Abstract INPP 2026

Whack-a-mole! Resisting impostor concepts in mental health self-interpretation

Recent work on hermeneutic injustice emphasizes how it not only arises from conceptual lacunae in collective interpretive resources (Fricker, 2007), but also from the presence of *impostor concepts* that systematically distort the understanding of marginalized groups' social experiences (Deans, 2024; Delgado & Picazo, 2026). Many instances of hermeneutic injustice in mental health seem to be of this type, where the hermeneutic tools available to psychiatrized individuals are distorted due to stigma, pernicious stereotypes, or implicit assumptions of medical practice (Chapman & Carel, 2022; Jackson, 2017). This raises the question: what makes a concept impostor vs. legitimate? How to spot—and whack—moles in our self-understanding repertoire? Building on constructivism about self-illness ambiguity (Jeppsson, 2022; see Dings & Glas, 2020), we argue that drawing this distinction is not a matter of accurately tracking pre-existing self-illness borders. Yet, this does not imply a "frictionless", "anything goes" view of self-understanding. What self-interpretation tools are at our disposal depends on our social niches, and we cannot change at will their associated scripts and expectations. Instead, we will argue that a) discerning the legitimacy of a concept requires tracking its genealogy; and b) that legitimate concepts are those crafted and developed in communities of epistemic resistance (Medina, 2013).

Key words: hermeneutical injustice; mindshaping; neurodiversity; philosophy of psychiatry

References

Chapman, R., & Carel, H. (2022). Neurodiversity, epistemic injustice, and the good human life. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, josp.12456. https://doi.org/10.1111/josp.12456

Deans, D. (2024). Hermeneutical Injustice Through Defective Concept Possession. *Topoi*, *43*(5), 1379-1387. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-024-10096-x

Delgado, L., & Picazo, C. (2026). Blocking meaning creation: Impostor concepts and hermeneutical injustice. *Synthese*, *207*(1), 38. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-025-05420-w

Dings, R., & Glas, G. (2020). Self-Management in Psychiatry as Reducing Self-Illness Ambiguity. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, *27*(4), 333-347. https://doi.org/10.1353/ppp.2020.0043

Fricker, M. (2007). *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford University Press.

Jackson, J. (2017). Patronizing Depression: Epistemic Injustice, Stigmatizing Attitudes, and the Need for Empathy. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, *48*(3), 359-376. https://doi.org/10.1111/josp.12194

Jeppsson, S. (2022). Solving the self-illness ambiguity: The case for construction over discovery. *Philosophical Explorations*, *25*(3), 294-313. https://doi.org/10.1080/13869795.2022.2051589

Medina, J. (2013). *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination*. Oxford University Press.