in Turkish society. By giving the floor to those traditionally silenced, the Foundation undermines testimonial injustice and demonstrates that memory activism is a practice of epistemic repair.

Another cornerstone of the Foundation's efforts is its long-running project of monitoring and recording hate speech in the media. This initiative systematically analyzes newspapers, television, and other media outlets to document instances where minorities are targeted, vilified, or dehumanized. The regular reports produced through this program not only expose the persistence of hate discourse but also reveal how media serves as a conduit for reproducing illiberal narratives. By compiling empirical evidence, the Foundation resists the normalization of discriminatory speech and highlights the ways in which public discourse excludes and marginalizes. In doing so, it contributes to what Medina (2013) has called epistemic resistance: the practice of countering the mechanisms that silence oppressed voices and sustaining alternative epistemic resources. In a society where the dominant narrative seeks to erase or deny, the act of recording itself becomes a form of memory activism, preserving traces that official discourse would prefer to eliminate.

The significance of these interventions is heightened by the broader political climate in which they operate. Illiberal populism in Turkey, as elsewhere, thrives on polarization, constructing a binary between "the people" and their supposed enemies. Within such a framework, minorities, dissidents, and activists are easily labeled as threats to the unity of the nation. Alternative memories are not merely ignored but are framed as dangerous distortions. This environment raises the risks for memory activists, but it also underscores the necessity of their work. Hrant Dink Foundation demonstrates that memory activism in such conditions must be both adaptive and sustained. Rather than relying solely on dramatic public confrontations that authoritarian regimes can easily suppress, the Foundation builds enduring infrastructures of remembrance and knowledge. Its programs embed alternative

memories into education, civil society, and archives, ensuring their survival beyond immediate political cycles.

By engaging in this multi-faceted work, the Foundation not only contests illiberal narratives but also fosters the epistemic virtues necessary for democratic life. The cultivation of humility, curiosity, and open-mindedness is indispensable in contexts where epistemic arrogance, willful ignorance, and dogmatism are systematically encouraged by the state. The Foundation's practices show that epistemic virtues are not abstract ideals but can be cultivated through concrete memory work: in classrooms that encourage critical questioning, in conferences that value diverse testimonies, and in reports that meticulously document injustice. In this sense, the Foundation embodies the possibility of cultivating epistemic justice through memory activism. Its initiatives create fragile but vital counter-publics where silenced histories gain recognition and where society can begin to imagine itself differently.

As the rise of nationalism and authoritarianism continues to threaten pluralistic memory cultures, the example of Hrant Dink Foundation underscores the enduring significance of civil initiatives in preserving the conditions for epistemic justice. By combining educational efforts, platforms for dialogue, and systematic documentation, it ensures that silenced memories are not extinguished but continue to circulate, offering resources for future recognition. The Foundation's work reveals that in times of epistemic crisis, memory activism is not merely about the past; it is an intervention into the very conditions of knowing and living together.

In concluding this dissertation, it is crucial to return to the central claim: that justice in the aftermath of atrocity must also be conceived as an epistemic undertaking. Legal and institutional mechanisms can redress certain material harms, but they cannot alone restore the conditions of mutual understanding that denial destroys. The repair of epistemic injustice requires the slow, patient cultivation of virtues that enable societies to listen, to remember, and to learn. Hrant Dink Foundation demonstrates how this cultivation can occur within civil society—through education, cultural production, and dialogue rather than coercion. Its work shows that memory activism can become an ground for cultivating epistemic virtues, sustaining the conditions under which truth and empathy can coexist.

The path toward epistemic justice is neither linear nor complete. As Medina (2013) reminds us, resistance is an ongoing practice sustained by friction, vulnerability, and openness to change. Each act of remembrance, each conversation across lines of

division, contributes incrementally to this moral labor. In this sense, memory activism represents a democratic commitment to knowing rightly, to acknowledging that knowledge itself can be unjust and that justice requires transforming the ways we come to know.

To ignore or deny historical injustices is to perpetuate epistemic arrogance and moral blindness; to remember and engage with them is to cultivate the virtues of a just society. The task of memory activism, as this study has argued, is to transform remembrance into epistemic responsibility—to make of memory not a monument to suffering but a medium for learning, empathy, and freedom. Hrant Dink Foundation’s example reveals that even in the aftermath of denial, epistemic repair is possible.

To conclude, the pursuit of justice through remembrance is, at its heart, an act of faith in our collective capacity to learn. Every instance of epistemic injustice—every silencing, every distortion, every erasure—reveals how fragile our shared world of meaning is, and how easily it can be corrupted by fear and pride. Yet, as this dissertation has shown, the work of memory activism demonstrates that epistemic repair is possible. It begins with the humble acknowledgment that knowledge is never neutral, that truth must be struggled for, and that listening is itself a moral act. Hrant Dink Foundation embodies this labor of listening. It transforms mourning into moral imagination, dialogue into solidarity, and remembrance into an ongoing civic virtue. Its practices remind us that justice does not lie in perfect understanding but in the willingness to seek understanding together, across pain and difference. To remember, then, is to affirm the possibility of a shared future built on truth rather than denial. In Hrant Dink’s own spirit, the task is not to divide past from present, but to weave them together into a living commitment to humanity—to know rightly, to speak courageously, and to remember so that we may, at last, live justly.

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