Karen Frost-Arnold, **Who Should We Be Online? A Social Epistemology for the Internet**, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2023, 280 pp, $57.91 (ebook).

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The pervasive integration of the Internet into contemporary society has engendered a multifaceted landscape, characterized by global connectivity and the rapid dissemination of misinformation and ignorance (Kozyreva, Lewandowsky, & Hertwig, 2020). Karen Frost-Arnold's work, *Who Should We Be Online? A Social Epistemology for the Internet*, comprehensively explores the epistemic challenges and opportunities inherent in the digital milieu. Central to Frost-Arnold's inquiry are the various social roles and personas assumed by individuals in online spaces, including moderators, imposters, tricksters, fakers, and lurkers, each of which is subjected to analysis regarding its epistemic comportment, virtues, and vices. Furthermore, the book scrutinizes the influence of trust dynamics, platform design, and social structures on the production of knowledge within digital environments. Specific topics addressed encompass online content moderation, Internet hoaxes, fake news dissemination, and the educational potential inherent in social media platforms. The author advocates for a virtue epistemology framework that guides individuals in responsibly navigating their online epistemic engagements while also proposing structural reforms to rectify injustices and foster emancipatory knowledge practices within the digital sphere.
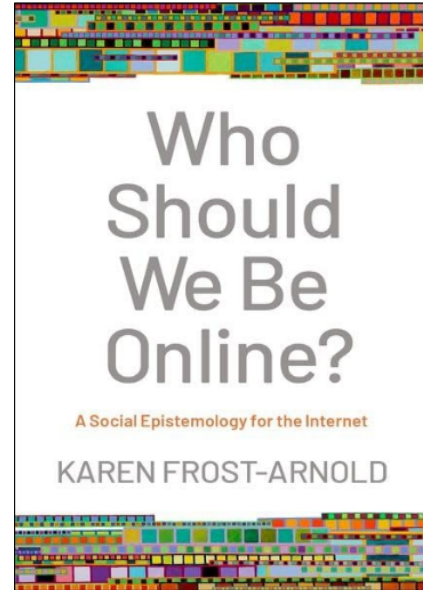
This book's interdisciplinary approach is noteworthy, wherein Frost-Arnold draws on theoretical frameworks from feminist philosophy, social epistemology, philosophy of race, postcolonial theory, and science and technology studies, among others. This expansive engagement with diverse disciplinary perspectives underscores the intricate sociotechnical fabric of the Internet. As such, the book significantly contributes to the emergent field of Internet social epistemology, adeptly addressing pivotal issues through innovative interdisciplinary methodologies.

At its core, this book grapples with profoundly philosophical questions: How should we live, and who should we aspire to be in the digital age? The author approaches these questions with a pragmatic hope to provide actionable guidance while acknowledging the need for structural change. Her goal is to develop frameworks that individuals can apply to navigate their online lives virtuously while inspiring collective efforts to build a more just online world.

This book comprises six chapters. The introductory chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the FOVIVI epistemological approach (feminist accounts of objectivity, veritism, ignorance, virtues, and injustice), which will serve as the underlying framework for analyzing the Internet. It also offers a

fundamental elucidation of the basic concepts and principles associated with each framework. Moreover, as some of these theories may appear incompatible to certain epistemologists, the author demonstrates their compatibility and elucidates how they form an integrated and mutually reinforcing set of evaluative frameworks. Then, the chapter outlines the key themes and arguments explored in the following chapters of the book.

Chapter 2 focuses on a crucial set of agents impacting online knowledge: content moderators. The author argues that current commercial moderation practices perpetuate epistemic injustice by failing to cultivate essential epistemic virtues in workers. Moderators deal with a flood of content with minimal context, little content expertise, and implicit biases. This results in overcensorship and dismissal of marginalized users' concerns. The ignorant and rushed nature of moderation labor also subjects workers, often women of color in the Global South, to psychological trauma. The author proposes "epistemic dumping" as a term for the injustice of exploiting certain groups to handle the toxic information waste of online communities. She suggests alternative cooperative structures where moderators can gain relevant knowledge emotional support, and exercise informed discretion. Overall, in this chapter, the author emphasizes the need for a balanced approach that combines the strengths of both humans and algorithms in moderation practices. This chapter is expected to encourage future collaborations between social epistemologists, scholars in Internet studies, engineers, and moderation workers.

Chapter 3 tackles the phenomenon of Internet imposters and tricksters. Imposters who deceive others for personal gain are contrasted with tricksters who creatively challenge oppressive power structures. The author argues that some deception can be virtuous if it expands trust networks to include marginalized groups. For instance, activist tricksters like the Yes Men spread awareness by impersonating corporations and spreading factual information about misdeeds. Their hoaxes highlight excluded truths and target the privileged. Such betrayal of trust differs from malicious imposters like Tom MacMaster, who posed as a lesbian Syrian blogger. By speaking for marginalized voices, these imposters reinforce stereotypes and tighten epistemic exclusion. The author helps distinguish between harmful deception and beneficial trickery by considering their effects on trust relationships. The significance of this chapter is that it explores the role of trust in objectivity and truth and proposes guidelines for virtuous online self-presentation.

Chapter 4 delves into the virality of fake news and its reciprocal relationship with racism. The author connects fake news to the concept of "White ignorance"—the structural nonknowing and false belief perpetuated by White supremacy. Racist framing gives fake news salience among certain audiences, facilitating its spread. And exposure to fake stories containing racial tropes strengthens racist thinking. The author suggests interventions like diversifying news curation teams. Drawing on feminist standpoint empiricism, she argues contributors from oppressed groups can identify racist fake news their privileged colleagues may miss. Another proposal is rethinking rigid conceptions of journalistic objectivity and neutrality that prevent direct challenges to fake news. This chapter facilitates readers in comprehending the potential of social epistemology in analyzing the phenomenon of fake news, offering normative frameworks to comprehend and tackle the issue. Moreover, it enlightens readers on the use of feminist tools by social media companies to mitigate bias and enhance trust in their epistemic processes.

Chapter 5 explores "lurking," where privileged individuals observe marginalized online communities to unlearn prejudices. The author acknowledges the benefits of lurking for consciousness raising but also its potential harms. Passive lurking can treat marginalized users as objects of study rather than full epistemic agents. And voyeuristic intrusion into spaces not meant for privileged observers is problematic. The author advocates active engagement with difference and cautions against appropriative lurking that exploits marginalized labor. She proposes a virtue epistemology framework to determine when listening silently is appropriate versus when hands-on dialogue is needed. This chapter accentuates the significance of humility, open-mindedness, and respect for the intentions and privacy of others as crucial virtues for epistemically responsible lurking.

Chapter 6 serves as the conclusive segment, complemented by an appendix. The concluding section articulates the author's intent behind composing the book and her corresponding reflections while furnishing a concise summary of the theories and illustrative instances explored throughout all chapters. The concluding section emphasizes the significant impact of the Internet on knowledge dissemination and the risks of oppressive ignorance. It encourages a hopeful approach to philosophical questions about how we should live and who we should be online, considering both individual responsibility and the need for broader structural change. The author aims to provide practical suggestions for responsible online engagement and contribute to collaborative efforts across disciplines to promote liberatory knowledge in the digital age.

The research methods and content employed in this book possess distinctive characteristics that warrant acknowledgment and hold significant value. First, a primary strength of this book is its multilayered analysis, integrating insights from various fields to shed light on complex sociotechnical issues. For instance, the discussion on fake news weaves together the philosophy of race, feminist epistemology, political economy, media studies, and more. This interdisciplinarity reflects the diverse factors shaping online knowledge. It also enriches social epistemology, pushing it to engage more deeply with marginalization, global capitalism, and technology. Second, the author also highlights the concrete impacts of abstract epistemic issues. Concepts like White ignorance and epistemic injustice are related to tangible examples of platform harms, traumatic labor practices, and viral misinformation. The book repeatedly drives home the point that unserious epistemic analysis has serious ethical consequences. This framing underscores the urgency of developing actionable philosophical tools. Finally, the book is highly recommended for letting readers realize the need for collective responsibility in shaping a just online world, resisting the privatization of solutions. While individual cultivation of virtues is beneficial, broader reforms are essential to dismantle exploitative and exclusionary architectures. This book fulfills the need for cross-disciplinary insights and activism to address the fundamental causes of online ignorance and injustice, aligning closely with its content and advocacy.

However, regarding inclusivity, while the author deeply engages with feminist epistemology and the philosophy of race, there are openings to strengthen the integration of perspectives from disability studies, queer theory, and postcolonial scholars. Incorporating additional standpoints would further enrich the intersectional approach. For instance, issues like website accessibility, heteronormativity in platform design, and colonial legacies in Internet infrastructure constitute fruitful areas for analysis.

Overall, this book highlights the profound epistemic dimensions of issues like content moderation, deception, propaganda, and platform inequalities. It emphasizes that striving for valuable Internet knowledge requires a focus on social justice. It provides valuable insights for individuals, scholars, policy makers, and technology designers. It encourages readers to critically evaluate their online interactions, promoting a more informed and responsible approach to navigating the Internet.

Reference

Kozyreva, A., Lewandowsky, S., & Hertwig, R. (2020). Citizens versus the Internet: Confronting digital challenges with cognitive tools. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, *21*(3), 103–156. doi:10.1177/1529100620946707