limiting nonwhites’ contribution to the shared pool of knowledge of racial and racist experience.

Conclusion
I have argued colorblindness maintains a fiction of white superiority that insulates itself against the harms and disadvantages that are created and maintained by colorblindness. This insulation in turn prevents colorblindness from being detected by the colorblind subjects. I explored Medina’s possible strategy to address colorblindness, and the counterstrategies used by colorblind subjects. I then argued that meta-level colorblindness and the colorblind logic of willful colorblindness both operate as hermeneutical filters. Using anti-racist racial projects as examples I discussed how as hermeneutical filters, they filter out race-based explanations of racial harms and disadvantages leading to hermeneutical injustice.

Notes
1 Although I suspect that the racial harms that can only result from racism or only have a race-based explanation will be denied outright rather than reduced to some other factor.
2 Although the content does not have to be strictly preffered by an agent or at all. The subject might just happen upon it or had a moment of lucidity (a crack in the colorblind armor).
3 For all intents and purposes our current society would do just fine.

Works Cited

Sealing: A Case Study in Epistemic Vice

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§1. Introduction
With new technology and new ways of communicating come new ways of exercising epistemic agency in social contexts. In this paper I consider a novel phenomenon of the social media world: sealing. I first discuss background issues involving epistemic virtue and vice in general, and the specific intellectual virtue of inquisitiveness, the “question-asking virtue” (Watson, 2015, p. 282). I then provide a philosophical analysis of sealing, arguing that it functions as the negative counterpart to inquisitiveness, a specific character trait that uses questions in epistemically vicious ways. This analysis demonstrates some important conclusions about how epistemic vices are more than mere deficiencies or incompetencies, but are instead psychologically rich character traits directed toward epistemically malicious ends.

§2. Intellectual Virtue and Intellectual Vice
According to the Responsibilist approach to virtue epistemology, virtues are the specific excellences of epistemic agents, and possession of a virtue depends on the agent having a robust suite of cognitive and conative dispositions.1 On one well-developed account of epistemic virtue (Baehr, 2018, pp. 87-94), they have four components:

Motivational Principle (MP): A subject S possesses an intellectual virtue V only if S’s possession of V is rooted in a “love” of epistemic goods.

Affective Principle (AP): S possesses an intellectual virtue V only if S taken pleasure in (or experiences other appropriate affections in relation to) the activity characteristic of V.

Competence Principle (CP): S possesses an intellectual virtue V only if S is competent at the activity characteristic of V.
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Judgment Principle (JP): S possesses an intellectual virtue V only if S is disposed to recognize when (and to what extent, etc.) the activity characteristic of V would be epistemically appropriate.

On this view, an epistemic virtue is comparable to a moral virtue: it not only contributes to excellent epistemic activity, it also makes its possessor excellent as an epistemic agent, and is the ground for normative judgements about the agent and their actions.3

Discussions of epistemic vice have, not surprisingly, mainly followed the same contours as discussions of epistemic virtue (Battaly, 2014). However, in discussions whether epistemic vice is simply the negative inversion of the four dimensions of epistemic virtue listed above, Baehr (2020) argues that the epistemic virtue and vices are asymmetrical: whereas the four dimensions of epistemic virtue are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for a given epistemic virtue, lacking any of the four dimensions individually can be sufficient for a specific epistemic vice. For instance, a young graduate student may be motivated to do research, enjoy doing it, and be good at it, but nonetheless fail to exercise good judgment about how much research is enough and when to stop, and hence fail to get to the writing stage because they spend too much time researching first. Such a person might satisfy MP, AP, and CF, and yet still have an epistemic vice with respect to their research activity (‘distractedness’, perhaps, or ‘perfectionism’), because they fail to satisfy JP, this means that the standards for epistemic vices are lower, and more variably met, than the standards for epistemic virtue (see also Cassam, 2019; Crear, 2018; Flood, 2008; Swink, 2006). This accords with an oft-quoted dictum from Aristotle (itself borrowed from the Pythagoreans) that "good people are uniform, bad people are multiform" (1160b35).

To put things slightly more precisely, we can use the following benchmark to adjudicate our investigation:

Responsibilist Standard: X is an epistemic vice if X is an agency-defective character trait that is deficient with respect to at least one of: motivation, affect, competence, or judgement.

Deficient motivation or affect here can include both apathy toward an epistemic good that should be valued (broadly construed), and also active disvalue or malintent with respect to that epistemic good.4

In what follows, I will argue that sealing satisfaction satisfies the Responsibilist Standard, and will therefore count as an epistemic vice. But before doing so, we must first look at an example of an epistemic virtue which we can use as a foil to sealing: Inquisitiveness.

§3. Inquisitiveness: An Epistemic Virtue of Questioning

Inquisitiveness, as defined by Lani Watson, is the epistemic virtue that is uniquely associated with good questioning, so we can use her account to guide our discussion. To understand inquisitiveness, however, we will need to look more closely at some issues concerning epistemic virtue more broadly.

Following Zagzebski’s account of the structure of epistemic virtue, Watson points to two central features of epistemic virtue: a motivation component and a success component (Watson, 2018a, pp. 156-157; Watson, 2015, pp. 274-279. See also Baehr, 2013; Zagzebski, 1996). Epistemic virtue in general is characterized by a motivation of pro-attitudes towards epistemic goods, and by an ability to successfully act these pro-attitudes into action by pursuing these epistemic goods. Individual epistemic virtues can then be individuated by their distinct motivation and their distinct success conditions.5 Open-mindedness and epistemic courage, for instance, might both involve the same kinds of situations but different motivations and success conditions.6 Both involve balancing individual commitment to a belief with the perspectives of others. But open-mindedness is focused on not under-valuing the epistemic perspective of others, whereas epistemic courage is concerned with not under-valuing one’s own epistemic perspective. Succeeding as an open-minded person might involve deferring to peer disagreement, whereas successful exercise of epistemic courage may involve not doing so. Yet despite these asymmetries, open-mindedness and epistemic courage are structurally similar species of the same genus.

We can use this understanding of epistemic virtue to better understand two closely related but distinct virtues, curiosity and inquisitiveness. Curiosity is motivated by a desire to improve one’s epistemic standing by acquiring worthwhile epistemic goods that one lacks or believes that one lacks.7 One is epistemically successful in this regard to the extent that one engages in the kinds of behaviors that tend to lead toward improvements in one’s epistemic standing.

Inquisitiveness, on Watson’s (2018a, pp. 160-161) account, is an epistemic virtue distinct from curiosity. It is defined by the motivation to engage seriously in questioning as a way of acquiring the worthwhile
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Judgment Principle (JP): S possesses an intellectual virtue V only if S is disposed to recognize when (and to what extent, etc.) the activity characteristic of V would be epistemically appropriate.

On this view, an epistemic virtue is comparable to a moral virtue: it not only contributes to excellent epistemic activity, it also makes its possessor excellent as an epistemic agent, and is the ground for normative judgments about the agent and their actions.4 Discussion of epistemic vice has, not surprisingly, mainly followed the same contours as discussion of epistemic virtue (Battaly, 2014). However, in discussion whether epistemic vice is simply the negative inversion of the four dimensions of epistemic virtue listed above, Baehr (2020) argues that the epistemic virtue and vices are asymmetric: whereas the four dimensions epistemic virtue are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for a given epistemic virtue, lacking any of the four dimensions individually can be sufficient for a specific epistemic vice. For instance, a young graduate student may be motivated to do research, enjoy doing it, and be good at it, but nonetheless fail to exercise good judgment about how much research is enough and when to stop, and hence fail to get to the writing stage because they spend too much time researching first. Such a person might satisfy MP, AP, and CP, and yet still have an epistemic vice with respect to their research activity ('distraction'), perhaps, or 'perfectionism'), because they fail to satisfy JP, this means that the standards for epistemic vices are lower, and more variably met, than the standards for epistemic virtue (see also Cassam, 2019; Cerrar, 2018; Flood, 2008; Swank, 2000). This accords with an oft-quoted dictum from Aristotle (its' itself borrowed from the Pythagoreans) that "good people are uniform, bad people are multiform" (1100b35).

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Deficient motivation or affect here can include both apathy toward an epistemic good that should be valued (broadly construed), and also active disvalue or malice toward that epistemic good.5 In what follows, I will argue that seeloning satisfies the Responsibilist Standard, and will therefore count as an epistemic vice. But before doing so, we must first look at an example of an epistemic vice which we can use as a foil to seeloning: Inquisitiveness.

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epistemic goods that can improve one's epistemic standing, and by success at being able to do so by asking good questions. Inquisitiveness is one way of demonstrating curiosity, but it is not the only way; one could improve one's epistemic standing through a variety of methods, such as research, experience, apprenticeships, or careful thinking. But one important way of behaving as a curious person is by being inquisitive; this is especially important for children and in educational settings. In other words, inquisitiveness is the "question-asking virtue," the specific trait that one exhibits when using questions to improve one's epistemic standing in an epistemically virtuous way (Watson, 2015, p. 282).

§4. Sealioning

Like inquisitiveness, sealioning is specifically focused on asking questions; it is a species of trolling with that exact defining feature. The label is adapted from a popular webcomic, Wondermark comic #1062, "The Terrible Sea Lion." In this comic, a sealion oversees a conversation between a couple, and attempts to debate them about this conversation, becoming increasingly intrusive of their personal space and private time as the comic proceeds. All the while, the sealion appeals to civility and politeness, insisting it is the victim who is mistreated and having its good faith questions ignored. The sealion in this comic represents a common pattern of online behavior, and so was quickly made a symbol for this behavior by fans of the comic, and hence 'sealioning' became a verb to describe this behavior.

Oxford Reference's A Dictionary of Social Media defines 'sealioning' as "A disparaging term for the confrontational practice of leaping into an online discussion with endless demands for answers and evidence" (Chandler and Munday, 2016). Another description is "Sealioning is an intensional, combative performance of cluelessness. Rhetorically, sealioning fuses persistent questioning—often about basic information, information easily found elsewhere, or unrelated or tangential points—with a loudly-insisted-upon commitment to reasonable debate" (Johnson, 2017, p. 13); it has been likened to a denial of service (DoS) attack that shuts down computers or networks via an overload of information (Johnson, 2017, p. 14). It has also been described as "the process of killing with dogged kindness and manufactured ignorance by asking questions, then turning on the victim in an instant" (Stokel-Walker, 2018). What these descriptions have in common is that they recognize sealioning as a practice of using questions not to elicit information, but rather to derail or disrupt a conversation.

There are two features that make sealioning unique as a species of trolling. First, it is characterized by the use of questions; this distinguishes it from other forms of trolling that rely on, e.g., insults, inappropriate humor, non-sequiturs, or self-aggrandizement. Second, sealioning depends on the superficial appearance of being a good faith interlocutor: it is not combative or demeaning or flippant as other forms of trolling are. This appearance of good faith is essential to the strategy of sealioning: a bad faith interlocutor can be ignored, while a putatively good faith interlocutor deserves acknowledgement. The sealioner hijacks the respect appropriate for a good faith interlocutor and uses it to undermine the conversation from the inside.

If the questions succeed in eliciting a series of responses also given in good faith, then the sealioner has succeeded in either derailing the conversation, often to basic background information or other starting points which the conversation is then prevented from moving beyond, or to another topic more preferable to the sealioners. If the questions do not work, however, and the sealioner is ignored or chastised for derailing the conversation, the sealioner can then confront their interlocutors and accuse them of being the ones acting in bad faith instead. This requires a conspicuous level of apparent civility and politeness from the sealioner, which they can then contrast with the putatively disrespectful behavior of others in the conversation. This makes the sealioner an especially insidious form of trolling: it can be superficially indistinguishable from a good faith effort at self-improvement by an ignorant but well-meaning interlocutor. It also allows the sealioner to appeal to what are presented as shared values of good faith communication, to defend themselves and make others look like the conversational malfactor.

The harms of sealioning are numerous. As with any kind of trolling, sealioning is, a minimum, an annoyance and a distraction, even when they are ignored. When a sealioner successfully derail a conversation to other topics, one is prevented from making one's original point, and one's communicative aims are thereby frustrated. If one is tricked into focusing on reiterating basic points or confirming minutiae, one can waste one's time and effort.

Critically, the sealioners also shifts the epistemic burden, demanding epistemic labor from others that they are not willing to show for themselves. Johnson (2017, p. 14) writes that

Sealioning also fits into a larger set of rhetorical marginalization practices. Refusals to understand can be subtle forms of erasure. Questions—shaped by explicit or implicit expectations about who has the right to question and who can be questioned about what—impose labor by demanding the questioned party either answer or appear indifferent; providing explanations and maintaining patience takes time and effort.
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The harms of sealoning are numerous. As with any kind of trolling, sealoning is, at a minimum, an annoyance and a distraction, even when they are ignored. When a sealion successfully derails a conversation to other topics, one is prevented from making one's original point, and one's communicative aims are thereby frustrated. If one is tricked into focusing on retreading basic points or confirming minutiae, one can waste one's time and effort.

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Sectioning can also lead to one’s epistemic self-confidence being undermined if the sectioner’s questions require answers that one cannot immediately provide. If decides not to humor the sectioner, then one must deal with the attacks on one’s epistemic character by the sectioner. This can be especially fraught in a group setting, because (a) good faith questioners can be mistaken for sectioners, and treated unfairly as a result, and (b) the sectioner can appeal to the values and norms of communication in defense of their activities, using their superficial appearance of reasonableness to mask their underlying bad faith and hypocrisy. The superficial resemblance between the good faith questioner and the sectioner makes sectioning especially pernicious as a form of trolling. The standard advice of ‘don’t feed the trolls’ is less helpful here, because it is hard to see the troll for who they are until it is too late: a strategy of ignoring possible sectioners is likely to result in readiness towards good faith interlocutors, and in failure to use one’s higher epistemic standing to educate others and so improve their epistemic standing. This is especially true in environments where one does not know one’s interlocutors, or at least know them well enough to make inferences about their subversive and spiteful motivation. One may fail to show epistemic benevolence, and perhaps even fail to discharge epistemic duties to others, by mistaking a good faith interlocutor for a sectioner. This is both an individual failing and a harm to others, one which can lead to increasingly widespread acrimony and mistrust. By mimicking the practices of good faith interlocutors, the sectioner can not only disrupt a particular conversation, but also undermine epistemic communities more generally (Johnson, 2017, p. 14).

§5. Sectioning as an Epistemic Vice

We have already seen that sectioning is both annoying and epistemically harmful. But does it rise to the level of epistemic vice? I believe that the answer is ‘yes’, and moreover that this answer reveals some interesting things about character epistemology and questions.13

To say that sectioning is a vice requires that sectioning be a character trait, not just a behavior one might engage in. Is this the case? Can one be described as a sectioner, the same way one might be described as open-minded or close-minded, honest or dishonest? Despite the novelty of using such a recently coined term as ‘sectioner’ in this way, it is not as strange a proposition as it may sound at first.14 After all, ‘troll’ is a personality trait, as evidenced by commonly used statements like “Don’t be a troll” or “They are such a troll.” The idea that one can be a troll, and not just perform the act of trolling, is a natural one, at least once the concept of ‘troll’ became widely understood. If trolling falls within the category of ‘character trait,’ then we would expect sectioning, which is a species of trolling, to likewise fall within the same category. The structure of epistemic character traits is such that one trait can be a species of another trait; inquisitiveness and curiosity are a case in point.

One common way of thinking about character traits, ultimately Aristotelian in influence, is that character traits are active and persistent dispositions to reliably think, feel, and act in certain ways, a disposition which is a deep, characteristic feature of one’s personality (see Azar, 2011, pp. 8-15 for a particularly useful treatment of this topic). A person who regularly engaged in sectioning when the situation allowed for it, because of a settled disposition to enjoy or be otherwise motivated to disrupt conversations, could be described as a sectioner, rather than merely one who engages in sectioning behavior from time to time. So long as the adjective ‘sectioner’ can be understood in a way that describes someone’s character, then sectioner can be a character trait for the kind of person the adjective truly describes. Again, inquisitiveness provides a useful comparison: we might be tempted, pretheoretically, to think of inquisitiveness as merely a kind of behavior that involves seeking lots of questions. And while it is true that one can act inquisitively, it also true that one can be inquisitive. The same should apply, mutatis mutandis, for sectioning. Nothing stops us from recognizing a homonym, and making finer-grained distinctions between sectioning as an individual action, a habit, a disposition, and a character trait.15

Supposing, then, that sectioner could qualify as a character trait, would it reach the level of epistemic vice? Recall that epistemic character traits involve motivation, affect, competence, and judgment, and an inappropriate orientation towards any of the four dimensions can be sufficient for making a trait an epistemic vice. But rather than simply lacking or failing to properly express these dimensions, I argue that sectioners possess negative versions of them:

Motivation: A sectioner is motivated by a desire to obstruct pursuit of the epistemic goods that others might acquire in their productive conversations.

Affect: A sectioner enjoys or takes pleasure in disrupting the productive conversations of others.
Seelioning can also lead to one’s epistemic self-confidence being undermined if the seelioner’s questions require answers that one cannot immediately provide. If decides not to humor the seelioner, then one must deal with the attacks on one’s epistemic character by the seelioner. This can be especially fraught in a group setting, because (a) good faith questioners can be mistaken for seelioners, and treated unfairly as a result, and (b) the seelioner can appeal to the values and norms of communication in defense of their activities, using their superficial appearance of reasonableness to mask their underlying bad faith and hypocrisy.

The superficial resemblance between the good faith questioner and the seelioner makes seelioning especially pernicious as a form of trolling. The standard advice of ‘don’t feed the trolls’ is less helpful here, because it is hard to see the troll for who they are until it is too late: a strategy of ignoring possible seelioners is likely to result in redness towards good faith interlocutors, and in failure to use one’s higher epistemic standing to educate others and so improve their epistemic standing. This is especially true in environments where one does not know one’s interlocutors, or at least know them well enough to make inferences about their sincerity and motivation. One may fail to show epistemic benevolence, and perhaps even fall to discharge epistemic duties to others, by mistaking a good faith interlocutor for a seelioner. This is both an individual failing and a harm to others, one which can lead to increasingly widespread acrimony and mistrust. By misunderstanding the practices of good faith interlocutors, the seelioner can not only disrupt a particular conversation, but also undermine epistemic communities more generally (Johnson, 2017, p. 14).

§5. Seelioning as an Epistemic Vice

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Supposing, then, that seelioner could qualify as a character trait, would it reach the level of epistemic vice? Recall that epistemic character traits involve motivation, affect, competence, and judgment, and an inappropriate orientation towards any of the four dimensions can be sufficient for making a trait an epistemic vice. But rather than simply lacking or failing to properly express these dimensions, I argue that seelioners possess negative versions of them:

**Motivation:** A seelioner is motivated by a desire to obstruct pursuit of the epistemic goods that others might acquire in their productive conversations.

**Affect:** A seelioner enjoys or takes pleasure in disrupting the productive conversations of others.
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Competence: A sealioner is skilled in asking questions in ways that can disrupt conversations while appearing to follow epistemic norms and values, without revealing their bad faith.

Judgment: A sealioner can recognize good opportunities and methods to disrupt a conversation through questioning, and how far they can go without revealing themselves as a sealioner.

Hence according to the Responsibilist Standard we established in §1, seali ons can count as an epistemic vice.

One noteworthy feature of seali oning is that it does not exhibit many of the hallmarks of bad questioning that we might expect. Watson (2020, pp. 243-247) provides a taxonomy of bad questions, which can fail in virtue of either their content or their performance. However, it is notable that Watson (2020, p. 239) describes what she calls the ‘vices of questioning’ as ‘intellectual failing often expressed in intellectual vices such as negligence, closed-mindedness and arrogance’ rather than specifying a specific, unique vice of bad questioning. Moreover, the deficiencies Watson describes are all understood with reference to the primary function of questions, eliciting information, rather than at the level of an epistemic agent’s character traits:

Bad questioning is not an intellectual vice itself, just as good questioning is not an intellectual virtue. Rather, good questioning is an intellectual skill found in the exercise of many of the intellectual virtues.... In much the same way, bad questioning is an intellectual failing found in the exercise of many intellectual virtues.... (Watson, 2020, p. 242; Watson expands on this point further on pp. 255-256)

I would suggest that this way of thinking about bad questioning is incomplete. It is true that bad questioning can be a lack of skill. But it can also go beyond that: one can be a bad questioner, not in the sense that one is bad at questioning, but in the sense that one is the sort of person who regularly expresses their epistemic agency by using questions for epistemically vicious ends.

Sealoning is one example of how this can happen. Sealiners are not, as such, unskillful at asking questions. If anything, they have to have at least some skill in order to meet their ends successfully. Rather the problem is that the ends themselves (disrupting conversation) are bad. This suggests that sealoning is more than just a deficiency when it comes to question-asking skills. Sealoning can be a trait of its own, the negative counterpart to the epistemic virtue of inquisitiveness. Inquisitiveness is defined as the 'question-asking virtue.' Sealoning can be understood as a question-asking vice.1

§6. Conclusion

I’ve argued in this paper that sealoning counts as a Responsibilist epistemic vice. Sealoning is not just an annoying way of trolling online, but also an epistemic orientation that involves using the skills of good questioning toward the epistemically malicious end of disrupting conversation. This short investigation reveals that there is more to bad questioning than just a lack of skill. One can, in certain psychologically deep ways, be a bad questioner, and sealoning is one example of what this can look like.

Notes

1 The Responsibilist approach is contrasted with the Reliabilist approach, which sets a lower standard: on this view, an epistemic virtue is whatever regularly makes a positive contribution to the intellectual activity of its possessor. This can include character traits, but also skills, capacities, and functions for which an agent is not responsible and (presumably) not praiseworthy, just as good vision or good memory. See Sosa (2007) and Greco and Railton (2018) for discussion of the Reliabilist view.


3 See Buchr (2010) for more on the idea of epistemic malevolence.

4 This novel is distinct from, but compatible with, the four dimension model Buchr later developed, which we discussed in the last section. We can think of MP and AP as falling under the rubric of motivation, and CP and JP as falling under success.

5 See Rigg (2018), and Kidd (2018a) for a more detailed look on an open-mindedness and epistemic courage, respectively.

6 See Watson (2018a, pp. 157-159) for a fuller explication and defense of this position.

7 Watson (2018b). Watson (2019) also argues that good questioning is an important skill for democratic citizens.

8 See: http://wondermark.com/16/2/.

9 This comic has been used to suggest that the woman in the comic is
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Competence: A sealioner is skilled in asking questions in ways that can disrupt conversations while appearing to follow epistemic norms and values, without revealing their bad faith.

Judgment: A sealioner can recognize good opportunities and methods to disrupt a conversation through questioning, and how far they can go without revealing themselves as a sealioner.

Hence according to the Relativist Standard we established in §1, sealioning can count as an epistemic vice.

One noteworthy feature of sealioning is that it does not exhibit many of the hallmarks of bad questioning that we might expect. Watson (2020, pp. 243-247) provides a taxonomy of bad questions, which can fail in virtue of either their content or their performance. However, it is notable that Watson (2020, p. 239) describes what she calls the "vice of questioning" as "intellectual failing often expressed in intellectual vices such as negligence, closed-mindedness and arrogance" rather than specifying a specific, unique vice of bad questioning. Moreover, the deficiencies Watson describes are all understood with reference to the primary function of questions, eliciting information, rather than at the level of an epistemic agent's character traits:

Bad questioning is not an intellectual vice itself, just as good questioning is not an intellectual virtue. Rather, good questioning is an intellectual skill found in the exercise of many of the intellectual virtues.... In much the same way, bad questioning is an intellectual failing found in the exercise of many intellectual virtues.... (Watson, 2020, p. 232; Watson expands on this point farther on pp. 255-256)

I would suggest that this way of thinking about bad questioning is incomplete. It is true that bad questioning can be a lack of skill. But it can also go beyond that: one can be a bad questioner, not in the sense that one is bad at questioning, but in the sense that one is the sort of person who regularly expresses their epistemic agency by using questions for epistemically vicious ends.

Sealioning is one example of how this can happen. Sealioners are

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not, as such, unskilful at asking questions. If anything, they have to have at least some skill in order to meet their ends successfully. Rather the problem is that the ends themselves (disrupting conversation) are bad. This suggests that sealioning is more than just a deficiency when it comes to question-asking skills. Sealioning can be a trait of its own, the negative counterpart to the epistemic virtue of inquisitiveness. Inquisitiveness is defined as the 'question-asking virtue.' Sealioning can be understood as a question-asking vice.\(^7\)

§6. Conclusion

I've argued in this paper that sealioning counts as a Responsibilist epistemic vice. Sealioning is not just an annoying way of trolling online, but also an epistemic orientation that involves using the skills of good questioning toward the epistemically malicious end of disrupting conversation. This short investigation reveals that there is more to bad questioning than just a lack of skill. One can, in certain psychologically deep ways, be a bad questioner, and sealioning is one example of what this can look like.

Notes

1 The Responsibilist approach is contrasted with the Relativist approach, which sets a lower standard: on this view, an epistemic virtue is whatever regularly makes a positive contribution to the intellectual activity of its possessor. This can include character traits, but also skills, capacities, and functions for which an agent is not responsible and (presumably) not praiseworthy, just as good vision or good memory. See Sosa (2007) and Greco and Rabin (2018) for discussion of the Relativist view.


3 See Buchl (2011) for more on the idea of epistemic malfeasance.

4 This model is distinct from, but compatible with, the four dimension model Buchl later developed, which we discussed in the last section. We can think of MP and AP as falling under the rubric of motivation, and CP and IP as falling under success.

5 See Riggs (2018) and Kidd (2018a) for a more detailed look on openness-mindedness and epistemic courage, respectively.

6 See Watson (2018a, pp. 157-159) for a fuller explication and defense of this position.

7 Watson (2018b). Watson (2019) also argues that good questioning is an important skill for democratic citizens.

8 See: http://wondersmark.com/162/.

9 This comic has been used to suggest that the woman in the comic is
prejudiced against seelions, which turns the seelion itself into a more sympathetic character defending its own dignity. The author, David Malîk, clarifies his original intent with the comic here: http://wondermark.com/2014-strange.

Malîk gives a brief account of the history of the webcomic's jump into the popular consciousness here: http://wondermark.com/see-los-verb/.

10 See also the discussion at Merriam-Webster: https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/seelion-internet-trolling.

11 Most of the literature on episodic duties has focused on an individual's duty to believe in light of evidence (as in Cliffordian Evidentialism). These duties are either absolute, third-personal duties, or perhaps duties to oneself qua episodic agent. But there is some grounds for belief in having episodic duties toward others, comparable to but distinct from moral duties. Fricker's (2007) discussion of episodic injustice is one influential avenue for this line of thought. See also Barn (2019) and Kawall (2022). It is worth mentioning that seelioning clearly counts as an episodic vice according to the lower standard of the Reliabilist approach, discussed in n. 1 above. On this view, a vice can be anything that regularly obstructs episodic activity, and this includes behaviors. So even if one is not persuaded that seelioning might be a characteristic trait, we can still call it an episodic vice.

12 So understood, seelioning would fall under the category of what Kidd labels "episodic vices", which are "those that do not feature in prevailing vocabularies, despite their tracking genuine forms of episodic viciousness" (2018, p. 50). He goes on to describe how a trait and its label can become more or less important across time or across cultures, and how some vices may be dependent on specific historical or cultural background facts. It would not be surprising that a family of episodic vices and vices emerged with the advent of social media and other forms of online communication.

13 As a point of comparison to further motivate this strategy, note that Cassam makes the same distinction when discussing the vice of episodic insouciance. He distinguishes from lying or bullshitting as acts or behaviors, from being a liar or a bullshitter as what he calls a stance or posture (Cassam, 2018, p. 5). Cassam is approaching things from a slightly different angle than we are here, but shares function analogously to character traits: they are belief-, value-, and norm-motivated dispositions to think, feel, and act in regular ways.

14 Among the many features of the performance of bad questions, Watson gives distracting, incorrect, misleading, and misplaced. Any of these might seem to apply to seelioning (these features are only listed, not described in any detail, so it is difficult to say).

15 Though not necessarily the only one. To recall the Pythagorean/Aristotelian dictum mentioned above, perhaps the virtue of questioning is uniform (impertinence), whereas the vice of questions is multifar, with seelioning as one notable example.

**Works Cited**


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prejudiced against sexists, which turns the sexist into a more sympathetic character defending its own dignity. The author, David Malin, clarifies his original intent with the comic here: http://wondermark.com/2014-credits.

Malin gives a brief account of the history of the "wondermark.com" site: http://wondermark.com/se-xion-verb/

See also the discussion at Merriam-Webster: https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/sealing-internet-trolling.

Most of the literature on epistemic duties has focused on an individual's duty to believe in light of evidence (as in Cliffordian Evidentialism). These duties are either absolute, third-personal duties, or perhaps duties to oneself qua epistemic agent. But there is some grounds for belief in having epistemic duties toward others, comparable but distinct from moral duties. Fricker's (2007) discussion of epistemic injustice is one influential avenue for this line of thought. See also Bani (2019) and Kavosi (2020).

It is worth mentioning that sealing clearly counts as an epistemic vice according to the lower standard of the Reliabilist approach, discussed in n. 1 above. On this view, a vice can be anything that regularly obstructs epistemic activity, and this includes behaviors. So even if one is not persuaded that sealing might be a character trait, we can still call it an epistemic vice.

So understood, sealing might well fall under the category of what Kidd labels "epistemic vices", which are "those that do not feature in prevailing vocabularies, despite their tracking genuine forms of epistemic viciousness" (2018, p. 50). He goes on to describe how a trait and its label can become more or less important across time or across cultures, and how some vices may be dependent on specific historical or cultural background facts. It would be surprising that a family of epistemic virtues and vices emerged with the advent of social media and other forms of online communication.

As a point of comparison to further motivate this strategy, note that Cassam makes the same distinction when discussing the vice of epistemic insouciance. He distinguishes from lying or bullshit as acts or behaviors, from being a liar or bullshit as what he calls a stance or posture (Cassam, 2018, p. 3). Cassam is approaching things from a slightly different angle than we are here, but differs function analogously to character traits: they are belief-, value-, and norm-motivated dispositions to think, feel, and act in regular ways.

Among the many features of the performance of bad questions, Watson gives distracting, inapt, misleading, and misplaced. Any of these might seem to apply to sealing (these features are only listed, not described in any detail, so it is difficult to say).

Though not necessarily the only one. To recall the Pythagorean/Aristotelian dictum mentioned above, perhaps the virtue of questioning is uniform (inquisitiveness), whereas the vice of questions is multifacm, with sealing as one notable example.

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Works Cited


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Credentialed Fictions and Robustness Analysis

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Abstract: In this paper I defend the possibility of robustness analysis as confirmatory. Given that models are highly idealized, multiple models with different sets of idealizations are constructed to show that some result is not dependent on those idealizations (it is robust). This method of robustness analysis has been criticized since, no matter how many false models agree, all of them are false and lack confirmatory power. I argue that this line of criticism makes an assumption that a model is confirmatory only if it ontically represents its target. I draw on work about explanations to motivate a challenge to this assumption, and argue that this assumption needs bolstering.

Introduction

In this paper I challenge a common criticism that robustness analysis (RA) cannot be confirmatory because it operates on false models (Orzack and Sober, 1993, p. 538; Odenbaugh and Alexandrovna, 2011, pp. 763-765; Odenbaugh, 2011, pp. 1181-1182). I argue that this criticism makes an assumption of critic-dependence that has been questioned in the literature on modeling. I look to the work of Boklich (2009, 2012, 2016), drawing on her account of credentialed fictions to make this case.

That fictions are permissible in modeling is not contested, but how, and whether, fictions are explanatory or confirmatory is. Given that, the work in this paper is not a conclusive rebuttal of arguments against RA, but a call for a basic assumption to be examined and motivated, as well as to bring various lines of literature on modeling into contact with each other.

In section II present the basics of RA and the general criticism of it.
In section II I briefly discuss what I call the ontic-dependence assumption and Boklich’s credentialed fictions aimed to undercut this. In section III argue that a notion like credentialed fictions has not been considered in the literature on RA, and provide some motivation for reading it into some of the literature.

1. RA and its Discontents

A general impetus for the philosophical work on RA can be found in the work of Richard Levins (1966, 1993) and Orzack and Sober’s (1993)