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Academic Subjectivity, Idols, and the Vicissitudes of Virtues in Science: Epistemic Modesty Versus Epistemic Grandiosity

Thomas Teo

Epistemic subjectivity has been the nemesis of objectivity. To be more precise: Subjectivity has always been a dialectical part of objectivity (see Daston & Galison, 2007). Objectivity is not only an epistemic category, but also a *value* that guides science (Teo, 2018a). To demand from the subject to "be objective" is clearly a normative claim and shows the connection between epistemology and ethics, or, what one could label "epistemo-ethics." Epistemic values become personal virtues once they are considered positive and embodied in concrete subjectivities. Scientists, implicitly and explicitly, have committed to various epistemic virtues over time. Traditional values may include academic freedom, honesty, transparency, truth, or objectivity, while critical researchers may emphasize truthfulness, and social, economic, and environmental justice as ideals of research.

Whereas objectivity remains a widely endorsed value and virtue, *epistemic modesty* is hardly mentioned in textbooks, the academic literature,

T. Teo (✉)
Department of Psychology, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada
e-mail: tteo@yorku.ca

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or seminars, although it is a value that emerges when understanding subjectivity in its full complexity, including a recognition of the historical, cultural, and personal limitations of knowledge. While the historicity and the personal limitations of knowledge apply to all sciences, culture-centric knowledge within a complex globalized world impacts the human sciences more deeply. Yet, it also leads human scientists to be anxious about the consequences of humble knowledge claims in the public domain. Epistemic subjectivity may also be compared to everyday subjectivity and in this process may be aligned with *epistemic grandiosity*. The dialectics between epistemic modesty and grandiosity in human subjectivity has a long history in European thinking.

In Western philosophy this conflict is played out in classical Graeco-Roman expositions. Cicero's (106–43 BCE) Socrates laid the foundation for understanding the limits of one's knowledge, for being open to the uncertainty of one's knowledge, translated from Greek, and later from Latin, as the dictum: "I know that I do not know" (sometimes erroneously translated as "I know that I know nothing") (see Fine, 2008). This must be contrasted with Plato's (1997) allegory of the cave, involving Socrates as well, that portrays the knower as belonging to the few who embrace truth, against the many who chain themselves to ignorance and who sacrifice the true knower in a seemingly inevitable course of events. Western philosophy has contributed to this mindset in the works of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who labeled his own contributions a Copernican revolution, or Georg W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), who suggested that the absolute spirit was embodied in his works, or Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), who titled one of his chapters in *Ecce Homo* (written 1888), arguably ironically, "Why I write such good books," to mention only a few examples.

If we put Francis Bacon (1561–1626) at the formation of modern Western science, we find a similar dialectic (one could include Descartes): His idols emphasize the importance of understanding the hindrances to knowledge (Bacon, 1965), whereas the limitations do not apply to himself, and his own statements lack modesty (see also Keller, 1985). It is a common current in scientific thought that the limitations of knowledge, a lack of objectivity or rigor, or incompetence are attributed to other people but not to oneself. Accusing other researchers of

bias, ignorance, and speculation has been a tool to diminish the epistemic quality of the work of others (Teo, 2008). This applies equally to "positivist" and empiricist approaches, as well as to critical scholarship that should be aware of its own temporality.

The belief that one can assume a point from nowhere, that history, culture, and society do not play a role in epistemic subjectivity, that "I" am objective, whereas others are not, may lead to a feeling of epistemic grandiosity, whereas the assumption that "my" knowledge is always fragile, even when "I" attempt to be objective, might inspire epistemic modesty. In the natural sciences, modesty could include the context of discovery (see Reichenbach, 1938) (what questions are asked and why), and one's own inevitably narrow expertise, whereas in the human sciences, it applies to the contexts of discovery, justification (how was a claim justified? what methodology or method was used to make this statement?), interpretation (how were results interpreted?), and application (how were findings translated for practical purposes?). Particularly in the human sciences, the temporality and contextuality of objects and events demands making epistemic modesty a virtue.

For instance, postcolonial research has shown the degree to which Western ideas permeate knowledge in the human, social, and psychological sciences. Such research identifies power dynamics against the *periphery* that include misrepresentations, silencing, and structural and epistemic violence (e.g., Spivak, 1999). Scientific projects have played an important role in *othering* non-Western mental life (Jackson & Weidman, 2004). Western science has shown the cultural, colonial, and indigenous impact of knowledge, and how colonial interests have been responsible for the generation of knowledge about dominated people. Even when there is an agreement that European history is not world-history, historians from the "periphery" (e.g., India), still need to address the "center's" history, which does not hold true for the center (Chakrabarty, 2000). Similarly, human scientists from the periphery must relate indigenous knowledge to mainstream organizations, journals, and practices if they want to have an impact, whereas the opposite is not required of the mainstream.

Indigenous knowledge has shown that we can have alternative conceptualizations about the human world (e.g., Kim, Yang, & Hwang,

2006), and that much of Western thinking itself is indigenous in its context. The problem is not just one of sampling or organizational structure (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010), but affects the core categories with which disciplines in the human sciences operate. The problem of *epistemic ethnocentrism* is not confined to the participants of research, but includes distortions and interests that emerge from hypotheses, interpretations, and research practices that psychologists have adopted. Power and culture play a role in the choice of problems, methods, data analyses, discussions, and applications. The solution to the problem of ethnocentrism in the human sciences is not about expanding but about decolonizing such sciences (see Adams & Estrada-Villalta, 2017; Bhatia, 2018). Psychological intuitions, categories, theories, philosophies, and even methodologies have a cultural dimension embedded in power. Thus, for subjects involved in sciences about humans, the value of modesty in regard to one's knowledge claims should be obvious. Epistemic virtues and values—endorsed or embodied—are one area of research for a new psychology of science.

A Psychology of the Sciences and Beyond

Attempts to capture some of the subjective elements in the scientific process have been accomplished in a traditional psychology of science. For instance, one of the pioneers of psychology, Galton (1869/1962), proclaimed that scientific genius was inherited, as well as that modern Europeans are in greater possession of it than other races. The botanist Candolle (1873), skeptical of Galton's nature over nurture arguments, agreed that colored races lack men of scientific discovery and that women have not written any original scientific work. The criminologist Lombroso (1905) believed that the giants of the mind may be burdened with mental illness, while the Nobel Prize recipient and chemist Ostwald (1908) heightened the appreciation of scientists in suggesting that scientific innovators are the most important class of human beings, contributing to epistemic and social grandiosity and not to modesty.

In a largely forgotten, systematic book on the psychology of science, Hiebsch (1977) suggested that the subdiscipline studies creative

thinking, the ways in which the personality of the problem-solving individual conditions cognitive activity, and how creative thinking and the creation of knowledge can be advanced through working in teams. For instance, Wertheimer (1945) analyzed productive thinking by looking at the thought processes of Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) and Albert Einstein (1879–1955), and how these thought processes led to the beginning of modern physics and the development of the theory of relativity. Guilford (1950) in his *Presidential Address* expressed the importance of the discovery and development of creative talent, since creativity by scientists and engineers had economic value. Yet, attempts to improve the practice of science have not involved psychologists, but authorities in business and management.

The case for a psychology of science was made by Müller-Freienfels (1936), who argued that epistemologies produced abstract systems that ignore living human beings that produce knowledge. In contrast, the philosopher of science Popper (1972) famously banned the psychology of science from epistemology and pleaded for an epistemology without a knowing subject. Yet, Fleck (1935/1979) incorporated with his concepts of *thought style* and *thought collective* a social psychology into his understanding of science. Kuhn (1962) can be understood as including within a psychology of science the idea that the inability to find a solution challenges the researcher and not the theory, that students accept theories because of the authority of a teacher, or that most scientists perform normal science.

Psychological ideas as core to the study of science have been endorsed by historians of science. For instance, Holton (1973) moved the argument into the direction of psychology by arguing that thematic decisions by individuals are more important than paradigms, and that such commitments emerge from the personality of the individual, rather than from the environment or community of the researcher. A *thema*, just like in music, is something that may be repeated and may recur throughout a scientific career. Even Feyerabend (1975) employed psychological insights in his anarchistic epistemology, by pointing to the obedience of researchers and the role of money and emotional support in the work of scientists. The question regarding the age at which scientists reach their peak is of psychological interest as well. Albert Einstein,

Werner Heisenberg (1901–1976), or Paul Dirac (1902–1984) experienced their peak before the age of 30, and it appears that physicists at that time lost their creativity after the age of 35; chemists reached their peak at 40; and philosophers can improve into their 60s (Oeser, 1988). More recently, the works of Simonton (1988) or Feist (2006) fall under the umbrella of traditional psychology of science.

My critique suggests that most of the traditional psychology of science works do not put subjectivity in its nexus at the center. Even some critically oriented approaches ignore that nexus. Freud (1977) argued that the sublimation of sexual desires is also responsible for the highest cultural, artistic, and social achievements of humanity. More challenging for the mainstream is Devereux (1967), who connected anxiety and methods in the human sciences, and argued that the experiment in psychology is as much an experiment on the experimenter as it is on the participant. The anxieties and defense mechanisms of the researcher, research strategies, and the collection and interpretation of data disclose more about the nature of human behavior than the seemingly objective observation of rats or other human beings. There exists also an important tradition in feminist philosophy of science that points to the gendered psychological dimensions of science. The choice for quantification, the analyses of variables, and the preference for abstract conceptualizations may represent a masculine attitude toward problems (Code, 1993; Harding, 1986; Keller, 1985).

A critical psychology of science that embraces subjectivity needs a theory that encompasses the social (socio-subjectivity: culture, society, history, etc.), the interpersonal (inter-subjectivity: groups, peers, organizations, teachers, etc.), and personal dimensions (intra-subjectivity: mind and embodied practices, thinking, feeling, and motivation) in their nexus and in connection with the material worlds. In short, epistemic subjectivity requires the first-person standpoint of researchers in its interconnection with social reality (see also Schraube, 2013; Teo, 2017). For instance, a psychology of science needs to explain why researchers, using scientific methods and standards, have endorsed ideas and "knowledge" that turned out to be false and even violent (e.g., scientific racism, sexism, classism). Is this ideological knowledge the result of personality, cognitive mistakes, or group dynamics? If ideological

knowledge were just a matter of personality or cognition, then it would be easy to overturn or combat it. But this type of knowledge has a long shelf-life because it represents historically constituted prejudices that have been materialized in social practices and then corroborated by the existing scheme of hypotheses testing (e.g., group differences; see Teo, 2008).

I submit that the exclusive focus on traditional psychological topics in research prevents an understanding of ideology, hidden assumptions, and taken-for-granted theories, and requires a theoretical shift from personality to a historical, cultural, and societal concept of subjectivity, a concept that includes interaction with peers and colleagues, but does not neglect unique personal characteristics. Such a concept also includes an analysis of the scientific habitus (Bourdieu, 1988), the embodiment of scientific activities, and the privilege to speak on behalf of truth (see Teo, 2016). Research in the human sciences that fortifies existing privileges cannot be sufficiently understood by focusing on the individual, cognition, or even groups. The concept of subjectivity (in its broad meaning) is able to more adequately capture the problem, and its anchoring in the psychological humanities allows for critical analyses that include the socio-and historical constitution of mental life, while not neglecting individual commitments and idiosyncrasies. Changing epistemic virtues and values express a culture *and* an individual commitment.

New Idols

The statement "the more one knows, the more one knows what one does not know" is a play on Socrates and should have consequences for a study of epistemic values. There is an inherent conflict between epistemic modesty, engendered by such sayings, and the need to present oneself as part of the epistemic elite or as one of the grandiose minds of knowledge (especially when one has expert knowledge). The point is not that the system of knowledge deserves no recognition, because it does. Rather, the reality is that the individual scientist can accommodate only a tiny part of any system of knowledge, even within one discipline such

as psychology. Scientists are not exempt from cognitive issues and emotional attachments (see also Osbeck, Nersessian, Malone, & Newstetter, 2011). Like all humans, they must deal with realities that emerge in the cultural intersection of socio-, inter-, and intra-subjectivity. In the following, the new idols of research, and the consequences of a neoliberal academia and a post-truth society, as they impact epistemic subjectivity and modesty, are discussed.

Epistemic grandiosity encourages and is nourished by various idols that make epistemic modesty a difficult proposition. The first set could be called (a) "idols of the narcissistic halo," for which celebrities are known (and are used in advertising), but which also touches academic subjectivity. This concept refers to the tendency for scientists who are recognized experts in one area to appear or present themselves as competent in other knowledge areas as well. Scientists afflicted with this condition bank on their accumulated cognitive capital to convince the public and other audiences about their all-around knowledge capabilities. This tendency may be nourished by the status of scientific methods, which, certainly, do not make the scientist an automatic expert in all knowledge content areas. Doubt and critique, modesty and humility, are abandoned for one's own thoughts and statements, partial knowledge, rhetoric and exaggerations, which in turn reinforce notoriety in the public. As examples, natural scientists and economists come to mind who claim to possess expertise about gender differences; or, one can consider William Shockley (1910–1989), the Nobel prize winner in physics in 1956, and his epistemic support for a political, scientific racism (see Tucker, 1994).

The second set, (b) "idols of ideology," refers to a process where experts in one area do not challenge their assumptions as experts but rather justify the status quo by providing scientific discourses. In the context of scientific racism, an example would be an expert who misunderstands the history of racism, and the power of the interpretation of results, while neglecting disconfirming evidence. In political economy, where this phenomenon was first observed (Marx, 1867/1962), this refers to the propagation of the sources of the constitution of wealth and the degree to which one's theoretical preference is embedded within one's own interest or the interest of the powerful (or see Graeber, 2011,

for a more recent example about the origins of debt). This subjectivity involves a lack of awareness of the assumptions or underlying motives that lead to the promotion of certain knowledges that are used to justify the status quo as natural and inevitable. Although a description can be wrong, it is presented as normative. A recent political example from psychology is the defense of torture, when psychologists' presence in enhanced interrogations was interpreted as the absence of torture per se and provided the justification for the continuation of enhanced interrogations (Aalbers & Teo, 2017).

The third set, (c) "idols of bullshit" (see Frankfurt, 1986/2005), is exemplified by scientists and psychologists in the service of the tobacco industry. These scientists (including psychologists) were *bullshitters,* in the sense that arguments such as "correlation does not mean causation," "nothing has ever been proven definitively," "we have to understand the times," and so on, misrepresented what actually went on without being false (see also Oreskes & Conway, 2010). The argument that large-scale epidemiological studies do not demonstrate causality in a psychological sense is correct, but it assumes that a psychological understanding of causality (which is different from the understanding of causality in physics) is superior to the one in epidemiology. Another example of this idol would be the concept of heritability. Scientists often suggest, erroneously, that this concept denotes the degree to which an *individual* has inherited a trait, when in reality it is a *population* statistic. Bullshiters exaggerate, they present something local as being true around the world, and they provide misleading statements that appeal to a parochial common sense, all while knowing that they are not doing justice to the complexity of the problem. They pick and choose, ignore disconfirming evidence, take things out of context deliberately, and do all this with a sense of epistemic grandiosity.

Sometimes the idols of bullshit cannot be distinguished from the fourth set, (d) "idols of ignorance," especially when the bullshitter starts to believe that what they are promoting is true, and when bullshit morphs into "truth." However, this process is neither apolitical nor benign. The production of ignorance is sociopolitical and benefits existing power structures and economic interests. Proctor and Schiebinger (2008) focus on the cultural production of ignorance with scientists

having a part in this production. Psychology, for instance, produces ignorance when focusing on the individual and excluding social conditions. The idea that all change begins with individuals, or the focus on individuals, ignores research on inequality that identifies the many negative consequences of inequality for the mental health of individuals (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). If mental health issues are embedded in inequality, which is a social and structural category, not a psychological category, then it is ignorance-producing to suggest that one can solve mental health issues on an individual, psychological level. Of course, this finding requires modesty as well.

The Vicissitude of Epistemic Modesty

We are all ignorant on certain issues at various times and the personal limitations of knowledge should logically lead to modesty and not to grandiosity. Even if we try to overcome personal knowledge deficiencies, our knowledge deficit will always be larger than our knowledge surplus. Epistemic modesty is the consequence of acknowledging subjectivity, culture, history, and society in knowledge-making and -dissemination, especially in the human sciences. Some of the same figures that lacked humility also advocated for modesty (see also Grenberg, 2005). In my argument, epistemic modesty means to be aware of one's *own* horizon, the strengths and limitations of one's own approach, while being knowledgeable about the history, sociality, and culturality of knowledge.

Modesty means having an awareness of one's own accomplishments without assuming the superiority of one's own knowledge or taking on a paternalistic attitude toward the other. Modesty, which is based on self-understanding and self-respect (Grenberg, 2005), means being careful about the old and new idols of research. Modesty does not imply relativism, that anything goes, or that one is weak, inferior, self-degrading or self-contemptuous. Modesty does not mean rejecting one's own knowledge competencies. Rather, modesty refers to a realistic assessment of the possibilities and limitations of "my" knowledge, while neither overestimating nor underestimating these possibilities or

limitations. Epistemic modesty is a historical outcome of all the research that has accumulated over the centuries, in different countries, with different groups. In psychological practice, it has been acknowledged that an epistemologically humble clinical approach may be better received by patients (Fowers, 2005; Hersch, 2006).

The question emerges as to why scientists have not developed more epistemic modesty. Why do many scientists prefer grandiosity? It should be clear, based on my short description of subjectivity, that virtues or idols cannot be understood without the larger context, and without moving from the internal to the external logic of research. There are reasons why epistemic grandiosity thrives and epistemic modesty starves. The analysis of an epistemic virtue as being endorsed by an individual or as the result of a philosophical argument is insufficient, if one does not take the larger societal context into account. There are at least two important societal factors that counteract epistemic modesty: the neoliberal transformation of societies in recent decades and the emergence of a post-truth cultural reality.

The neoliberal transformation of society involves the privatization, individualization, and marketization of common goods (Harvey, 2005), with enormous consequences for the subject's conduct of everyday life. Neoliberalism denotes materially a political-economic alteration that has taken place since the 1980s, and ideologically to a thought system that emphasizes the self and family in the market place to the degree that a *homo neoliberalus* has emerged (Teo, 2018b). At the psychological level, neoliberalism means the psychologization, responsibilization, and subjectification of persons. At the institutional level, it means that all public entities are affected by a transformation, universities and colleges included, that demands that they be managed like businesses.

A neoliberal academia (see e.g., Smyth, 2017) means that unsuccessful departments or programs are closed, whereby success is defined by financial outcomes and not by the quality of work. The number of administrators is increased to supervise faculty, and likewise the number of performance evaluations are increased for everyone in the name of accountability. A neoliberal academia entails for-profit calculations, academic output that is compared and ranked in contrast to other universities, salaries based on external performance criteria, and the devaluation

of academic service work that does not involve revenue, profit, or other financial gains. At the same time, the same service work by administrators is lauded as managerial. Entrepreneurship is celebrated, precarious work for students and part-time faculty is more prevalent, and critically oriented humanities are increasingly devalued if they do not produce something that can be sold.

What does a neoliberal university do to academic subjectivity, and what values are thereby promoted? Certainly not promoted is the value of epistemic modesty, which conflicts in significant ways with a neoliberal academia, where advertising, selling, and the impact of one's research are measured and used as benchmarks for status, success, and promotion. Academic subjectivity needs to exaggerate and focus on the impact and promotion of one's research. Epistemic modesty is superseded by an entrepreneurial self that needs to look constantly at citations and impact. One can even ask to what degree fraudulent work in academia can be understood on the background of neoliberalism. Faculty need to market their research, and if not marketable, move to new products that promise grants and higher impact. The work of the world-renown expert on medieval history (with a limited number of citations due to the small community) does not count as much as the normal science of the neuroscientist who produces an average number of citations in their field. Incommensurability of research has been reduced to quantifiable measures. In short, neoliberal academia does not provide forms for the embodiment of modesty, and rather promotes an innovative self that is in the business of marketing all accomplishments, to the point where epistemic grandiosity appears as a natural outcome.

The second cultural context that counteracts epistemic modesty is the post-truth society (see McIntyre, 2018). Intellectuals who share a skepticism toward a *Truth* concept with a capital *T*—a stream of argument one can find not only in postmodern theory, but also in German Idealism and in Popper's (1935/1992) critical rationalism,—find themselves forced to defend the practice of science, the concepts of truth and evidence, as well as better and worse knowledge, all within a context where truth has lost its meaning, and opinions and feelings have the same status as careful knowledge and well-developed, systematic thought. In the public domain, this means defending scientific truth as

a benchmark against which other claims can be measured. Although the scientist understands the degree to which knowledge is provisional, the public demands authoritative statements, especially when the opponents of scientific truth promote their claims in absolute terms. Epistemic schemes that require the public to buy-in, and for emotional or financial reasons are distributed widely, cannot be overcome through reason, especially when a scheme seems to provide tangible emotional advantages or privileges.

In this context, the modest knower, defending distinctions between better and worse interpretations, applications, and knowledge, and perhaps even relevant and irrelevant questions, will always lose against the apodictic claimant who announces truth with grandiosity. Although epistemic modesty emerges from the logic of research, a post-truth cultural reality urges academics to advocate for the authority of science and the grandiosity of scientists (which is confused with the possible grandeur of science), which itself is a move that some of the critically oriented sciences must problematize as a political move. The selling of science, itself a new value, needs to learn from entrepreneurship, and modesty or moral generalizability are not the foremost concerns of business (see also Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/1982).

Sometimes the movement against modesty is supported by unique disciplinary constellations. For example, in psychology, the low disciplinary ranking, the lack of a clear foundation, the fear of not being recognized or taken seriously as a real science, and the clash and confusion with pop-psychology, have all led to an inferiority complex (if one were to remain in the language of psychology). Moreover, such developments have made it difficult for psychology, or psychologists, to promote epistemic modesty. Historically and empirically, we find that psychologists have needed to exaggerate the scientific status of psychology, its comparability to physics and other STEM sciences, and its knowledge claims as a discipline and practice (Teo, 2018a). Within such a backdrop, any call for modesty will likely fall on deaf ears.

In contrast, the argument I am putting forth here is that a psychology of science needs to include political economy and culture when talking about epistemic virtues. Yet, this does not mean that we cannot address the subject. “I” can realize that “my” epistemic traditions are not

the only traditions "I" should rely on, and epistemic modesty remains a value that "I" can choose, despite the realities of academia and culture. To do so will have more negative than positive consequences in the current academic landscape, and may require a subjectivity that embraces *courage*, a classical virtue (courage is not emphasized in academia either). On an analytical scale, however, the endorsement of virtues must be understood on the background of the dialectics of subjectivity and society.

Conclusion

Focusing on one aspect of human subjectivity, namely epistemic virtues and values, demonstrates that the academic subject cannot be subtracted from the world. Yet, a theory of subjectivity also shows that academic subjects have agency inside and outside of their discipline, as narrow as this agency may be. Agency can take on different forms in different disciplines. I suggest that an analysis of epistemic modesty/grandiosity needs to be combined with the critical interests of the psychological humanities. This analysis may reach from when the subject of knowledge is demystified as a universal master-mind who is uninfluenced by extrinsic sources and immune to shortcuts in thinking and doing, to personal reflexivity and interference.

From a philosophical point of view, epistemic honesty requires the laying open of the sources of the limitations of knowledge, even when it is politically disadvantageous to do so, and even when it reinforces an attack on academia. Modesty does not entail the seeking only of a narrow-minded expertise beyond which one cannot contribute to the public debate. Yet, critical modesty demands that expertise is augmented with critical thinking, thinking that refuses to simply follow a neoliberal agenda, and that reflects on the assumptions, strengths, and weaknesses of science. Emphasizing reflexivity and interference as sources of strength for the sciences is something that critical modesty requires. Such critical reflection does not necessarily provide the assurance for a better science, but rather supports the conditions for its possibility.

History has always had a special status in the study of science, and it must also hold such status in psychology, when one traces the history of epistemic subjectivity. A psychology of science identifies how subjectivity has changed over time and how it shapes current research practices. Such a new psychology of science should not be developed in order to denounce science, but rather in order to identify its relevance for addressing current problems, as well as to reconceptualize problems and apparent solutions that have often hindered truthful action in the world. Psychologists of science, colleagues, and students of psychology should remain careful about researchers whose primary interest is producing, marketing, and selling a product, and who use neoliberal self-promotion to increase shares in the market place.

Beyond reflexivity, epistemic modesty requires interference not only in one's own epistemic shortcomings, which necessitates a constant improvement in terms of the processes and contents of knowledge, but also in terms of knowledge claims that others are making. If those claims are problematic from an epistemo-ethical perspective, then academic and public interrogations are required. The move from the ivory tower to recommendations for practice needs to involve reflection upon the concept of applicability, which needs to be challenged if it only means support for systems of power and financial interests. In this process, it is important that modesty does not become its opposite, the grandiosity of critique. Critique itself needs to remain modest if it seeks to do justice to its meaning, an equally difficult challenge in a neoliberal, post-truth context.

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