

---

CHAPTER 1

---

**Prejudicial Dysfunctions, Epistemic Practices and Priestly Formation: Anselm Jimoh and the Pursuit of Genuine Knowledge**

*Francis Eshemomoh IKHIANOSIME*

**Introduction**

The seminal work of Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*<sup>1</sup>, has become the *locus classicus* in contemporary discourses in social epistemology for analysing the different ways there can be dysfunctions in our epistemic practices. Fricker explores two main ways of dysfunctions in our epistemic practices. The first occurs in testimonial transaction, wherein a speaker can have a deflated credibility from a hearer owing to prejudice on the hearer's part. A deflated credibility can be due to a "negative-identity-prejudicial stereotype" a hearer has about a speaker. In such a situation, prejudice plays a negative role. In the history of epistemology, the debate of testimony being a source of knowledge is intractable and vexed. Although there are vigorous queries on whether testimony is an autonomous source of epistemic authority, it is nevertheless, arguably true that much of what we know is testimonially acquired; from information from books, teachers to what others tell us. But, prejudice plays a facultative role on how we accept or refute the claim of a person or an epistemic agent. For instance, if S has an ill-founded idea that P is a liar, because as at the last time S asked P if he drinks alcohol, he replied in the negative, not knowing that S had asked P, the question to test his sincerity, because

about two years ago, S had seen P at a function drinking a bottle of beer, but, unknown to S that P had exchanged the contents of the alcohol with a non-alcoholic substance earlier because there were no glass cups around. Then, S concluded that P is a liar on that basis. While S has grounds to believe P is telling a lie and so concludes that P is a liar, S's claim for P is ill-founded. In such a situation, S can become prejudiced to whatever P says. This can be a prejudice that deflates S's degree of credibility for P. Prejudice, therefore, can block the flow of knowledge and weaken the chances for achieving truth. Prejudice can manifest itself in varied ways. Fricker calls this kind of situation where prejudice shrinks a hearer's credibility, testimonial injustice.

The second dysfunction in epistemic practice is what she calls, hermeneutical injustice. In her precis to the epochal seminal work in question, Fricker explains that this occurs "at a prior stage, when someone is trying to make sense of a social experience but is handicapped in this by a certain sort of gap in collective understanding – a hermeneutical lacuna whose existence is owing to the relative powerlessness of a social group to which the subject belongs. Such a lacuna renders the collective interpretive resources *structurally prejudiced*".<sup>2</sup> The dysfunction referred to by Fricker as hermeneutic injustice often has a cultural or historical context. For instance, in an environment where smokers are regarded as perverts because of the cultural understanding of smoking, in such a situation, a smoker would be morally deflated or disdained when he talks on some moral matters for instance. This can lead to 'hermeneutical inequality'.

The two forms of injustices identified by Fricker abound from wrongs or negative influence of prejudice. Nevertheless, the philosophical understanding of prejudice is not necessarily negative. The work of Fricker, therefore, has opened up new considerations of harms and wrongs in epistemic practices. Her work has become a launchpad for discussing different social environments, how epistemic accounts are formed, and how epistemic transactions are interpreted. This work attempts to discuss how prejudicial dysfunction can either lead to credibility deficit or excess in the formation of priests, taking a seminary as an epistemic community. In the formation of priests, a lot rests on judgments and assessment from different evaluators/Formators. These reports ultimately form the

basis for discernment and judging of the suitability of a candidate for the priesthood. Like every testimonial or hermeneutic practice, the goal is understanding or knowledge in the long run. Prejudice can either stand in the way as a positive or negative element. This work, therefore, set to establish some ways there can be dysfunctions in an epistemic environment of priestly formation. This work analyses the understanding of prejudice from a philosophical standpoint and further progresses to analyse epistemic practices in priestly formation. Granted that the goal of every epistemic practice and epistemology is a holistic vision for knowledge and truth, the last part of this work devotes attention to how Anselm Jimoh, the silver jubilarian as an academic, has been involved in the pursuit of this agenda in epistemology, taking note of some of his contributions in pursuing the vision for a genuine knowledge in epistemology and also in creating a clearer understanding of what the priestly ministry should be as an epistemic subject in particular.

### **Philosophical Understanding of Prejudice**

Prejudice as a philosophical concept is historical. Anja Steinbauer argues that the first philosophical musings about the concept 'prejudice' (*praeiustitium*) started during the classical age with Cicero. He talks of prejudice as the opposite of the truth, associated with an error. For Cicero, prejudice is born out of manipulation.<sup>3</sup> He cites the legal context to explain for instance, that once a juror had listened to a particular case over and over, so once a trial happens and a lawyer is citing a version of that case, has little to do to convince them of the veracity of his words. Thus, the case in question takes its merit from the understanding of previous accounts listened.

During the period of the Enlightenment which was marked by the Renaissance, the understanding of prejudice as manipulation was abandoned, and rather, the concern was with the problem of prejudice. Francis Bacon's doctrine on prejudice was equated with "idols of the mind" (*idola*) which the intellect must be purified from if it can get knowledge. This understanding of prejudice (*idola*) which the mind must get rid off continues with the works of Descartes. According to Descartes, the first act of the new philosophy is to free the mind of prejudice. Descartes explains: "I yet apprehend that they cannot be adequately understood by many, both because they are also a little lengthy and dependent the one on other, and principally

because they demand a mind wholly free of prejudices, and one which can be easily detached from the affairs of the senses”<sup>4</sup> With the Enlightenment, prejudices takes on a negative connotation as prejudice. In the light of this thought, Voltaire regards prejudice as an opinion without judgment.<sup>5</sup> This transfusing understanding of prejudice as a prejudged opinion continued and was also a fashionable term during the French Revolution which denoted “all errors of the mind, which, in the worst cases, could only be eradicated by means of the guillotine!”<sup>6</sup>

The views on prejudice during the Enlightenment period sometimes confused the preliminary thought of an individual on an issue for a conclusive claim. Hence, the misgiving and labelling of prejudice as errors that blurs understanding. It is against this background that Gadamer evolves his philosophy on prejudice which argues for a beneficial and valuable role of prejudice. With Gadamer, Prejudice as a philosophical concept was immune from his negative garb. Gadamer explains the positive validity, the value of the provisional decision as a prejudgment, like that of any precedent”<sup>7</sup> Cynthia Nielsen argues that “Gadamer’s focus on the positive value of prejudgment is part of his critique of Enlightenment rationalism, which claimed that judgment is legitimate only when methodologically justified. Absent such justification, a judgment is rendered baseless. Thus, all appeals to tradition and the authority of others – where accepting authoritative voices is misunderstood as relinquishing the use of one’s own reason- are considered invalid and irrational”<sup>8</sup>.

Gadamer argues that prejudice aids understanding. He notes that anyone trying to understand something or a text projects an initial meaning and it is this that guides the actual meaning of the text. Gadamer appeals to binary opposition to establish the value of prejudice. The theory of binary opposition is seen as a fundamental organizer of language, culture and human philosophy. In simple terms, this theory explains that we derive the meaning of a thing or concept by an appeal to its opposite. For instance, we can understand darkness more with the concept of light, etc. It is in this sense, Gadamer explains that fore-meanings or what is understood as prejudice helps to protect a text from a misunderstanding from the start. In this case, the actual meaning of a text becomes more valuable and meaningful, only with the presence of fore-meanings. With

prejudice, what is required in openness. The reader must remain open in reading the text. He notes clearly:

A person trying to understand something will not resign himself from the start to relying on his own accidental fore-meanings, ignoring as consistently and stubbornly as possible the actual meaning of the text until the latter becomes so persistently audible that it breaks through what the interpreter imagines it to be. Rather, a person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something. That is why a hermeneutically trained consciousness must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's alterity.<sup>9</sup>

Even with Gadamer, prejudice is not a terminus in understanding, it is only a pathway to getting meaning. We must take note of the window he offers for this, and that is "openness". However, he fails to realize that prejudice can, in fact, be the clog on the wheel of openness. This becomes as he describes it, "the tyranny of hidden prejudices" and this makes us deaf to understanding and actual meaning oftentimes. Prejudice, therefore, can either be positive or negative. From the Gadamerian understanding of prejudice, the concept can be epistemically neutral as it pertains to forming judgment or knowledge. Judgment has its dignity if it has a basis and has a methodological justification.<sup>10</sup> Prejudice becomes negative if it has no epistemological foundation and lacks adequate methodological justification and it is positive if it acts on the contrary to aid judgment and knowledge. However, Gadamer stresses the historical situatedness which shapes our understanding; our language, customs, social and familial ties, etc. These historical situations are what make up the prejudices for him. He writes: "The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being". Our prejudices, therefore, for Gadamer, form our historical reality. As Nielsen puts it, "Our prejudices orient us in a certain direction and direct us to specific concerns and questions"<sup>11</sup>

Gadamer maintains that prejudice could be due to human authority or over hastiness. It is either we have respect for persons

who hold them and so fall into error or we are overhasty ourselves. Authority within the period of Enlightenment was a major source of prejudice which was refuted and countered. The Enlightenment critique was primarily directed against religious tradition in Christianity, where for instance, the Bible is treated as a dogmatic literature and not historical and so anything that comes out of it was seen as authoritative and this formed a bedrock for prejudice. The Enlightenment rather critiqued much of these as a way to free man from the trammels of prejudice by subjecting every claim to the judgment seat of reason. Tradition and Authority were, therefore, twin elements that fanned the embers of prejudice. This is what Miranda Fricker calls Social Power.<sup>12</sup>

Fricker's conception of power is at the basis of discussing her notion of prejudice, particularly her notion of "Identity prejudices". Prejudices of this kind function as a monocle through which everything the person says or does is refracted. This is a kind of distorting the lens. According to Fricker, power which she generally also understands as social power is a capacity we have as social agents to influence how things go in the social world.<sup>13</sup> Social power understood as a capacity persists through periods even when it is not being realized. Thus, power can exist whether operative or inoperative. Although, some scholars contest this understanding of power<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, power can either be agential or structural, that is, it can either be possessed by an individual or a structure or group and it functions principally for control: either positively or negatively. And then, power is socially situated. Thus, Fricker's working conception of Social Power is, "a practically situated capacity to control other's actions, where this capacity may be exercised (actively or passively) by particular social agents, or alternatively, it may be operated structurally".<sup>15</sup>

Be that as it may, Fricker singles one form of social power which is identity power. Whenever there is an operation of power that depends on some significant degree upon such shared imaginative conceptions of social identity, then *identity power* is at work.<sup>16</sup> Identity power comes to play on account of a certain position or class a person occupies. It is a form of authority and is a tool of control and sometimes silencing of the lesser other. For instance, identity power can be prominent in a patriarchal culture where women's voice are diminished. In such a situation, when a woman speaks on an issue,

her position is not highly reckoned with, but once a man speaks, it is taken as authoritative. In such a situation, identity power can cause stereotypes. In this case, even before the woman speaks, her position is already distorted by this social stereotype as socially inferior or weaker. To conceive of this differently, if in such a situation, a man accuses a woman of something wrong in such a context, there is a primordial bias to accept the position of the man on the basis of his identity category. What is playing out here is identity power. It so happens in other social contexts. Identity power, therefore, is an integral part of our testimonial exchanges, and it creates stereotypes in how we evaluate the judgments of those in certain identity or power category. Such stereotypes embody prejudices; either creating credibility deficit or credibility excess and this is what Fricker calls “prejudicial dysfunction in testimonial practice”<sup>17</sup> In testimonial exchanges, Fricker notes that prejudice can insinuate itself in a number of ways, but its main entry point is via stereotypes.<sup>18</sup> Stereotypes are generally neutral. They can have a positive or negative valence based on its context.

### **Epistemic Practices and the Priestly Formation**

The understanding of prejudice from the foregoing explains its preponderance in the epistemic transaction whether positively or negatively. The implication of prejudice in such exchanges is that it influences understanding and judgment either positively or negatively. It generally creates a skewed way of viewing people especially in an epistemologically refracted lens and this causes harms or wrongs in epistemic practices and even sometimes injustice as Fricker puts it, both testimonial and hermeneutical. These conversely affect how we form beliefs on people and what we count as knowledge in the long run.

Epistemic practices are understood to mean the different pathways in generating knowledge. Put elaborately, epistemic practices “are the socially organized and interactionally accomplished ways that members of a group propose, communicate, assess, and legitimize knowledge claims”<sup>19</sup> Epistemic practices are therefore basically interactional in which case it is a construction among people. It is also contextual as it involves norms of a particular social system. It is also intertextual in which case it involves communication through a history of coherent discourse, signs and symbols. It is also

consequential in which case it both instantiates power and legitimize knowledge.<sup>20</sup> Karin Knorr Cetina expatiates on the concept in point by maintaining that epistemic practices are considered to be included in epistemic cultures, ‘the culture of knowledge settings’<sup>21</sup>, which are linked to and form the basis of a broader contemporary concept, the knowledge society. Epistemic practices, therefore, are related to a frame of meaning which regulate people’s lives. It is this knowledge which determines what people do, how they are related to and what constitutes people’s actions. When we talk of epistemic practices in a given social context or background, we are referring to a framework of how knowledge is formed and applied. We also refer to all those pathways for arriving at these, including interpersonal epistemic transactions. Therefore, as long as there is a social given, epistemic practices necessarily abound. Our concern in epistemic practices in priestly formation is how we form knowledge about others especially with the operation of social power and also how we make sense of our social experiences. Our concern also oscillates around how we think about our epistemic relations if they produce epistemic advantage or disadvantage especially within the context of priestly formation.

In priestly formation, the seminary is the epistemic community in context. Within this epistemic community are students (seminarians); those in training to become priests and Formators; those training the students. There are a number of epistemic transactions that take place within this epistemic community; epistemic transaction between fellow students and between formators and students. The latter is of greater importance because in it there is a power play; the formator seen as superior. The epistemic transaction between the formator and student is important, that it ultimately helps in his overall evaluation and how his vocation is eventually discerned. Since the factor of evaluation is at stake, the whole epistemic practice must be looked to see how testimonial excess or deficit can play a role in judgment and knowledge formation. One area of concern is how Formators listen to their students’ concern and how the students make themselves known to their Formators so as to be helped. Another area is how the student can provide completely irrelevant information or provide a superfluous assessment of themselves and not allowing themselves to be known and assisted in the formation process. This can create a wrong epistemic relationship for assistance and support. The difficulty that can be created is a complicated

epistemic relationship sometimes arising from the compromising of information because of a prejudged understanding that such information can be used negatively against him. This kind of situation has a lot of consequences for the student and for the intended outcome of formation altogether.<sup>22</sup> The practical implication is that this can jeopardise the opportunities of being properly assisted and eventually, the essence of the formation is in all defeated.

Another area in the epistemic practice within the seminary as an epistemic community is that there are sporadic cases of communicative failure which can lead to false belief and knowledge formation. This can be due to what I can regard as some gaps in the student-formator relationship. Within this relationship, the power relations play a key role in either the widening of the gaps or its closure. Once there is no proper management of the balance of power, it can lead to silencing sometimes of the student, leading to wrongs or harm in the epistemic relations. Unless there exist an atmosphere of symmetric power relations, sometimes there cannot be openness in the relationship. The epistemic starting point for this discussion is that students (seminarians) can be vulnerable in the epistemic relationship and that prevalent stereotypes and prejudices within the structural framework of the seminary as an epistemic community, some are prejudices they have about the epistemic community which can hamper a holistic and healthy epistemic situation which in turn can hinder proper understanding of the student and eventually influence how he is judged or evaluated. A caveat must be established here that it is not the case that at all times seminarians are epistemically vulnerable or oppressed, but, that they can be susceptible to this based on the imbalance power relation that sometimes exists between the formator and the seminarian.

It suffices to begin by identifying stereotype structures and practices that are generated and sustained in the seminary as an epistemic community. Stereotypes are sometimes brewed from a warped understanding and belief that those who underperform within the system will not always be promoted for the Orders that they are there for, regardless of the context. Also, some are within the seminary community with a fixed understanding and stereotype that not all who begin can finish in the program. This creates a Darwinian survival mentality; the survival of the fittest. Again, since the process of assessment is basically done by formators and so, the students

sometimes could attempt to play a positive image before them, so a positive impression could be formed and consequently influence positively the judgement of them, without it being their true image and personality. The primary work of a formator is not to pass judgment, but to form. Assessment is only part of this process of formation, it is not the principal role. To say that the students think this way, is a structural stereotype from what they have understood and interpreted over time. Thus, the system has foisted a negative stereotype which reinforces a negative attitude in them. Another stereotype can be that anyone who is found out to consistently manifest a negative or an unapproved behaviour would be dismissed from the community. This is an incomplete picture of the process, because, this runs contrary to what a seminary should be or of its formation program. However, this stereotype affects how the students, therefore, open up in the process. These stereotypes portray a wrong image of the epistemic community and of the epistemic relation between the student and formator. These kinds of stereotypes already create prejudice to the epistemic transaction and interaction. Thus, there is epistemic distrust from the beginning of the interaction and this is an epistemic vice.

There are other levels of stereotypes arising from the part of the formator to the student, based on certain understanding and experience in the past. This may sometimes be accidental, not habitual. For instance, to think that people from a certain region are poised to behave in a certain way, based on the experience of others from that area. There is also a case of testimonial excess, where a student who is academically sound is perceived as a morally balanced individual. His academic brilliance can create a situation of testimonial excess and a mirror or lens for seeing every other action of his in the light of brilliance. Conversely, to think that a person who is not academically sound is not suitable enough in other areas and so judged on the basis of that alone. It suffices to say that stereotype can also be created systemically, wherein, much of what is known about the individual are relied upon by information and accounts about him from others, not necessarily a personal experience of the student.

Hypothetically speaking, in a situation where all the reports that have been written about the candidates are by people who have had a negative bias against the candidate in question, then, the Formator may be relying on such a negatively biased report, unknown

to him to make an assessment. And so, if there are any pointers to such situations, whether confirmed or not, the Formator is likely to admit it a sequence and moral difficulty of the candidate. Here, we can find a case where negative bias is perpetuated and judgment formed on the basis of prejudicial dysfunctions. There are also possible situations where judgments about individuals are based on disparaging associations, social groups and one or more objectionable attributes, not just on the basis of an individual situation. When judgments are made on such merits, we sometimes can talk about a version of injustice Fricker talks as the basic form of injustice; testimonial injustice.<sup>23</sup> This situation as Fricker and some commentators on Fricker uphold can lead to credibility deficit; that whatever they say is viewed in this light with some prejudice. This can gradually lead to eroding the epistemic confidence of the speaker or group. If this situation endures, it can lead to a crush of their confidence in their epistemic capacities. “A person or group suffering from such a situation will not expect what they say to be heard, and in time might not speak at all, as the constant assault upon their testimonial practices gradually undermines their epistemic and social confidence”.<sup>24</sup> This is the kind of situation that can sometimes lead to silencing of the other or speaker with the constant erosion of his epistemic confidence. This can pose some difficulty in the epistemic practice in the seminary. These are possible instantiations of structural stereotypes that build up our prejudices which eventually influence judgment and knowledge formation in the seminary as an epistemic community. One of the consequences of a negative stereotype is that it leads to a deflated level of credibility to the speakers’ word.<sup>25</sup> In our case in point, stereotypes can cause either the student to be suspect of what the formator is saying or on the contrary, it can cause the formator to have a deficit of trust in what the student is saying. In any case, stereotypes create a prejudicial dysfunction and this weakens a complete epistemic situation for either a chance for a fair judgment or a balanced and comprehensive understanding of an epistemic transaction.

Stereotypes as Fricker notes are windows for prejudices and the first it does is the impairment of listening. It functions on how we listen to others. For the lecturer, once he has a negative stereotype of a candidate, how he listens to him becomes lopsided or impaired. The same is true about the student, once he forms a prejudice about a

lecturer, he is always at a losing end, not paying attention to details, but only listening with the wrong aid of his prejudice. He thinks of all the teacher says in the light of this. So, he becomes perpetually suspect of his contributions. This can be a major form of deflection for a wholesome epistemic interaction. This short-circuited interaction necessarily will lead to communicative failure as there would not be an anticipatory openness as Gadamer recommends in dealing with prejudice rather, there would be anticipatory reticence and deflection. This outcome of such epistemic practice can only be incomplete, imbalance and an unproductive epistemic interaction. Formation process in this context is skewed and lead to error. Negative prejudice takes a progression not only for testimonial deficit, but can also lead to hermeneutical injustice. Hermeneutical injustice is the second variant of epistemic injustice outlined by Miranda Fricker. This is the phenomenon that occurs “when the intelligibility of communicators is unfairly constrained or undermined when their meaning-making capacities encounter unfair obstacles”.<sup>26</sup> Fricker puts it as “when a gap in collective interpretative resources puts someone at an unfair advantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences”.<sup>27</sup> What is needed in this situation are epistemic practices that lead to openness, epistemic trust and testimonial justice.

There is an entirely new way we can evaluate epistemic practices in the seminary as an epistemic community and this can be in the pedagogical exchange; the teaching-learning process. Arguably, the formator as a teacher is considered as an epistemically privileged person possessing epistemic authority. The essence of this authority is to facilitate students’ learning. There are, however, ways within this mutual interaction that there are harms and wrongs due to prejudice both on the part of the student and on the part of the formator as a teacher. Ben Kotzee explains that epistemic harm or injustice could occur in such a relationship “if teachers systematically gave learners less epistemic credit than they deserve due to some negative identity prejudicial stereotype pertaining to learners in a particular setting”.<sup>28</sup> Epistemic credit, in this case, is understood as the testimonial value attached to a student. When teachers tend to place more value on some or a group of students at the expense of others, this can cause some level of epistemic harm. Although this is peculiar to many pedagogical settings, there is a tendency to always give more attention to students who are brighter than others who are less

academically inclined. Malcolm Gladwell describes this as the Matthew Effect<sup>29</sup> in his book, *Outliers*.<sup>30</sup> Kotzee corroborates this point in detailed terms thus:

Teachers may give more epistemic credit to the views of students from epistemically privileged groups. On the testimonial level, they may believe or praise such students more often due to their identity as members of an epistemically privileged group. On the hermeneutical level, teachers, but more so, the school's culture, language and ethos may give more credence to such students' perspectives, engage more naturally with these perspectives and fail to comprehend the perspectives of less privileged students.<sup>31</sup>

Conversely, there is another way that there can be epistemic harm on the part of students to teacher and even causing the student to be at a loss. Once a student has a set of stereotypes about a teacher, it forms some negative prejudices against such a teacher and this becomes refraction that impairs his openness to learning because of his bias. This is another form of a detour in the student-formator epistemic transaction. From our analysis of epistemic practices in a seminary as an epistemic community, prejudicial dysfunctions play roles in impairing proper understanding of an epistemic situation and making the most of an epistemic exchange. The concern to have a wholesome epistemic situation is the concern of analytic epistemology. This leads us to the third part of our conversation, the contributions of Anselm Jimoh to the pursuit of genuine knowledge

### **Anselm Jimoh and the Pursuit of Genuine Knowledge**

The growing breakdown in epistemic practices reflects an increased need and relevance for the pursuit of genuine knowledge which is the goal of epistemology. The term, 'genuine knowledge' is specialized. In the analysis of knowledge, epistemologists talk of legitimate or genuine knowledge to differentiate it from unsubstantiated claims or knowledge that is not warranted. Thus, "genuine", "legitimate", "warrant" are designates to protect the process that leads to knowledge formation. Genuine knowledge is one that is free from the encumbrances of prejudice for instance and scepticism. This explains

the role of justification as a condition for knowledge. Efforts in understanding the justification condition have made some scholars talk about epistemology as a theory of justification. Jimoh Anselm is one scholar who has made substantial contributions to the subject matter of justification in epistemology. He maintains that epistemic justification describes when a person's belief is in right standing with knowledge<sup>32</sup>. Jimoh notes that epistemic justification clarifies or reduces doubt about the genuineness of our beliefs<sup>33</sup>. The question of epistemic justification lends itself to various understandings, interpretations and theories. Justification is so central to our knowledge claims, yet, establishing a paradigm is very herculean.

Regardless of the inconclusiveness on the topic of justification, Jimoh Anselm subscribes to a context-dependent version of epistemic justification. In his article, "Context-Dependency of Human Knowledge: Justification of an African Epistemology", he argues "that knowledge is ultimately dependent on some human and social factors, rather than being an objective, impersonal relation between the object known and the knowing subject."<sup>34</sup> The essence of context, consideration of human and social factors are at the heart of overcoming prejudice in our knowledge claims and this is the vision of Anselm Jimoh's philosophical theorizing on justification. Contextualism as a theory of justification reacts against the incoherency of coherentism and foundationalism as theories of epistemic justification. Foundationalism holds that some beliefs are incorrigible and infallible and so do not need to be justified; those beliefs are said to be self-evident or derived from intuition.<sup>35</sup> It suffices to say that prejudices act like foundational belief, that the epistemic agent, tend not to seek their justification because they are believed to be self-justifying or intuitive. However, it is precisely for this reason that foundationalism is criticized as an incomplete theory of justification. The most evident albatross for this theory is how some beliefs are infallible. Similarly, in seeking justification and freedom from prejudicial dysfunctions, when all our beliefs are interrogated and a warrant is provided for them, then, our knowledge claims can be genuine. This is precisely the advocacy of contextualism as a theory of epistemic justification which Anselm Jimoh subscribes and promotes.

It suffices to say, that Jimoh Anselm's devotion in epistemology is for clearer grounds of belief or certitude and

dismantling grounds for doubt. This is the focus of what can be regarded as *opus magnum* or one of his most cited work, *Certitude and Doubt: A Study Guide in Epistemology*.<sup>36</sup> Through this work, he treats key themes in epistemology which can aid the acquisition of certitude in our knowledge claims and the diminishing or elimination of doubts in epistemology. It suffices to say that Jimoh devotes special attention to African Epistemology. African Epistemology takes to cognizance the epistemic peculiarities of the African man as an epistemic agent. It, therefore, analyses issues, concepts and perspectives in epistemology from an African perspective. In fact, he advanced in one of his papers, “An African Theory of Knowledge”.<sup>37</sup> In this work, he reinforces his position advanced by his subscription to the contextualist thesis of justification by further advancing that “our knowledge claims among traditional Africans are not validated in objectivist terms, as required by rationalists and empiricists, but with regards to the habits and customs of the people.”<sup>38</sup> It suffices to cite Jimoh in some details:

Justification in African epistemology is culture-bound and therefore context-dependent. The truth-value or falsity of our epistemic claims is ultimately dependent on factors that are human, social and culture-based. An appraisal of the factors discussed above gives us a clear assessment of rational certainty. African epistemologists should consider the role played by the human person and the society in establishing our knowledge claims. There are no epistemic claims whose justification rests wholly on the prescribed objectivist terms of the rationalist and empiricist as seen in traditional Western epistemology. If the justification of our knowledge claims is situated within social practices, we would no longer think of knowledge, truth and rational certainty in abstract terms. Therefore, there would be no need to study these concepts independent of the factors alleged as necessary conditions for human knowledge.<sup>39</sup>

The submission of Jimoh with reference to the justification of our knowledge claims is that both the social and cultural parameters must

be assessed and analysed if we must get at genuine knowledge. This is giving a place to the context in seeking justification. When we have an objective lens with which we want to see or pursue certainly, we cannot but create stereotypes or have set foundations with which each situation is judged. This is what fosters prejudice; making judgements from stereotypes. If we can examine issues and epistemic contents within each given context, as Jimoh advances, we certainly would be on a path for a holistic epistemic portrait in our epistemic practices.

The contributions of Jimoh apart from advancing a picture for our search for certitude has also helped in reconstructing, what he considered as fractured indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). By indigenous knowledge system, Jimoh explicates is “the system of investigating, understanding, assimilating and attributing African conception of reality that is distinctively African and philosophical.”<sup>40</sup> As part of his project in pursuit of genuine knowledge and certainty, Jimoh seeks to also reconstruct the fractured epistemological template by which Africans evaluate their epistemic experiences. This was a kind of objective lens with which they investigate, interrogate and evaluate knowledge practices. Western logic, models and paradigms were the objective epistemological lens African hitherto used. This he believed caused epistemological silencing<sup>41</sup>, which is also known as epistemic injustice. This epistemic injustice which was caused by the bequest of a monochrome logic of western epistemology as either a lens, foundation or stereotype for evaluating African indigenous knowledge practices fractured our African epistemology. His efforts at a reconstruction of the fractured epistemology were advocacy of taking the African context, culture and circumstances to cognizance. This is a further search of genuine knowledge in African epistemology and the breaking down of the walls of stereotypes and prejudices which impair our vision for a holistic epistemic picture.

It suffices to say that Jimoh’s quest for genuine knowledge is also evident in his contributions to the priestly formation and vocation. One very notable important contribution to this is in his article, “Priestly Formation in the Face of Contemporary Challenges in Nigeria: Lessons for Consideration in Auchi Diocese”<sup>42</sup>. He highlights some misgivings in priestly formation today and advanced ways for a correct understanding of what it should be. He notes: ‘redefining the priesthood is not an option. If things are not as they should be, the option is to go back to the roots and make them what

they ought to be”.<sup>43</sup> It is clear that the vision of Jimoh over time has been the reconstruction of fractured epistemic templates both for how we arrive at knowledge claims and what the priesthood should be.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This paper has discussed common dysfunctions in our epistemic practices and how they lead to prejudice. It has been elaborately stated in this paper that prejudice refracts our understanding and impairs us from achieving a holistic epistemic picture. Although prejudice, at least, philosophically speaking is not itself negative, however, when used as an end, a judgment in itself, it always brings about an incomplete or partial understanding. Stereotypes reinforce prejudice and until we get rid of stereotypes, our understanding will keep being impaired by prejudice, what Francis Bacon calls the “idols of the mind”. Taking a seminary as an epistemic community as this work has established, both stereotypes and prejudice can refract a balanced view of things and the consequence is harms and wrongs done at certain levels. Apart from various harms and wrongs certainty or genuine knowledge also becomes scarce. The pursuit for knowledge that is warranted has become exigent in contemporary analytic epistemology since the epochal challenge by Edmund Gettier<sup>44</sup> that the tripartite traditional conditions for knowledge, namely, “belief”, “truth” and “justification” although individually and jointly necessary, are not always jointly sufficient for knowledge. With Gettier’s hypothetical interrogation of the traditional understanding of knowledge, it has become expedient to tighten the grounds for our knowledge claims. This is the concern for “genuine knowledge”. Prejudice can sometimes lead to knowledge but one that is not warranted. Hence, the focus in contemporary analytic epistemology for genuine knowledge.

Anselm Jimoh, the silver jubilarian is a consummate epistemologist who has pursued the vision for genuine knowledge in epistemology as an intellectual focus in general and in different epistemic contexts in particular. With his advocacy of epistemic contextualism, he has made clearer the vision for genuine knowledge as an epistemic possibility. Through his works, he has pursued activism against the objectification of means for knowledge. He further has self-engaged in a reconstruction of fractured epistemic portraits of different epistemic pictures, including those fractured by

stereotypes and prejudice. His epistemic template of contextual-dependency for justification of our knowledge is what this work has advanced for a reconstruction of the fractured epistemic situations in priestly formation. In synopsis, therefore, in priestly formation, the taking of an individual context, background and situations are important if we must get the best from the formation process. In our epistemic transactions in priestly formation, if we undermine context, there would be different harms, wrongs and deficits that would be incurred in the process. Therefore, each epistemic interaction must be subject to individual contextual clarification, interrogation and justification. If we keep having beliefs that are foundational or incorrigible, then we cannot make the most from our epistemic exchanges. But, if we subscribe to the advocacy of Anselm Jimoh for context-based interaction and justification in our epistemic practices, then, even if we cannot get a complete or holistic epistemic picture or certitude, we are sure to have diminished the embers of errors and wrongs in our epistemic exchange. The resultant outcome would be a healthy outlook and basis for discussing other issues in priestly formation.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Miranda Fricker, "Precis- Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing" in *Theoria*, 61, 2008: 69-71

<sup>3</sup> Anja Steinbauer, "The False Mirror: A Brief History of Prejudice" in *Philosophy Now*, Issue 123, December 2017/January 2018, retrieved on October 13, 2019

[https://philosophynow.org/issues/123/The False Mirror A Brief History of Prejudice](https://philosophynow.org/issues/123/The_False_Mirror_A_Brief_History_of_Prejudice)

<sup>4</sup> René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, ed. Stanley Tveyman, New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 36, translated by Elisabeth S Haldane and G.R.T Ross).

<sup>5</sup> Voltaire on Prejudice as cited in "Prejudice, Philosophies and Language: Spinoza and His strategy of Liberation", Conference Proceedings in *Nordicum-Mediterraneum, Icelandic E-Journal of Nordic and Mediterranean Studies* [https://nome.unak.is/wordpress/volume-12-no-3-2017/conference-proceeding-volume-12-no-3-2017/prejudices-philosophies-language-spinoza-strategies-liberation/#\\_edn2](https://nome.unak.is/wordpress/volume-12-no-3-2017/conference-proceeding-volume-12-no-3-2017/prejudices-philosophies-language-spinoza-strategies-liberation/#_edn2)

- 
- <sup>6</sup> Anja Steinbauer, “The False Mirror: A Brief History of Prejudice” Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second, revised edition, London: Continuum, 1975. p. 270
- <sup>8</sup> Cynthia R. Nielsen, “Gadamer and Fricker on Prejudice and Testimonial Injustice” in [https://www.academia.edu/40149778/Gadamer\\_and\\_Fricker\\_on\\_Prejudice\\_and\\_Testimonial\\_Injustice](https://www.academia.edu/40149778/Gadamer_and_Fricker_on_Prejudice_and_Testimonial_Injustice)
- <sup>9</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 271
- <sup>10</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 273
- <sup>11</sup> Cynthia R. Nielsen, “Gadamer and Fricker on Prejudice and Testimonial Injustice” Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 9-17
- <sup>13</sup> Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 9
- <sup>14</sup> Michael Foucault contests this understanding of power as operative even when not put into use. Foucault generally holds that power exists only when put into action. See, Michael Foucault, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Press, 1982.
- <sup>15</sup> Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 13
- <sup>16</sup> Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 14
- <sup>17</sup> Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 14
- <sup>18</sup> Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 14
- <sup>19</sup> Gregory J. Kelly and Peter Licona, “Epistemic Practices and Science Education” in Michael R. Matt *History, Philosophy and Science Education*, Dordrecht: Springer International Publishing, 2018. 139-165.
- <sup>20</sup> Gregory J. Kelly and Peter Licon, “Epistemic Practices and Science Education” Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Knorr Cetina, K. “Knowledge Cultures” in M. Jacobs and N Weiss Hanrahan (Eds), *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. 65-79. See also, Inger Eriksson and Viveca Lindberg, “Enriching ‘learning activity with ‘epistemic practices’- enhancing students’ epistemic agency” in *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 2016, 1, DOI:10.3402/nstep.v2.32432
- <sup>22</sup> Ian James Kidd and Havi Carel discussed this kind of situation happening in conditions of illness or healthcare and medicine. This is discussed in at least two of their papers, namely, Ian James Kidd and Havi Carel “Epistemic injustice and Illness” in David Coady and Miranda Fricker (eds.), *Applied Epistemology*, a special issue of the *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 33 (4), 2016, 172-190. Also, Havi Carel and Ian James Kidd, “Epistemic Injustice in medicine and Healthcare, in Ian James Kidd, Jose Medina and Gaile Pohlhaus, (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2017, 336-346.
- <sup>23</sup> Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 35

<sup>24</sup> Ian James Kidd and Havi Carel, “Epistemic Injustice and Illness” in David Coady and Miranda Fricker (ed), *Ibid*, 177. See also, Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 47-48.

<sup>25</sup> See, Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 17

<sup>26</sup> Jose Medina, “ Varieties of Hermeneutical Injustice” in Ian James Kidd, Jose Medina and Gaile Pohlhaus, *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, *ibid*. 41.

<sup>27</sup> Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 1

<sup>28</sup> Ben Kotzee, “Education and Epistemic Injustice” in in Ian James Kidd, Jose Medina and Gaile Pohlhaus, *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, *ibid*. 326

<sup>29</sup> The Matthew Effect is based on the biblical principle of St. Matthew “for unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”—Matthew 25:29

<sup>30</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008, 15-34

<sup>31</sup> Ben Kotzee, “ Education and Epistemic Injustice”, 327

<sup>32</sup> Jimoh Anselm, “On the Question of Justification in Knowledge Enquiry” in *Nasara Journal of Philosophy (NAJOP)*, 2.1, 2017, 9-25

<sup>33</sup> Jimoh Anselm, “On the Question of Justification in Knowledge Enquiry” 10

<sup>34</sup> Jimoh Anselm, “Context-Dependency of Human Knowledge: Justification of An African Epistemology” in *West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 2, 1999, 18-37

<sup>35</sup> Kolawole Owolabi, “The Nature of Epistemology” in *Issues and Problems in Philosophy, Kolawole Owolabi (ed.)*, Ibadan: Grovacs Network, 2000, 64.

<sup>36</sup> Jimoh Anselm, *Certitude and Doubt: A Guide in Epistemology*, Ibadan: Ebony Books and Kreations, 2013. This text has been revised and expanded in its second edition, Jimoh Anselm, *Certitude and Doubt: A Guide in Epistemology*, Benin: Floreat Systems, 2017..

<sup>37</sup> Jimoh Anselm, “An African Theory of Knowledge” in *Themes, Issues and Problems in African Philosophy*, Isaac Ukpokolo (ed), Switzerland: Palgrave Macmilliam, 2017, 121-136.

<sup>38</sup> Jimoh Anselm, “An African Theory of Knowledge”, 135.

<sup>39</sup> Jimoh Anselm, “An African Theory of Knowledge”, 138

<sup>40</sup> Jimoh Anselm, “Reconstructing a Fractured Indigeneous Knowledge System” in *Synthesis Philosophica*, 65 .1, 2018. 5–22

<sup>41</sup> Jimoh Anselm, “Reconstructing a Fractured Indigeneous Knowledge System” *Ibid*, 5

<sup>42</sup> Jimoh Anselm, “Priestly Formation in the Face of Contemporary Challenges in Nigeria: Lessons for Consideration in Auchi Diocese” in J. A. Onimhawo and F. E. Ikhianosime (eds), *Diocese of Auchi at Ten: History, Growth and Perspectives*, Ibadan: Safmos Publishers, 2013. 31-53.

---

<sup>43</sup> Jimoh Anselm, "Priestly Formation in the face of Contemporary Challenges in Nigeria...", 53

<sup>44</sup> Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis* 23. 6 (1963): 121-123