**Historical Vice Epistemology: History of Humanities Meets Vice Epistemology**

*Making of the Humanities X*, 3/5/11

Kidd, ‘A Case for an Historical Vice Epistemology’, Humana.Mente 14.39 (2021): 69-86.

**Sjang**

1. **The functions of epistemic vice-concepts**.

What are the *functions* of epistemic vice-concepts? Or, in vice-epistemological terms, what are the functions of **vice-attributions** (a concept implicit in Cassam’s *Vices of the Mind*).

Philosophers focus on two functions:

1. *explanations* of epistemic acts and conduct
2. *vice-charging*

Sjang – and others – note a much wider range of epistemic and non-epistemic functions.

Some examples:

1. disciplinary **boundary-marking** and **boundary-policing**
2. advocacy and rejection of **epistemologies of enquiry**
3. advocacy and rejection of ‘**personae**’

vice-attributions are contextually rich

1. which vices get *selected*?
2. how are vice-charges *articulated* and *performed*?
3. how are such charges *evidenced* or *supported*?
4. what sorts of moral, religious, cultural norms and convictions are required for vice-charges to *resonate*?
5. what sorts of *responses* are available to vice-charges – to resist, deflate, or reclaim them as virtue-attributions. What kinds of professional norms or rhetorical practices do such responses presuppose?

Cassam on **disciplinary vices** (‘Some Vices of Vice Epistemology’, draft paper, §4).

We need more research on the *dialectics* of vc-charging and counter-charging.

**Herman**

1. **The historical contingency of epistemic vice concepts.**

Epistemic vice concepts have *histories*. Several aspects of ep-vices are historically variable:

1. *intelligibility*
2. *significance*
3. *expression*

Epistemic vice concepts can and do change over time – appearing, disappearing, altering in ways that are open to historical investigation.

Kidd (2021)’s terminology:

1. **Transient epistemic vices** – a vice-concept whose intelligibility, salience, and expression are dependent on specific contextual conditions and that disappears if and when they change.
2. **Promiscuous epistemic vices** – a vice-concept whose intelligibility, salience, and expression can attach to across changing contextual conditions, meaning they can survive across major changes in background conditions.

Strictly speaking, all vice-concepts are transient, but some are more so than others.

Herman on hypercriticism: a transient vice that became possible at that *time* in that *context* in those *cultures* – “a current or movement” – thus a vice that became *possible* relative to certain conditions?

Epistemic vice concepts presuppose a much wider background array of epistemic norms, interpersonal norms, ideas of decorum and propriety, conceptions of professionalism, ideals of enquiry.

Without this, where do we acquire our sense of ‘balance’, ‘excessive’, etc.?

If so, we should distinguish different *forms* or *inflections* of epistemic vices.

Are those who use vice- are really warring about something *else* – professional, religious, political, even metaphysical visions (what I have called *deep epistemic vices*).

* ‘Deep Epistemic Vices’, *Journal of Philosophical Research* 43 (2018): 43-67.

Herman invokes what I called *the problem of consensus*: the efficacy of vice-charging will depend on a consensus on (a) the definition of the vice and (b) the question of whether one’s conduct expresses that vice.

* ‘Charging Others with Epistemic Vice’, *The Monist* 99.3 (2016): 181-196.

What happens when such consensus does not obtain?

**Alexander**

1. **The normative stability of epistemic vices.**

There are many epistemic vices – or many epistemic vice-concepts – and they can be ‘paired’ or taxonomized in many different ways. Vice-epistemologists so far have shown little interest in vice-taxonomy.

*Dogmatism*, the promiscuous vice-concept *par excellence*, and its changing conceptions: (a) doctrinal conformity, (b) anti-progressivism, (c) doxastic rigidity (the dominant modern sense).

How should be explain patterns of emergence, disappearance, and transformation? What sorts of intellectual, cultural, social, disciplinary, religious, and political events and processes seem to be salient to those explanations?

Moreover, if epistemic vice-concepts are historically contingent in these ways, we may also consider further possibilities (see Kidd 2016):

* **Normative contextualism**: epistemic character traits – like the trait of dogmatism – do not have historically invariant normative status as *vice* or *virtue*.
  + **Weak claim:** character traits have a default normative status, but this does not always apply.
  + **Strong former:** character traits have no default normative status.

Kidd, ‘Epistemic Corruption and Social Oppression’, Ian James Kidd, Heather Battaly and Quassim Cassam (eds.), *Vice Epistemolog*y (New York: Routledge, 2020), 69-87.

A further possibility: there are currently unrecognised forms of epistemic vices, ones we have not yet conceptualised:

* **Occluded epistemic vices** – ones which used to be intelligible and salient, but which are now either forgotten or subsumed under other labels. Such occluded vice-concepts could potentially play valuable roles, if they were retrieved and renovated.

Ian James Kidd | [web](http://www.ianjameskidd.weebly.com/)