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Intellectual Servility and Timidity

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Abstract: Intellectual servility is a vice opposing proper pride about one's intellectual achievements. Intellectual timidity is also a vice; it is manifested in a lack of proper concern for others' esteem. This paper offers an account of the nature of these vices and details some of the epistemic harms that flow from them. I argue that servility, which is often the result of suffering humiliation, is a form of damaged self-esteem. It is underpinned by attitudes serving social-adjustive functions and causes ingratiating behaviors. Timidity, which is habituated through self-silencing, is underpinned by negative attitudes toward the intellectual worth of the self, which serve a defensive function. Like servility, timidity is an obstacle to the acquisition and transmission of knowledge and especially knowledge about oneself.

Discrimination, slights, prejudice and hatred have profound effects on the psychology of those who face them every day. Writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, W. E. B. Du Bois notes in *The Souls of Black Folk* that "the facing of so vast a prejudice could not but bring the inevitable self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals which ever accompany repression and breed in an atmosphere of contempt and hate" (Du Bois 1990: 13). This lowering of self-esteem and crushing of self-pride, which is for Du Bois one of the psychological harms of oppression, is in his opinion experienced as a double-consciousness with potentially disabling consequences.[1] In addition to seeing oneself through one's own eyes, one also develops a "sense of looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois 1990: 8). As a result, Du Bois also observes, one may become exceedingly obsequious to those who hold one in low regard in the hope that, by mimicking them, their measure of one's soul may change. Du Bois thinks that education, as character formation, may contribute much to addressing this state of affairs. But, as he noted in several polemical addresses, many of the black educational institutions of his day actually promoted something akin to intellectual servility or obsequiousness (Du Bois 1973). In these passages, DuBois highlights that prejudice damages the character of those who suffer from it. It breeds in them dispositions that pose obstacles to their well-being including their intellectual flourishing.[2] Discrimination, in his view, fosters some intellectual vices in those who are at its receiving end.

My main aim in this paper is to offer what is to my knowledge the first philosophical account of two intellectual vices that often beset those who are oppressed.[3] These are: intellectual servility (or obsequiousness) and intellectual timidity.[4] Mine is an account that takes seriously Du Bois' observation that those who are obsequious measure the worth of their souls or characters by a tape devised by others who hold them in low regard. Both servility and timidity, I argue, should be understood as self-evaluations for one's intellectual worth based on comparisons with the qualities one attributes to other people. These evaluations are faulty in so far as they are mis-measures. Those who are timid or servile evaluate their intellectual characters as being less worthy than those of many other people because, as Du Bois acutely observes, they measure themselves by the tape of a world that underestimates or even despises them. But the motivations for these evaluations differ. The servile individual accepts the low evaluation of the self, which he learns from others, in order

to gain acceptance by an elective group. The timid person acquires her low self-estimation as a defensive mechanism designed to avoid rejection. She adopts a policy, reputedly advocated by Margaret Thatcher's husband Denis, when he said: "Better keep your mouth shut and be thought a fool than open it and remove all doubt." [5]

This paper consists of four sections. In the first, I introduce the framework of the psychology of attitudes which I adopt in my account of the underpinnings of servility and timidity (see also Tanesini 2018a). I also briefly discuss the connections between these two vices and some of the virtues and vices in their neighborhood (see also Tanesini 2016b). In section two, I provide my account of servility. I argue that its psychological underpinnings are a cluster of strong, mostly negative, attitudes directed at cognitive features of oneself and serving a social-adjustive function. So understood servility stems from a damaged self-esteem. Whilst one's estimation of oneself may become deleterious because of bad luck, it is plausible to think that damage often develops following repeated humiliating experiences. Section three is dedicated to an account of intellectual timidity. I argue that this vice is underpinned by a cluster of strong, mostly negative, attitudes serving an ego-defensive function and directed at cognitive features of oneself. I also indicate that the development of this vice may be a consequence of repeated experiences of intimidation. Finally, in section four, I highlight some of the harms caused by timidity and servility to our testimonial practices.

I. VIRTUES AND VICES AS ATTITUDES

An important aspect of growing up involves the acquisition of an overall assessment of one's strengths and weaknesses. This complex evaluation of one's own abilities and limitations may be accurate or off the mark. Either way it often guides our decisions about the challenges we are prepared to take on, or refuse, and about the strategies we may adopt to solve problems and address difficult situations. It is likely to influence how we relate to other people and which careers we try to pursue; it may also shape our interests and ambitions. Whilst some people appear to have the measure of themselves, others fail to develop it. They may, instead, either have an inflated or a deflated sense of themselves. Arrogant individuals who are typically full of themselves belong to the first category (Tanesini 2016a; Tanesini 2016b), timid and servile people fit into the second.

Those who have their own measure are able to accept or own their intellectual limitations, whilst being modest about their strengths and achievements (Tanesini 2018a; Whitcomb et al. 2017). Such individuals can be aptly described as being intellectually humble. One way of cashing out this characterisation of the intellectual virtue of humility is to think of it as being underpinned by a cluster of strong attitudes each of which is directed toward different components of one's cognitive make-up (Tanesini 2018a). These attitudes are summary evaluations of features of oneself such as intellectual abilities, cognitive capacities, skills, or talents. For example, one may be said to have a positive attitude toward one's drawing skills if one likes, or has a positive feeling toward, this aspect of oneself.

So understood, attitudes are not propositional attitudes.[6] They are instead associations between representations of an object and a positive or negative affect (Banaji and Heiphetz 2010).[7] They can be understood as evaluations that register the outcome of weighing up all the considerations which count in favor or against something. This assessment thus summarizes one's evaluative beliefs, affective states, and behavioral tendencies concerning that object. For instance, I have a negative attitude toward liquorice. This dislike for the stuff guides my avoidant behavior when I come across it. The attitude is a summary of my evaluative beliefs about liquorice, my affective states about it, memories of my behavior during past encounters. Whilst attitudes can change, having them means that we do not need to work out afresh, every time we come across it, whether we like something. This is particularly advantageous if the object in question poses an immediate threat. Hence, attitudes are cognitive shortcuts (Fazio and Olson 2007; Maio and Haddock 2015).

Attitudes are said to be strong or weak depending on the strength of the association between the object and the positive or negative feeling. Whilst weak attitudes are poor predictors of behavior and are unstable across situations, strong attitudes are cross-situationally stable, good predictors of behavior, and are usually consistent with the person's other attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Fazio 2000; Maio and Olson 2000). Attitudes are not immune from change. They can be revised in the light of new evidence and persuasive messages; but they may also update in the light of non-rational considerations such as the attractiveness of the conveyer of a message (Watt et al. 2008).

Attitudes, as likes (preferences) or dislikes (dis-preference), are formed, revised or sustained to serve the needs of the person who has them. Some attitude psychologists categorise attitudes functionally by reference to the motivations to satisfy those needs that

specify the function or functions served by the attitude (Katz 1960; Maio and Olson 2000; Maio et al. 2004; Maio and Haddock 2015). There is no consensus on the precise number of attitude functions. However, there is agreement on a few of these. For my purposes here, only three are relevant: knowledge (Katz 1960), ego-defense, and social adjustment (Fazio 2000). Attitudes with a knowledge function are those evaluations whose role is to assist in the satisfaction of the need for knowledge and understanding.[8] Those whose function is the defense of the ego address the need to repel perceived threats to the self. Finally, social-adjustive attitudes promote the satisfaction of the need to be accepted by one's elective social group.[9]

For example, a person may have a positive attitude toward her diary or her mobile phone, which was formed to fulfil her need to know her daily schedule, and becomes readily accessible to her when she engages in knowledge seeking activities. If the attitude is strong its activation may be chronic so that it is accessible in most, if not all, circumstances. Similarly, a person may have a negative attitude toward a social group (e.g., people with tattoos) that was formed to satisfy the need to be accepted by another group (e.g., ladies who lunch) to which she wants to belong. In this case also, the attitude, if strong, will become readily accessible in most circumstances, and guide the person's behavior when engaging in many activities whose explicit purpose is not directly linked to social acceptance.[10]
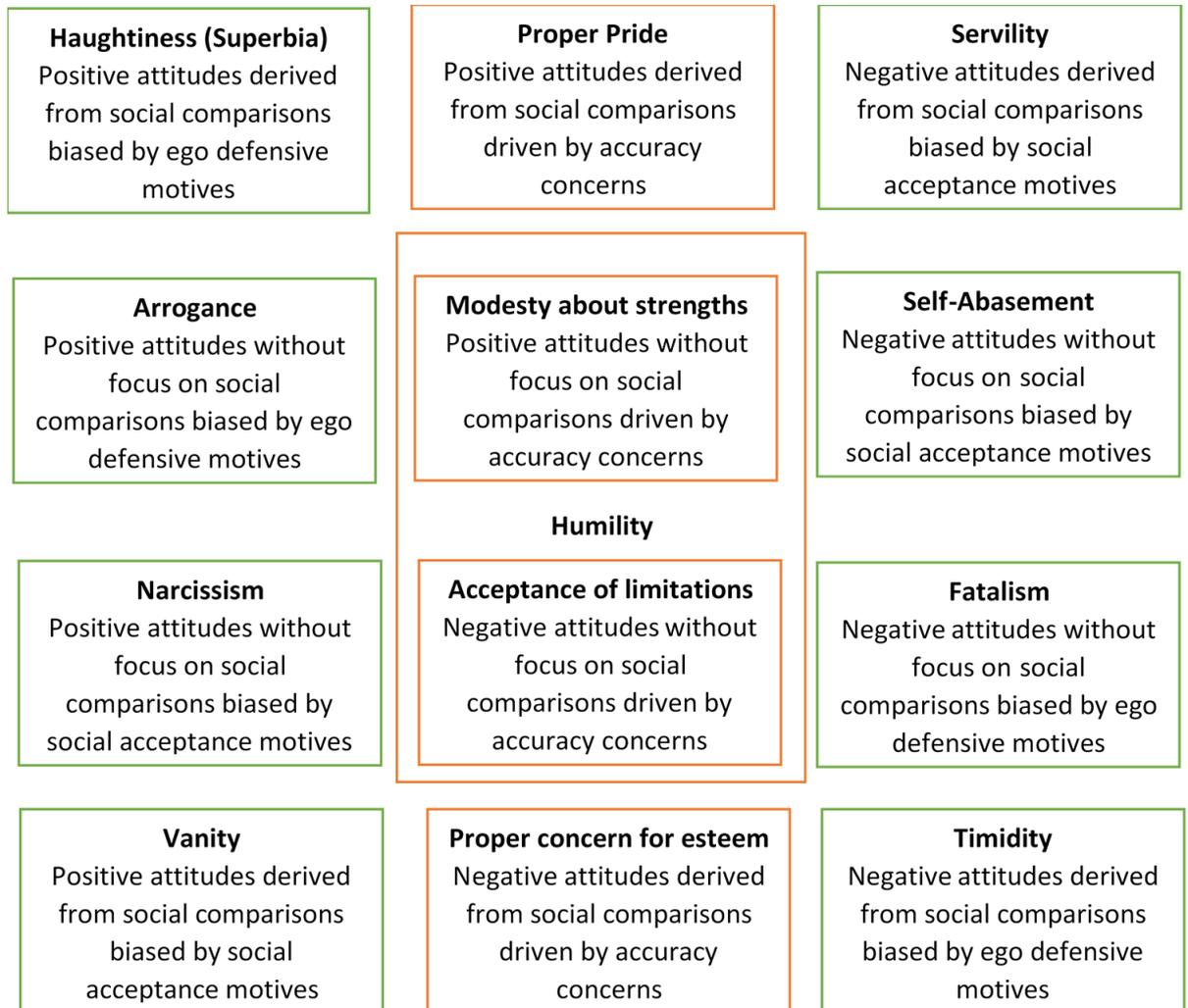
The intellectually humble person is the individual who accepts her cognitive limitations and is modest about her epistemic strengths. She has the appropriate attitudes toward her skills, abilities, and capacities. She has negative attitudes toward some of her features. These she regards as her limitations. Her dislike of them motivates her to strive to improve. She has positive attitudes toward other aspects of her cognitive make-up. These she considers her strengths. Her evaluation of her competencies guides her enquiries. For instance, when tackling a problem, she may rely on her abilities or ask for help depending on her assessment of her strengths and limitations. In the intellectually humble person these assessments have been formed to serve the need for knowledge. More specifically, her attitudes are the result of weighing up information, feelings, emotions, and desires pertaining to the object of the attitude (e.g., a cognitive faculty or a skill) in light of the need to acquire knowledge. Thus, for example, a humble person who has previously noted that her memory has occasionally failed to provide her with accurate information about past events will bring this evidence to bear on her attitude about her memory. She might, as a result, feel less positive about it than she did before.

The intellectually humble person has her own measure in the sense that her evaluations of her own faculties, abilities, and skills have been formed, are revised and maintained by weighing up or summarizing evaluative beliefs, desires, and emotions relevant to these qualities' perceived effectiveness in satisfying the need for knowledge. Additionally, the cognitive processes of evaluation that produce the attitudes from the informational bases they summarize are driven by the need for accuracy.[11] It does not follow that the humble person's assessment of her own intellectual qualities is especially accurate or reliable. In hostile circumstances, a person's information basis might become greatly distorted. She may, for instance, have been told that she is not good at mathematics, and believe it, even though it is not true. [12] If, due to bad luck or systemic discrimination, the person harbors a large number of false beliefs about her intellectual qualities, she may form attitudes whose role is to satisfy the need for knowledge but which are somewhat inaccurate as evaluations of her true abilities.[13] Nevertheless, we should expect that if the circumstances are not hostile, the humble individual's assessment of her own qualities will be reasonably accurate.[14]

So understood, intellectual humility is a cluster of evaluations of one's own intellectual competencies which are unbiased but also based on objective rather than interpersonal standards. There are at least two ways in which people can estimate their own intellectual strengths and weaknesses. They can evaluate them by how well they fare on objective tests such as the ability to solve a complex mathematical problem, or they can assess them by way of comparisons with another's performance.[15] These two methods of self-appraisal are not incompatible. I suspect most people have recourse to both on separate occasions. Either method can lead to unbiased assessments when it is driven by the need for accuracy, or to biased results when cognition is motivated by other goals such as the need to defend the ego. In the account described above, intellectual humility is the cluster of self-evaluations of one's intellectual qualities that are unbiased but also based on comparisons to objective standards rather than to other people's levels of attainment. Other intellectual virtues which are related to humility, however, are plausibly underpinned by attitudes based on unbiased, but social, comparisons that gauge ability by measuring it against others' performance. These virtues are proper pride in one's intellectual achievements and proper concern for the esteem in which one is held by others (Tanesini 2018a; Tanesini 2018c).

The picture I have drawn so far identifies four related virtues as four interconnected clusters of strong attitudes serving a knowledge function. These are: modesty about one's intellectual qualities, pride in at least some of these, acceptance of one's limitations, and

proper concern for others' esteem. Each of these four virtues is, in my view, flanked by at least two (but possibly more) vices, giving rise to the following picture:[16]

Haughtiness (Superbia) Positive attitudes derived from social comparisons biased by ego defensive motives	Proper Pride Positive attitudes derived from social comparisons driven by accuracy concerns	Servility Negative attitudes derived from social comparisons biased by social acceptance motives
Arrogance Positive attitudes without focus on social comparisons biased by ego defensive motives	Modesty about strengths Positive attitudes without focus on social comparisons driven by accuracy concerns	Self-Abasement Negative attitudes without focus on social comparisons biased by social acceptance motives
	Humility	
Narcissism Positive attitudes without focus on social comparisons biased by social acceptance motives	Acceptance of limitations Negative attitudes without focus on social comparisons driven by accuracy concerns	Fatalism Negative attitudes without focus on social comparisons biased by ego defensive motives
Vanity Positive attitudes derived from social comparisons biased by social acceptance motives	Proper concern for esteem Negative attitudes derived from social comparisons driven by accuracy concerns	Timidity Negative attitudes derived from social comparisons biased by ego defensive motives

It is beyond the scope of this paper to justify fully the framework represented in the picture above. But it may be helpful to say a few words to render it plausible. Humility in this account is a dual virtue comprised of both modesty about strengths (which are those qualities one evaluates positively) and acceptance of limitations (which are the targets of negative evaluations). Humility is not based on interpersonal comparisons with the strengths and weaknesses of other individuals. However, these comparisons are often helpful especially when engaging in joint epistemic activities. Thus, it is plausible to think that there might be virtues regulating their proper deployment. In my view the virtues in question are: proper pride and proper concern for others' esteem. Pride involves feeling good about one's

achievements and comprises positive self-assessments based on unbiased comparisons with others' levels of attainment. Concern for being worthy of other people's esteem involves being appropriately worried about one's own shortcomings and includes negative self-appraisals derived from unbiased comparisons with others' performance. These four clusters of attitudes constitute a person's self-assessment of her intellectual qualities that is motivated by a desire to form accurate appraisals and that is gauged by comparing herself to others or to objective standards. These four virtues are distinct, although one would expect individuals who exemplify one of them also to possess the others at least to some degree.

Each of the vices flanking these virtues is a defective self-appraisal. They are defective because they comprise evaluations that are driven by goals unrelated to accuracy. For example, haughtiness (*superbia*) is a positive assessment of many of one's own intellectual abilities because one estimates oneself to be better in this regard than other people, but where these appraisals are biased because they are driven by the need to feel good about oneself. Arrogance is similar to haughtiness because it involves self-assessments motivated by a desire for self-enhancement even though these evaluations are not focused on interpersonal comparisons. Vanity is a positive self-assessment biased by the need to be esteemed or accepted by members of a group to which one wishes to belong. Narcissism is, like vanity, driven by the desire to be liked, but it is not focused on comparing oneself to others. Self-abasement is a deepening of servility where one moves from thinking of oneself as being of lesser value than others to thinking of oneself as worthless. Fatalism is an aggravated version of timidity that occurs when a person has become so resigned to her alleged shortcomings that she no longer entertains comparisons with other people's levels of attainment. Servility and timidity are the focus of this paper. They are addressed in sections two and three below.

These eight vices are different ways in which one may fail to have the measure of one's own intellectual qualities. It is overwhelmingly likely that people suffering from these vices make inaccurate assessments of their strengths and weaknesses. Some may have unwarrantedly positive or negative attitudes toward many or even most of their intellectual qualities. However, it is also possible that by numerous strokes of good luck, a vicious person's assessment might turn out to be accurate. Hence, for example, a haughty person may actually possess the extraordinary artistic talent of which she is so proud. Inaccurate self-assessments then are not necessary components of haughtiness (Tanesini 2016b; Tanesini 2018a).

The vicious person's attitudes are faulty because they are evaluations of intellectual qualities driven by the wrong motives. Truth or knowledge are among the constitutive goals of numerous cognitive faculties (e.g., perception) and abilities (e.g., problem-solving). But, the vicious person's attitudes toward his own intellectual qualities is not sensitive to their effectiveness in the acquisition and retention of knowledge or understanding. That is to say, the vicious person does not assess his intellectual qualities by their internal standards. Instead, because his attitudes serve different functions, such as defending one's own sense of self-worth or being accepted in the social group to which one wants to belong, the vicious person treats as his intellectual strengths or weaknesses qualities that – as a matter of fact - promote or hinder his effectiveness in protecting his self-esteem or in gaining social acceptance.

For example, a vain person may have a positive evaluation of her musical ability. She has formed this attitude by comparing herself to some others and reaching a conclusion that she is good at music. However, she has not formed this assessment by means of accurate comparisons. Instead, this individual is motivated by the need to be liked by those she esteems. This motive biases her comparisons on which she bases her appraisal of her musical ability. She assesses her level of musical achievement based on its effectiveness in supplying the social approval that she craves. Provided that the "right" people praise her for her musical performance, this person will appraise herself as being a talented musician all the while being tone deaf to independent evidence of her true level of musical competence.[17]

The position sketched above provides an account of why these virtues and vices should be thought of as intellectual virtues and vices. It also explains what makes them virtuous or vicious. What warrants thinking of these attitudes as the psychological underpinnings of specifically intellectual virtues and vices is the fact that these are evaluations of individuals' cognitive or intellectual qualities. That is, these are intellectual virtues or vices (as opposed to moral ones) because they are underpinned by attitudes that take cognitive abilities, faculties, or intellectual skills as their objects. What distinguishes virtues from vices is in the first instance the motive that drives the formation and maintenance of the attitude, which is to say, the function served by the attitude. Self-assessments of one's intellectual qualities that are driven by accuracy concerns are virtuous, those which are motivated by self-enhancement or social acceptance are vicious. In addition, the first kind of self-assessments are likely to be reliable, promote self-knowledge, and be instrumental in facilitating the pursuit of intellectual activities that are conducive to

knowledge. Self-appraisals of one's intellectual qualities that are not driven by accuracy goals are likely to be unreliable, promote self-deception, and be obstacles to successful inquiries.[18] Therefore, they possess all the hallmarks of intellectual vices.

This paper aims to present a defense of parts of this framework by demonstrating in the next two sections that it provides a powerful model to understand the nature, and explain some of the manifestations, of two neglected vices - timidity and servility- which often beset those who occupy subordinate positions in society.

II. INTELLECTUAL SERVILITY

The aim of this section is to offer an account of intellectual servility as a kind of lack of pride in one's own intellectual achievements which leads one continually to seek approval from those one judges to be better than oneself. I begin the section with a description of the sort of behaviors, emotions and beliefs that are intuitively characteristic of intellectual servility. The point of this description is to isolate a phenomenon, which I hope will be recognizable, for which I reserve this label. I then turn to the work of some of those who have attempted to diagnose the psychology of oppression to show that they often point to the same cluster of behaviors, beliefs, and emotions as occurring together and as being caused by prejudice, discrimination, and exploitation. Finally, I present my account of the psychological underpinnings of intellectual servility as a cluster of strong attitudes towards one's intellectual and cognitive qualities which are on the whole negative and serve social-adjustive needs. I defend the account by showing that it is uniquely capable of explaining why the manifestations of servility cluster together, and why discrimination engenders this vice in those who suffer it.

There are some individuals who are full of doubts about their intellectual abilities.[19] These same persons may tend to humiliate themselves and belittle their achievements. They tend to explain away any accomplishments that are truly theirs. Instead, they may say that their success was not an achievement because the task was not hard. After all, they think, even someone as untalented as they are is capable of completing it. Alternatively, if the task is unquestionably challenging, these individuals may attribute their success to good luck rather than their own abilities (Schröder-Abé et al. 2007). Consequently, these people have little or no self-pride and hold themselves in low regard.

In addition, such individuals suffer from feelings of inferiority. They tend to compare their intellectual qualities to those they attribute to others and to find them wanting.[20] They may not genuinely believe that they are inferior.[21] At some level, they may know that they are not. Nevertheless, they cannot shake the anxious thought that they are worse than other people: more stupid, less refined, slower witted, less able to learn. In acute cases this feeling of inferiority may deepen into a sense of worthlessness (and self-abasement). Often the person, who feels inferior, also experiences her (alleged) lack of ability as shameful. She feels that she is a failure; which is to say, she feels that she has fallen short of the standards that have, in her view, been set for group membership.[22]

Servility, like proper pride and haughtiness (*superbia*) to which it is opposed, is not defined by the accuracy or inaccuracy of one's estimations of one's own abilities. An individual may be correct in his assessment of his achievements and yet be arrogant about them through bragging and putting others down. Whilst it is extremely likely that the servile person actually underestimates her intellectual abilities, it is not the fact of this underestimation that makes her servile.[23] Servility is characterised by the feeling that one is a failure and by the anxious thought that one is shamefully less able than other people.

This sense of shame leads to a lack of a sense of entitlement. Because one feels one is of little worth, one submits to disrespectful behaviors. Hence, these individuals do not protest when their opinions are dismissed. They accept as legitimate the imposition of extra burdens on their participation in epistemic practices. Such burdens may involve needing to be overqualified to be taken seriously, or being expected to meet higher thresholds in the evidence they are expected to supply in defense of their positions. In short, they submit without protest, and even accept as justified and befitting of their status, their treatment as epistemically inferior agents.

Finally, these individuals do not respond to these treatments with manifest rage and rebellion. Instead, at least in some circumstances they seek to ingratiate themselves to those who do them down. They attempt to gain the approval of those who treat them harshly by conforming with their views. Thus, those who are servile are the quintessential "yes-men", since they always agree with those who are powerful; they parrot their views and show deference to them in debate. In addition, obsequious persons will seek to flatter the vanity of those who dismiss them, by singing their praises and generally engaging in others' enhancing behaviors.

It may be objected that some people engage in behavior which displays an excessive willingness to please powerful individuals without harboring themselves feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem.[24] I would agree that this phenomenon is not uncommon; but I do not think that it is an objection to my account. Sometimes individuals who behave in this way are simply feigning servility to gain some benefit from the person they flatter. On other occasions, some feign servility out of necessity whilst suppressing rage. It is possible that over time these individuals become servile, since it is hard to be always deceitful while it is tempting to rationalize one's behavior as consonant to one's status. Finally, some may act in a deferential manner in order to belong to a very select team. These individuals may even think of themselves as superior to most of humankind; nevertheless, they are on some occasions servile in the presence of people they feel are superior to them. In my view this last group, unlike the other two I just mentioned, do not feign servility but are servile. However, they are only servile in a narrow range of situations and thus cannot be said to have a fully-fledged version of this vice.[25]

So far, I have outlined some behavioral dispositions (seeking the approval of, agreeing with, and flattering those who are powerful), affective states and emotions (shame and feelings of inferiority) and beliefs (about the likely sources of success and failure, about one's comparative abilities) which, I have claimed, cluster together to form a distinct phenomenon. This same, or similar cluster, has been identified by others interested in the moral damage done by oppression and prejudice to those who are at their receiving end. Hence, Claudia Card observes that the "oppressed are liable to low self-esteem, ingratiation, [and] affiliation with abusers" (1996: 53). She notes that those who are at constant risk of further harm sometimes choose to accept the humiliation; they modify their wants and desires to fit with what is expected of them; and they ingratiate themselves to their abusers as a survival strategy to limit their exposure to harm. Writing earlier in the twentieth century both Aimé Césaire (1972) and Frantz Fanon (1986) discuss the psychological consequences of colonialization. In particular they note that it promotes in the colonized "servility, despair, abasement" (Césaire 1972: 22).[26] Similarly, Fanon writes at length of colonialism as the source of feelings of inferiority, and of a burning desire to become white, to be accepted in white society and to receive white approval (1986).

What Card, Césaire, Fanon, and Du Bois are highlighting is a survival strategy of the oppressed. It is a strategy aimed at minimizing harm in conditions of oppression which, however, achieves its goal at a high psychological cost since it promotes the development of

vicious traits of character. It is the strategy of accepting one's lower social status and seeking the approval of those who subordinate one by humiliating oneself, whilst praising, and parroting them. It trades off social acceptance for self-esteem, dignity, and self-respect. It results in the acceptance of a life lived in shame.

Attitudes provide a powerful framework for understanding the underpinnings of the behavioral dispositions, affects, beliefs, and judgments that are characteristic of servility. It helps to explain why these features cluster together and also why the cluster is especially prevalent among those who have experienced discrimination.

Since servility is characterised in part by low self-esteem, by a conscious attitude of holding oneself in low regard, it is plausibly explained as being underpinned by a cluster of strong summative evaluations (explicit attitudes which are measured through self-reports) each directed toward different properties of one's cognitive make-up which are mostly negative. It is this overall negative assessment of one's own skills, abilities or achievements that is encapsulated by saying that obsequious individuals suffer from low explicitly measured self-esteem. If these negative attitudes are formed on the basis of social comparison judgments in which one evaluates oneself as being less capable than others, then one would expect these attitudes to be manifested in feelings of inferiority. Hence, servile individuals would exhibit what Fanon has labelled an 'inferiority complex' (Fanon 1986, 13, 42, 213 and passim).

Further, the behavioral, affective, and doxastic manifestations of servility are precisely what one would expect to find if these negative self-evaluations, based on social comparisons, served a social-adjustive function. For those for whom being accepted is an extremely important aim, inclusion as a low status group member is preferable to social exclusion. These individuals will evaluate their own qualities for their effectiveness in gaining acceptance to the group to which they wish to belong. One way of being accepted in a group is to enhance the self-esteem of its prominent members by communicating one's favorable opinion of their abilities. A particularly effective way of doing this is by making other people feel superior to oneself (Vohs and Heatherton 2004). Thus, portraying oneself as inferior to others is an effective strategy of gaining their social acceptance. It is likely that initially such ingratiating behavior does not reflect one's beliefs. It might be a strategy that a child picks up from the behavior of the adults belonging to the same stigmatised group as himself. Alternatively, it might be something a person hits upon by chance or trial and error,

but which becomes ingrained because of its effectiveness in gaining a modicum of social acceptance. However, as the research on cognitive dissonance illustrates, over time one's attitudes often tend to become consistent with one's behavior. Thus, the person who initially only behaved in inferior ways, may eventually evaluate himself as inferior and thus form negative attitudes toward his intellectual qualities.[27]

In short, individuals, who are likely to suffer from discrimination, if they want to belong to the social group that rejects them, respond to the risk of exclusion by engaging in ingratiating behavior. Over time, partly because of cognitive dissonance, these individuals will develop negative evaluations of their abilities.[28] In addition, they will compare themselves negatively with other people and thus suffer from feelings of inferiority. Hence, one would expect members of stigmatized groups to be at risk of developing low self-esteem (negative attitudes toward oneself) as a result of trying to satisfy their need for social acceptance.[29] Unfortunately, these negative attitudes serving a social-adjustive function generate a vicious circle of further negative comparisons with others' abilities and a consequent lowering of self-esteem.

There is psychological evidence substantiating my claim that the dispositions, beliefs, and affects that are characteristic of servility cluster in the way they do because they are the manifestations of negative attitudes toward aspects of one's cognitive make-up serving a social-adjustive function. First, low self-esteem promotes ingratiating behaviors (hence, the vicious circle mentioned above). More specifically, those who hold themselves in low-regard try to gain inclusion in social groups by comparing themselves unfavorably to group members and communicating this opinion to them (Vohs and Heatherton 2004). That is, they try to gain acceptance by enhancing the self-esteem of other people. Second, those people who respond to social exclusion by ingratiation tend to express higher levels of conformity with the views of the group whose acceptance they seek (Romero-Canyas et al. 2010: 803). Third, individuals whose self-esteem is damaged and thus have low self-esteem as measured explicitly have a depressive attributional style: they see their failures as due to their personal attributes, but take any success to be caused by external factors such as luck (Schröder-Abé et al. 2007; Vater et al. 2010). These studies all lend support to the conclusion that the manifestations of intellectual servility (low self-esteem, feelings of inferiority, intellectual conformism, ingratiating behaviors) are underpinned by negative attitudes to the self (low self-esteem) which serve the need to gain social acceptance.[30]

Further, these features are the outcomes of a common mechanism: they are the result of trying to gain social acceptance in the face of exclusion and harsh treatment as meted out by other people. Thus, intellectual servility is the product of suffering repeated humiliations and of adjusting to these by accepting a low social status and thus by trying to be liked and accepted by one's oppressors. If this is correct, intellectual servility clearly appears as a survival strategy in response to prejudice and discrimination.

Finally, it bears repeating that the attitudes underpinning servility are mis-measures of the relative intellectual worth of the self. They are not faulty because they are objectively inaccurate, although this may well be the case. Rather their defect is that they assess intellectual abilities by standards which are different from the internal norms that govern them. Hence, for instance, the person who is servile will have attitudes toward his mathematical abilities which are not sensitive to their effectiveness in knowledge acquisition, but which are based on their success in gaining social acceptance.

In this example, if the person is actually good at mathematics, exhibiting these abilities may be an obstacle to social acceptance, since the latter is promoted by behaviors which enhance others' self-esteem. Therefore, independently of his actual abilities, this individual will develop negative attitudes toward his mathematical prowess because possessing them results in behaviors which satisfy the need for social acceptance that is driving the intellectually servile individual. Having negative attitudes toward his mathematical abilities results in behaviors that are avoidant of engaging with mathematics. In turn, these behaviors promote other people's esteem of their own abilities when they compare themselves to the person that behaves in a manner indicative of low self-confidence. These activities are, therefore, conducive to gaining social acceptance because by engaging in them one makes clear to others that one is not a threat to their social position. In sum, the person who is servile evaluates his abilities negatively because possessing these negative attitudes toward himself helps him to get what he really wants. As the person is unlikely to be aware of the true basis of his self-evaluations, intellectual servility involves some form of self-deception.

III. INTELLECTUAL TIMIDITY

This section offers a characterisation of intellectual timidity as a vice that is often manifested in a desire to shy away from being noticed. In my view, intellectual timidity

embodies a lack of concern with being esteemed by other members of one's community.[31] I argue for this position by offering in the first instance a broad characterisation of a cluster of dispositions, beliefs, and affects which I think exemplifies what I wish to call 'timidity'. Secondly, I argue that we can understand why these manifestations cluster together if we think of them as having the same psychological underpinnings. These are in my view strong, largely negative attitudes toward aspects of one's cognitive make-up which serve the need to defend the ego against perceived threats directed against it.

There are individuals who are fearful of being exposed as less able or competent than others may initially presume. These people are risk averse; they accept the cost of being thought to have nothing to say to avoid any possibility of making fools of themselves. Their propensity is to shy away from the limelight and be quiet. These same individuals, if asked, may justify their approach by mentioning their (alleged) relative lack of ability, competence, or skill. Like Denis Thatcher, they think that, if they speak up and take an active role in discussion, they will make their shortcomings obvious to their audience. Hence, they believe that their actions to avoid exposure are sensible, since, in their view, if others had the measure of their abilities, they would find them wanting.

Timid individuals, then, like those who are servile, hold themselves in low regard, and feel that they are intellectually inferior to others.[32] However, whilst the behaviors of the servile are guided by the desire to gain social acceptance and thus social status, the actions of those who are timid are driven by the need to avoid explicit social rejection, even at the cost of sacrificing inclusion. Hence, those who are timid readily accept the risk that others may fail to notice their existence, and thus form no opinion of their abilities, to avoid a negative assessment which timid individuals think is extremely likely if others get to know them.

The fear and anxiety about others' opinions of oneself that is characteristic of those who are timid, when combined with their negative assessment of their own abilities, results in a disposition not to speak one's mind, but to bite one's tongue. So even when the person who is timid knows that her interlocutor is wrong about some issue, she may be too scared to say so, especially if the other person is powerful. Whilst ingratiation is one of the characteristic behaviors of those who are servile, self-silencing is one of the common strategies adopted by those who are intellectually timid and lack the courage of their convictions.

Those who are timid also justify their silences, their desire to fade unnoticed in the background, by claiming that their lack of ability is fixed and cannot change. These

individuals hold themselves in low regard, but they are also resigned to the alleged fact that their skills and competences cannot be improved. Thus, the timid person also exhibits a tendency to fatalism about their inferiority which in turn causes them to lose any motivation they may have had to improve.

It may seem odd that I present intellectual timidity as a vice which is opposed to humility rather than, as it is commonly presumed, to courage. In response, I want to suggest that one vice can stand in opposition to several virtues. In this case, more specifically, it seems plausible to think that fear of having one' alleged intellectual incompetence exposed is a kind of cowardice and a way of lacking in humility. It is also plausible that the self-appraisals I attribute here to intellectually timid individuals are at the root of other behaviors characteristic of epistemic cowardice such as being fearful of defending one's views, avoidance of any intellectual risks, and a resigned acceptance of one's own shortcomings.[33]

From these characterizations it should be apparent that timidity and servility are related, even though they also have distinct and differentiating features. Those who are timid have a negative view of their abilities and feel inferior to others. In this regard, timidity and servility are similar. However, they differ with regard to some of their behavioral and emotional manifestations. Intellectually timid individuals suffer from fear and anxiety; those who are servile are dominated by a sense of shame. Whilst servility causes ingratiating behaviors, timidity is characterised by self-silencing. In addition, those who are timid lack the courage to express any opinion; those who are servile, instead, are disposed to accept, and uncritically make their own, the opinions held by high status members of the group to which they wish to belong.

Although timidity as characterised here differs from servility, it is nevertheless possible and indeed might be likely that those who possess one of these vices may also suffer from the other. This is because they are both responses to threats of social exclusion due to one's perceived membership in a subordinate or stigmatized group. Servility develops through the habituation of ingratiating behaviors such as flattery and conformism; timidity through the habituation of self-silencing.

If repeated acts of ingratiation in response to harsh treatment promote the formation of negative self-assessment due, in part, to cognitive dissonance, recurring acts of self-silencing result in equally negative self-assessments also, partly, because of cognitive dissonance. A person who, because she feels intimidated, chooses to say nothing, even

though she thinks that she has something to contribute, will over time rationalize her silences by becoming convinced that she has nothing worthwhile to offer. In other words, she will develop negative attitudes toward her own abilities which in turn generate the conviction that one does not have an opinion that deserves to be voiced, and the consequent disposition to remain silent in conversations.

The framework of attitudes provides a lens through which to understand the cluster of behaviors (keeping silent), affective states (fear, resignation and lack of motivation, low self-esteem), and beliefs (about one's alleged intellectual inferiority and inability to improve) that are characteristic of timidity, and to explain how they emerge because of threats of social exclusion.

The timid individual, like the servile, suffers from low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority. That is to say, this person also has attitudes toward each of her intellectual qualities which are largely negative, and which are based on social comparison judgments. Attributing an ego-defensive function to these attitudes explains the behaviors and mental states which are typical of timidity. Since these individuals wish to avoid rejection because it constitutes a threat to their self-esteem, they develop attitudes toward their intellectual qualities based on their effectiveness in avoiding opportunities for rejection. Hence, these individuals prefer to avoid being noticed and are fearful of anything that makes them stand out. One would, for this reason, expect them to form negative attitudes toward any of their intellectual features that causes them to speak, do well, or in other ways be noticed. One would also expect them to be fearful, to have a disposition to be silent, and to have a low opinion of their intellectual abilities.

These considerations are backed by empirical evidence, although more would be needed to put them on a firm empirical footing. Nevertheless, work on the self-silencing of women in academic settings shows that these subjects bite their tongues because they fear social exclusion and act to avoid giving others the opportunity to issue negative judgments about them (London et al. 2012). These behaviors result over time in a loss of motivation. These same individuals fail to take up opportunities for improvement that carry some risk of exposure (London et al. 2012). They are also fearful and anxious. Further, individuals who are very sensitive to rejection also suffer from low self-esteem (Wu et al. 2011). In sum, there is evidence to show that some people who have a low opinion of their abilities are also fearful, lack motivation and become resigned to failure; they self-silence or have developed a

disposition to being silent. Such evidence offers some support to the view defended here that these attitudes are at the root of the recognizable intellectual vice of timidity that is characteristic of people who initially lack the courage of their own convictions, but may well end up in a position in which they lack any conviction of their own.

IV. SOME EPISTEMIC HARMS

In this concluding section, I highlight some of the epistemic harms caused by servility and timidity. My discussion is not exhaustive, since I focus only on some of the ways in which these vices function as obstacles to self-knowledge and to knowledge acquisition and transmission.[34] I also ignore the moral damage caused by these vices which, as should be apparent from the accounts offered above, bring lack of self-respect in their trails.

Both servility and timidity impede the development of self-knowledge. As I have shown above, those who develop these traits tend to form false beliefs about their intellectual qualities and their merits relative to those possessed by other people. However, even in the unlikely case in which such negative self-assessments were accurate, because they are the result of a kind of self-deception, they would fail to qualify as knowledge in any strong sense.[35] In addition, these individuals lack knowledge of their own motivations. Whilst those who ingratiate or self-silence as a conscious strategy are aware of their motives, once these comportments have become habitual, those who engage in them are prone to rationalize away the true roots of their behaviors. Such self-deception is typical of those who are servile and timid. They explain their response to dismissals or their tendencies to keep quiet in terms of their lack of abilities. They are unaware that their negative self-evaluations are not based on the epistemic worth of intellectual qualities but have been formed because having them is effective in gaining social acceptance or avoiding the risk of exclusion.

Hence, these intellectual vices are somewhat stealthy; that is to say, they are hard to detect in oneself (Cassam 2015). The same psychological mechanisms that drive one from ingratiation or self-silencing to low self-esteem function to conceal the inappropriateness of the negative self-assessment. Therefore, the more timid one is, the more one attributes one's quietness to having nothing to say, rather than to timidity. Similarly, the person who is servile attributes his tendency to praise others and to do himself down to his shortcomings rather than to his obsequiousness.

Finally, timidity damages self-knowledge because it promotes lack of motivation and resignation to the status quo. Since the acquisition of self-knowledge requires some perseverance and is facilitated by a motivation to improve, timidity functions as an obstacle to knowing about one's intellectual strengths and weaknesses. Since understanding oneself requires effort and dedication, one is less likely to engage in this endeavor when one is demotivated and disengaged. It is also plausible that the pursuit of self-knowledge would appear somewhat futile to those who think that improvement is beyond their abilities.

These two vices are also obstacles to the acquisition of knowledge about the world in which one lives. First, there is evidence that people underachieve to be liked by those whose acceptance they seek (White et al. 2002). Second, by undermining individuals' confidence in their abilities, these traits function as self-fulfilling prophecies. Those who suffer from them act in accordance with their distorted negative self-assessments even though such behavior may atrophy their abilities and diminish the opportunities for improvement. Hence, they fail to acquire knowledge that they may otherwise have gained. Third, timidity and servility also promote the development of further intellectual vices which prove to be further obstacles to effective inquiry.[36] For instance, timidity fosters incuriosity with the resultant tendency not to ask questions, not to explore or engage in inquiry. Servility promotes epistemic dependence and inhibits intellectual autonomy, resulting in a tendency not to think critically about the views advocated by those in power.

Finally, timidity and servility also damage other people's epistemic prospects. The tendency of those who are timid to say nothing deprives the whole epistemic community of an informant who may be the only person to possess some essential information. The inclination not to criticize or rock the boat that is characteristic of those who are servile deprives other epistemic agents of valuable feedback in the form of criticism and the airing of viewpoints alternative to their own. In addition, the disposition to engage in behaviors that enhance other people's self-esteem may mislead those who are thus flattered into thinking that they are smarter, more intelligent, and quick witted than they actually are.

Vice epistemology is a recent but burgeoning field. It is my hope that this paper contributes to it in at least two ways. It identifies and explains two important intellectual vices; but it also shows that vices do not develop in a social vacuum. If we are to offer fuller accounts of the psychological features that hinder inquiry we should be well advised to study the social structures that foster their formations.[37]

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[1] This negative aspect of double-consciousness is often underplayed in contemporary discussions of the notion.

[2] Kidd (2018) describes this phenomenon as epistemic corruption.

[3] I do not intend to suggest that all oppressed individuals possess these vices. Rather, my point is that discrimination promotes their development in those who are discriminated against. Resisting the formation of these vices, and the habits that flow from them, is an additional challenge that the victims of prejudice must face. Relatedly, it is worth recalling that talk of virtue has often been used to promote the development of submissive traits in those who suffer from oppression (Snow 2002).

[4] In what follows, I refer to these vices as servility and timidity. Unless specified otherwise, I am discussing their intellectual dimension.

[5] Whilst timidity and servility are exemplified by both genders, there is some evidence that, since men are on the whole more preoccupied with social status than women, some of the behaviors I attribute to those who are servile are more common among low status males than among females (Romero-Canyas et al. 2010).

[6] This notion of an attitude as a summary evaluation is one of the central planks of social psychology.

[7] 'Object' is used here in its grammatical sense. Thus, particulars, universals, abstract and concrete entities are all included. The affective component of the attitude varies in intensity along a continuum. It is thus possible, for example, to feel barely positive or very positive about something.

[8] Psychologists use 'knowledge' in the veritistic sense of true belief. In order to avoid confusions, I follow their usage. It should not be assumed, however, that I endorse this conception of knowledge.

[9] It is possible for one attitude to have more than one function. For example, a negative attitude toward poison may be both ego-defensive and knowledge promoting.

[10] Alternatively, one may say that she implicitly treats situations in which social acceptance is not really the issue, as if it were.

[11] See Kunda (1990) on the distinction between cognition driven by the need for accuracy and cognition driven by other directional goals such as the defense of the self against perceived threats.

[12] Also note that the beliefs and emotional states that lead to attitude formation may pull in different directions. Witness the case of the person who believes that her memory is reliable but cannot stop herself anxiously checking and triple checking a date or a document even though she remembers it well. On this phenomenon in the context of an account of self-trust, see Jones (2012).

[13] Barring demon worlds, however, even in societies where some are given unearned privileges whilst others are systematically underestimated, the humble person will still have access to evidence about her actual abilities which is independent of others' judgments about her.

[14] There is some recent empirical evidence in support of this claim. Leary el al (2017) have found that intellectually humble individuals tend to be less dogmatic, more tolerant of ambiguity, more curious and open-minded than less intellectually humble people. They are also more attuned to the actual strength of arguments.

[15] These are known as social comparison judgments. For a review of their importance and prevalence, see Corcoran et al. (2011).

[16] I do not wish this picture to suggest that each virtue is a golden mean between a vice of success and one of deficiency as I hope that the account of servility and timidity below makes clear.

[17] Florence Foster Jenkins (born Narcissa Florence Foster) may be a real life example of this dynamic. An American socialite, she has been described as the world's worst opera singer. Contemporaries claim that she was not aware of how bad she was. She became a musical cult figure and drew large audiences who probably enjoyed the car crash. Nevertheless, she believed their disingenuous praises.

[18] See Cassam (2016) for a characterisation of epistemic vices as obstacles to effective and responsible inquiry.

[19] It is possible to harbor these doubts, and be unable to shake them off, despite believing in one's abilities. For a discussion of this phenomenon see Jones (2012).

[20] Placing grave importance on comparisons is, in my view, one the main differences between servility and self-abasement. Those who are servile are often obsessively engaging in social comparison.

[21] Such doubts may be unshakeable even if one does not fully believe them to be warranted. I thus disagree with Ian Church who thinks that servility requires that one underestimates the positive epistemic status of one's own beliefs (2016).

[22] These points do not undermine the possibility that shame may in some situations be an apt response (Kristjánsson 2014). It may be appropriate to distinguish between different kinds of shame in ways that are akin to psychologists' distinction between authentic and hubristic pride (Williams and Davies 2017).

[23] I thus disagree with Whitcomb's et al. (2017) characterisation of servility as a matter of being too attentive to one's limitations and insufficiently attentive to one's strengths. It seems perfectly possible for a person to be a worrier and thus to obsess about her limitations without displaying the kind of deferential behavior which is a central manifestation of the intellectual obsequious person.

[24] I would like to thank Quassim Cassam for pressing this point.

[25] These points can be explained by the attitude framework. Individuals who feign servility do no possess the attitudes that are characteristic of servility. Those who are servile only in some situations have servile attitudes but these are weak and perhaps also less numerous and thus rarely determinant of behavior.

[26] I use the translation of these words as they appear as an epitaph at the beginning of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986: 9).

[27] For a review of the literature on cognitive dissonance see Cooper (2008).. In the cases under consideration agents try to avoid having to think of themselves as liars and deceivers. It is this threat to the concept of oneself as honest that over time produces the conformity of attitudes to behavior (cf. Wood 2000: 546). My thanks to Jonathan Webber for pressing this point.

[28] Another factor promoting low self-evaluation is the conformism of the ingratiator. Since those who ingratiate also come to share the views of those whose favor they seek, when these have a low estimation of one's abilities, one will tend to adopt that same opinion of one's worth.

[29] Some of the literature on this topic treats ingratiation as a response to a threat directed at the self and thus as a way of defending the ego. I presume that they conceive of it in this way because social exclusion is thought to be a threat to the self. Nevertheless, it would seem that whatever their ultimate motive may be, the actions of these people are guided by a proximate motive of seeking social acceptance.

[30] It should be noted that this discussion, and the empirical work on which it is based, is only applicable to individuals living in contemporary Western societies or wishing to be accepted

by white communities in the global North. It may be the case that in societies that are highly hierarchical, behavior indicating that one belongs to the lower strata of one's community has different psychological consequences.

[31] I presume here that proper concern with being esteemed by others and with being worthy of that esteem is a virtuous trait. Timid individuals sacrifice being the objects of other's positive estimation in favor of avoiding at all costs the threat of disapproval.

[32] Such low self-assessment may or may not be objectively accurate. In all likelihood when initially formed the self-assessment is an underestimate. However, it may function as a self-fulfilling prediction crippling the person's intellectual development. Be that as it may, irrespective of its reliability this self-evaluation is a mismeasurement of the self because it is not arrived at, and sustained, in a manner that is sensitive to the evidence. As I said above, the same considerations apply to the self-evaluations of those who are intellectually servile.

[33] Thanks to Heather Battaly for raising these issues and making useful suggestions. See Baehr (2011) for a discussion of intellectual courage and Biddle et al (2017) for a definition of epistemic timidity as unwarrantedly prizing risk avoidance over a concern for epistemic goods.

[34] These vices are also characterised by epistemically bad motives. See Tanesini (2018b) for a motivational account of vice. See Cassam (2016) for an account of epistemic vice as obstruction to effective and responsible inquiry.

[35] Such assessments are not reliably formed; they are not epistemically justified or responsibly held.

[36] These vices thus qualify as capital vices in Kidd's (2017) sense of being vices that beget other vices.

[37] I would like to thank the other panellists and audience at the 2017 Pacific APA Symposium on Epistemic Vice. My thanks especially to Heather Battaly for making the whole event possible. Some portions of this paper have also benefit from feedback from participants to a workshop on Epistemic Vice and Corruption held in Nottingham in September 2017 and organised by Ian James Kidd. I am also grateful to Natalie Ashton, Quassim Cassam, Ian James Kidd, Peter R. Sedgwick, Jonathan Webber and an anonymous referee of this journal for their comments on an earlier draft. Research leading to this paper was partially funded by a subaward agreement from the University of Connecticut with funds provided by Grant No. 58942 from John Templeton Foundation. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of UConn or John Templeton Foundation.

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