

The Epistemic Good of Epistemic Responsibilist Virtues

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ABSTRACT

The question of whether it is a necessary feature of intellectual virtues that they lead to a higher ratio of true to false beliefs has been a continuous controversy. The aim of this paper is to clarify what the instrumental value of intellectual responsibilist virtues amounts to. By spelling out what makes virtues epistemically good in terms of inquiry, a view can be offered that not only elucidates the theoretical and practical demands of intellectual virtues, but that also provides a plausible account of what comprises the instrumental value of responsibilist virtues.

Introduction

There are two contrasting theories about epistemic virtues: virtue responsibilism and virtue reliabilism. While the latter regards intellectual virtues as reliable faculties or powers, like vision, memory, introspection, etc., the former understands virtues as excellences of personal character. This paper will primarily regard responsibilist virtues. Thus the term “intellectual virtues” or “epistemic virtues” will, if not made explicit, solely regard responsibilist virtues.

Intellectual responsibilist virtues are understood as enduring, stable traits of character, such as epistemic open-mindedness, courage, attentiveness, or impartiality. Intellectual character traits help us to explain why a person acts, behaves, or thinks in a certain way and how she is likely to behave, act, and think in the future. If we, for example, say that Laura always hands in her work on time, we refer to her trait of epistemic conscientiousness. Or when we say that Peter is always willing to consider other arguments and is not too fast to draw conclusions, we refer to his trait of epistemic open-mindedness. As Quassim

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Cassam phrases it, intellectual character traits “(...) are habits or styles of thought or inquiry, and to describe someone as, say, [open-minded, conscientious, courageous or attentive] is to say something about their intellectual style or “mind-set”, for example, about how they approach novel hypotheses. To put it another way, intellectual character traits are distinctive ways of seeking out and evaluating evidence, and assessing the plausibility of explanatory hypotheses (...)” and we praise a person who possesses those traits (Cassam 2016: 164).

But what exactly makes epistemic virtues valuable?

Two of the most discussed views of what makes responsibilist virtues valuable is that they are instrumentally or intrinsically valuable. Commonly understood virtues involve a certain motivation towards epistemic ends, like truth, understanding, or knowledge. But it does not suffice that a person has these good motives, one also needs, based on these goods motives, to act in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question. Because it is a defining feature of virtues that they require this positive orientation towards epistemic goods, they are intrinsically valuable (section 1). But, many have argued that it does not suffice that virtues are intrinsically valuable; they, in addition, need to lead their possessor to acquire more true than false beliefs. But would we really say that a person who constantly cares about attaining the truth and performs epistemically conscientious acts based on that motive, is not virtuous, just because she, due to dumb luck or because an evil demon deceives her, never attains true beliefs? This certainly seems to be a too strong claim (section 2). Resolving this issue involves clarifying what is epistemically good about intellectual virtues. The main reason why we care about intellectual virtues seems to be that they make us good inquirers. Epistemic virtues help us to generate guidelines for scientific practices and inquiry (section 3).

Similarly to Cassam (2016 and 2018), I will develop a view that specifies the aim of epistemic virtues or what makes them epistemically good in terms of effective and responsible inquiry, even though, the account offered will differ in what effective and responsible inquiry amounts to. More specifically, I will incorporate Baehr’s claim, who states, simply put, that responsibilist virtues themselves will not explain what it is to know or what it is to be justified in believing something, etc. (Baehr: 2011) Rather it is effective and responsible inquiry, which involves not only responsibilist virtues but also a combination of relevant skills, abilities, faculties, relevant evidence, etc., that gets us closer to the truth, and is, thus, what it truth-conducive. This involvement, however, does

not diminish the claim that intellectual responsibilist virtues abet effective and responsible inquiry and, thus, play a significant role when it comes to inquiry, especially concerning more complex matters at issue. The relation of epistemic virtues and inquiry will particularly become apparent while regarding evil demon cases of which there seem to be two readings: one regarding the truth-conduciveness of a virtue a particular person possesses, the other regarding the truth-conduciveness of a virtue generally. Yet, by stating that virtues (among others) abet effective and responsible inquiry and that it is effective inquiry that is truth-conducive, what is called into question by evil demon cases is not whether the trait is truth-conducive, but whether the inquiry is truth-conducive (section 4). This shift of focus allows one to claim two things. First, although a virtue a person possesses might not lead her to acquire true beliefs, the virtue generally enables, because it abets effective and responsible inquiry, the attainment of more true than false beliefs (especially regarding more complex matters at issue). Second, virtues are constitutively valuable because they abet effective and responsible inquiry, and it is effective inquiry that is instrumentally valuable. Clarifying the aim or what makes intellectual responsibilist virtues epistemically good – namely, that they abet effective and responsible inquiry – not only sheds light on the theoretical and practical demands of responsibilist virtues but also provides a plausible account of what the instrumental value of intellectual virtues amounts to (Section 5).

1. Virtues Require Good Motives

On the general conception of epistemic responsibilist virtues, an intellectual virtue involves certain epistemically relevant emotions, desires, or affective states (Baehr 2013:100). That is to say that a virtuous person is (unconsciously or consciously) motivated towards epistemic ends, like truth, understanding, knowledge, etc., which will be subsumed under “good motives” (Zagzebski 1996, Baehr 2011, Montmarquet 1993). According to Montmarquet, for example, intellectual virtues are constituted by an acquired motivation to attain truth and avoid falsehood (Battaly 2008: 648). A virtue is a trait, a person who desires the truth would like to have (Montmarquet 1993:30). Zagzebski, similarly, argues that virtues involve a motivation for “cognitive contact with reality” (Zagzebski 1996:134) and defines virtues as enduring traits of character that require an appropriate epistemic motivation (Battaly 2008: 649).

There are two primary reasons for arguing that good motives are required for a virtue. First of all, to praise someone for their traits is to praise a person for something she has (to a certain extent) control over. We should not blame someone for their bad vision or for some external factor that influences the outcome of her (under normal circumstances) virtuous actions. “To be praiseworthy, virtues must be (to a considerable extent) under our control. And, arguably, we have greater (though not complete) control over our motives and actions than we do over our effects in the world” (Battaly 2008: 18).

Second, according to virtue responsibilism, virtues reveal what we care about and value. It is precisely for that reason that responsibilist virtues necessarily require good motives. Good motives reveal what one cares about and values in a way good actions or faculties cannot. Consider two scientists who investigate the long-term effects of a virus. One of them only cares about his reputation, the other, in contrast, has good motives, such as being motivated to believe the truth, acquire knowledge, seek understanding, and so on. The actions themselves cannot tell us about the person’s character. Only the underlying motivation can reveal what one cares about and values. We would not say that a person is virtuous, praiseworthy, or an exemplar if she is not motivated in the right way. We would, for example, not consider a person who only acts conscientiously because she cares about her reputation or just because she wants to finish her work as soon as possible as virtuous or praiseworthy. That is because she is not motivated in the right way.

But having good motives alone does not suffice for a person to possess a virtue (Zagzebski 1996). One also needs to reliably act upon the good motivational state. Only if one succeeds to reliably attain the epistemic end of the virtue in question, one possesses a virtue. To illustrate this point, consider the epistemic virtue of open-mindedness. The epistemic end of open-mindedness is defined as the freedom from prejudice, partisanship, and other habits that close the mind (Dewey 1933: 30). For a person to possess the virtue of open-mindedness she, thus, needs to reliably succeed to act according to the epistemic end of open-mindedness based on her good motives. That is to say that there is an inbuilt success condition in the possession of a virtue, so that one of the defining features of virtues, meaning what makes a trait a virtue, are the good motives and to reliably act upon those motives (Zagzebski 1996: 176–184). And because virtues necessarily have this inbuilt positive orientation towards the epistemic good –the good motives –, they are *intrinsically* valuable. That is,

responsibilist virtues are valuable because of their intrinsic property, which is finally valuable.

However, as Ann Baril (2018) points out, items can also be valuable for other reasons. Such that the good motivation can be valuable because of their constituents, like the love for truth, being motivated towards understanding, etc. which in themselves have final value. Moreover, good motives can be constitutively valuable, because they lead its possessor to perform virtuous acts, which themselves constitute an admirable life, which has final value. For now, I do not want to preclude such considerations and will return to the distinction between final and constitutive value and valuable because of its constituents in the final section. Yet, since it is a necessary feature of responsibilist virtues that they require good motives, they are (at least) necessarily intrinsically valuable.

Among advocates of responsibilism, there is little disagreement that responsible virtues are, because of their required good motives, intrinsically valuable, the much harder and more pressing issue is whether and in which sense virtues are instrumentally valuable.

2. Effects Matter

Apart from being intrinsically valuable, some have argued, as Zagzebski or Driver, that virtues, in addition, need to be instrumentally valuable. Traits are virtuous only if they reliably produce true beliefs. The main reason for arguing that besides being intrinsically valuable, virtues also need to be instrumentally valuable is that there seems to be something odd about claiming that a trait that produces more false than true beliefs still counts as an intellectual virtue (Driver 2000: 129). When we discover that a trait we conceived of as a virtue reliably produces false beliefs, we would no longer consider that trait to be intellectually virtuous, or so the reasoning goes. The general idea behind this is that "(...) an intellectual virtue must have some notable causal connection with truth in the world in which it is possessed" (Bachr 2011: 125).

Linda Zagzebski, for example, claims that a defining feature of virtues is not only the motivational component but also the reliability component. She defines a virtue "(...) as a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end, and reliable success in bringing about that end" (Zagzebski 1996: 137). Here the motivational component is twofold. That is, to possess a virtue one must be ultimately motivated to believe the truth, out of which the motivation to the

virtue in question arises. To possess a virtue not only means to be reliably successful in achieving the aims of the motivational component, but one must also be reliably successful in reaching the truth. Whereat the (instrumental) value of the reliability is derived from the (unconditional intrinsic) value of the motivational component of the intellectual virtues.¹

Zagzebski's view is indeed quite demanding, in that a person even though she has good epistemic motives and also reliably succeeds to act in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question, based on those motives, is not virtuous if she does not reliably succeed in attaining true beliefs. Put differently, if we end up in an evil demon world and all our beliefs are false, the virtues by which we attained such beliefs are no longer virtues (Zagzebski 1996: 100). If these traits would reliably produce false beliefs, they would even be considered as vices (Montmarquet 1997: 482). But this seems to be a too strong claim. Consider someone who "(...) desires the truth, is committed to achieving an understanding of important issues, is willing to make sacrifices so that she can achieve her epistemic goals, is tenacious and patient in inquiry, listens fairly and openly to others, evaluates evidence carefully and thoroughly, and so on" (Baehr 2007: 459). Would we not consider someone who has good motives and even reliably performs acts that are in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question, as being intellectually virtuous even if an evil demon deceives her so that all her beliefs are false? Would we not consider someone who has good motives and reliably acts upon her motivation as virtuous in our world, even if she due to dumb luck never attains true beliefs?

Answering the question of whether epistemic virtues reliably need to lead to true rather than false beliefs is complicated. Before addressing this question it is crucial to clarify what makes epistemic virtues good. Are epistemic virtues good simpliciter or are they epistemically good?

3. The Epistemic Domain and Inquiry

Before considering the question of whether epistemic virtues reliably need to lead to true beliefs, consider the question of what makes virtues good. What makes epistemic virtues good or valuable is not that they are good simpliciter,

¹ Jason Baehr discusses at length the problems that come with Zagzebski's claim that the instrumental value of being reliably successful at reaching the truth is derived from the unconditional intrinsic value of the motivation to believe the truth. For further discussion, see Chapter 7 of his book *The Inquiring Mind* (2011).

but rather that they are epistemically good or good from the epistemic point of view (Pritchard 2014: 113; Foley 1987: 125; Baril 2018: 73ff.). But how should we understand “good from an epistemic point of view”?

One promising way to understand goodness is as “(...) relativized to some normative domain: some domain comprising norms (e.g. requirements, permissions), evaluations (e.g., of items as good or bad, fitting or unfitting), and the like” (Baril 2018: 73). This epistemic good has its own domain with its own “(...) standards, ends, and values, relative to which items may be evaluated as good or bad, fitting or unfitting, right or wrong” (Baril 2018: 74). The boundaries of the epistemic domain are, however, rather hard to pin down, since they are not established by conventions and neither is there a natural basis for determining the truly epistemic domain (Baril 2018: 74). But even though one cannot pin down the natural basis of the epistemic domain precisely, one option is to stipulate the good or goods, the norm or norms, relative to which one is evaluating items as epistemically good (Baril 2018: 74). For example, one may stipulate the good relative to “maximizing truth and minimizing falsehood in a large body of beliefs” (Alston 1989:83), or accuracy (Ahlstrom-Vij and Grimm 2013) or truth on “topics of interest” (Goldman 2002: 61 and Baril 2018: 74). Yet, to evaluate items as epistemically good is not to say that they are genuinely good. Rather they might just be pro tanto (to some degree) good. For instance, if there is something pro tanto valuable about understanding and less or little pro tanto valuable about truth, then philosophical investigations should focus on understanding rather than truth since this will be the area of value (Baril 2018: 75).

One might still be doubtful or skeptical of how to delineate the epistemic domain by identifying norms and values. But even then one should still understand virtues as being epistemically good in one way or another. Perhaps in that conceiving of the epistemic good one way rather than another is useful “(...) for generating guidelines for good scientific practice, or for practical agents to occupy in the course of their reasoning or reflection about everyday matters” (Baril 2018: 76). If philosophical investigations can help us in these practices or help us to live richer and better lives, we have reason to engage in them. At any rate, a philosophical discussion of what makes epistemic virtues valuable from the epistemic point of view should be clear about what she takes the epistemic good to be.

Although I will not pin down specific norms and values of the epistemic domain, one of the main reasons why we should be interested in epistemic

responsibilist virtues is that they abet effective and responsible inquiry. What makes responsibilist virtues valuable from the epistemic point of view or epistemically good is, thus, that they are useful for generating guidelines for inquiry. But how do they do so, are there specific examples of virtues that help us to inquire and how? And how should we understand inquiry?

3.1 What Is Inquiry

Inquiry in general should be understood as the active and intentional search for the truth about some question (Baehr 2011: 18). Though, we are not always in the need to inquire to gain the truth or knowledge. For example, to know that there is a cup in front of me that contains coffee, I do not need to inquire. Or to know that $3+4$ equals 7, I do not need to inquire. A lot of what we know or what we consider as true is come by rather automatically or immediately. Our knowledge of our surroundings, memorial, introspective, and even some a priori knowledge “(...) requires little more than the brute operation of our basic cognitive faculties (Baehr 2011: 18). Whereat these types of knowledge are often referred to as “low-grade knowledge”.

There are, however, different cases in which knowledge or truth is rather hard to achieve. For example, the finding of a vaccine, providing an answer to a philosophical question or finding out the properties of a certain molecule. These types of knowledge or truth, commonly referred to as “high-grade knowledge”, certainly require inquiry. They make demands on us as cognitive agents, and require us to search, reflect, interpret, evaluate, judge, etc. (Baehr 2011:18). And this is exactly what an intellectually virtuous agent does. An intellectually virtuous agent reasons, thinks, interprets, judges, etc. in an intellectually virtuous way. Intellectual virtues help us to cognitively succeed in inquiry. But how do they do so precisely? To get an intuitive grip on that question, consider, the following case of Laura:

Laura investigates how the former president of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, contributed due to his program of free vouchers, in which each citizen was issued a voucher with a nominal value of around 10000 rubles to the emergence of the post-soviet oligarchy. Laura spends much of her time reading about post-WWII politics in the Soviet Union and particularly about the Yeltsin era. She comes to believe that Yeltsin made due to his privatization policy the existence of oligarchs in the mid-1990's possible.

Laura is certainly an inquirer. She tries “(...) to find things out and to extend [her] knowledge by carrying out investigations directed at answering certain

questions” (Cassam 2016: 164). Her questions include: How was the voucher program possible? Was Yeltsin’s drinking habit part of why he confirmed the privatization policy? Why did so many citizens exchange their vouchers for money?

The methods she uses to answer these and related questions are, for example, browsing the internet, going to libraries, searching archives, and reading old news articles about the Yeltsin era. Laura takes the whole historical period into consideration and tries to find contemporary witnesses, who can tell her about Yeltsin’s presidency, even those who refuse to talk to Laura at first. Laura is, thus, courageous, conscientious, careful, attentive, and so on. She does not ignore relevant evidence, is not too fast to draw conclusions, is willing to accept counterevidence, and takes other opinions into account.

The way Laura investigates reveals something significant about her intellectual character. She takes relevant evidence into account because she is conscientious; she is willing to accept counterevidence because she is attentive; and she takes other, even contrasting opinions into account because she is courageous and open-minded. Laura is a responsible and effective inquirer, “(...) and it is because of the influence of [her] intellectual character traits which is responsible for this” (Cassam 2016: 164).

There are at least six ways for epistemic virtues to be related to inquiry, that Jason Baehr refers to in his Book *The Inquiring Mind* (2011). First of all (1), an inquiry must be initiated or undertaken and, thus, one must be motivated to inquire. According to Baehr, intellectual virtues like inquisitiveness, wonder, curiosity, reflectiveness, or contemplativeness can be essential to the pursuit of inquiry. “A person with the virtue of curiosity, or whose mental life is characterized by wonder, is quick to ask why-questions, which in turn are likely to inspire inquiry. A person with the virtue of curiosity, or whose mental life is characterized by wonder, is quick to notice and be inclined to investigate issues or subject matters of significance. And a reflective or contemplative person is prone to ponder or reflect on her own experience in ways that also are likely to lead naturally to inquiry” (Baehr 2011: 19).

Second (2), inquiry requires to be focused. Inquiry involves being attentive to certain subject matters and requires certain alertness to details. Virtues that can help to succeed to be focused on the inquiry are for example attentiveness, scrutiny, perceptiveness, sensitivity to detail, or careful observation (Baehr 2011: 19). In addition (3), inquiry demands that one is not too fast to draw conclusions, is willing to take counterevidence or other opinions

into account, to resist the temptation to stick to one's opinion, and to carefully evaluate and regard other views. Thus, successful inquiry requires and often involves virtues like objectivity, open-mindedness, impartiality, consistency, and intellectual fairness.

Moreover (4), inquiry often involves intellectual virtues such as intellectual integrity, humility, self-awareness, self-scrutiny, transparency, and honesty (Baehr 2011: 21). We are prone to fail to recognize inconsistencies in our beliefs and sometimes even stay unaware of counter-evidence and considerations. We may be tempted to trust unreliable sources or to stop to inquire prematurely. To stay honest, aware, and alert to the evidence and the beliefs one has and how they bear to the propositions we consider, we need to make use of our intellectual virtues.

Fifth (5), inquiry sometimes demands to move beyond standard ways of thinking, to consider alternate possibilities, to contemplate different and new ideas, and sometimes even seemingly absurd explanations. Inquiry requires us to think outside the box. For an effective inquiry, especially regarding complex matters, we may use intellectual virtues as creativity, flexibility, agility, adaptability, imaginativeness, and open-mindedness (Baehr 2011: 20–21).

And last but not least (6), "(...) there are occasions in the context of inquiry where success requires an unusual amount of exertion or endurance" (Baehr 2011: 21). This might, for instance, be the case, if the object of inquiry is complex or new, if the collection or evaluation of available data takes a long time or if getting the truth is dangerous. "In such a case, what is required is the willingness to persist or persevere. Depending on the situation, this willingness might take the form of virtues like intellectual courage, determination, patience, diligence, or tenacity" (Baehr 2011: 21).²

² It should be noted here that epistemic virtues are in an important way related to all sorts of biases. In the sense that virtue requirements are intended to rule out biases. Baehr, for example, states that "(...) in the context of intellectual conflict or opposition, open-mindedness is the *antidote* to vices like narrow-mindedness, closed-mindedness, dogmatism, prejudice, and [certain kinds of] bias" (Baehr 2011: 144, my emphasis).

The claim made in this paper that epistemic virtues necessary abet effective and responsible inquiry in a sense incorporates that virtues rule out certain kinds of biases since an effective and responsible inquiry is (especially when it comes to complex matters at issue) understood as one that brings us closer to the truth. And getting closer to the truth (most of the time) involves not being partisan, prejudiced, confirmation biased, etc. Thus effective and responsible inquiry

Intellectual virtues are certainly connected to the way we inquire and there are various ways in which intellectual virtues can meet some familiar and generic demands of inquiry. Even though inquiry does not comprise specific epistemic norms, evaluations, and the like, the reference to inquiry certainly helps us to understand what is the epistemic good of intellectual virtues. Intellectual virtues are epistemically good because they abet effective and responsible inquiry. But what exactly makes effective and responsible inquiry epistemically good and what does this amount to?

4. Virtues Abet Effective and Responsible Inquiry

As has been argued with reference to Cassam and Baehr, our classification of intellectual virtues and what is epistemically good about them is “(...) driven by our sense of what makes for responsible and effective inquiry” (Cassam 2016: 165). Intellectual courage, whose epistemic end is to act in aplomb in the face of intellectual danger and to defend one’s views appropriately, is a virtue because it enhances the effectiveness of our inquiry. Open-mindedness is an intellectual virtue because it makes us effective at discovering misleading ideas and evidence. Being careful and considerate is exactly what we would expect from a person who possesses the trait of epistemic conscientiousness. What makes traits like attentiveness, thoroughness, discernment, and conscientiousness epistemically good is that they promote responsible and effective inquiry (Cassam 2016: 165). It comes naturally that virtues have something to do with inquiry or that part of what makes them epistemically good is that they abet effective and responsible inquiry.

However, there is a worry about proposing that effective and responsible inquiry is what makes intellectual virtues epistemically good. That is, we do not have an independent grip on the notion of such an inquiry (Cassam 2016: 165). As Quassim Cassam points out, “isn’t an “effective and responsible inquiry” just one that is conducted in the way that an intellectual would conduct it? If that is so, then it is circular to explain what makes intellectual virtues [epistemically good] (...) by reference to their impact on responsible and

involves (most of the time) the exercise of epistemic virtues, such as attentiveness, self-awareness, open-mindedness, etc.

Much more can be said on this behalf. However, I cannot elaborate this here in more detail (for further reading, see Baehr 2011, Fricker 2007, Cassam 2016).

effective inquiry. It's not that we begin with the idea of a responsible and effective inquiry and then explain on this basis (...) intellectual virtues (...). It would be more accurate to say that we have to start with [intellectual virtues] and then define a responsible and effective inquiry as one that is regulated by intellectual virtues (...). Or so it might be argued" (Cassam 2016: 165). This is the first circularity worry.

Yet, it is not the case that an effective and responsible inquiry can "(...) only be defined as one that is conducted in a way that an intellectually virtuous person would conduct it" (Cassam 2016: 165). To avoid the first circularity, one has to spell out the aims of what makes an inquiry effective and responsible respectively, and this not in terms of intellectual virtues.

Cassam, for example, promotes that effective inquiry is one that is knowledge-conducive since the aim of inquiry is to extend and to refine our knowledge (Cassam 2016: 165). Whereat inquiry is an activity that aims at the state of knowledge. However, it seems that the same circularity would arise if one in turn defines knowledge in terms of intellectual virtues. To circumvent this second circularity problem, Cassam states that knowledge itself should be understood as a fundamental term. Thus, instead of defining knowledge reductively in terms of intellectual virtues, he promotes a "knowledge-first" epistemology and takes knowledge to be a fundamental psychological state.

In contrast to Cassam, however, there seems to be a more intuitive solution to the second circularity problem. That is, in that we understand the aim of an effective inquiry as one that gets us nearer to the truth – meaning that inquiry extends what we justifiably truly believe, what we truly believe, and what we know. And to understand effective inquiry as one that gets us nearer to the truth is to say that effective inquiry is *truth-conducive*.

When we inquire, we pursue an active and intentional search for the truth about some questions. By understanding an effective inquiry as such, effective inquiry is still an activity and to conceive of effective inquiry in terms of truth-conduciveness diminishes the first circularity worry in that effective inquiry is not spelled out in terms of intellectual virtues. If I possess an intellectual virtue then this trait abets effective inquiry. Yet, it is not the case that if I am effective in my inquiry that I possess an intellectual virtue. I can, for example, be an effective inquirer, if I am motivated by acknowledgment or wealth.

So far so good, but one may worry here that stating that effective inquiry is truth-conducive is circular if truth-conduciveness is in turn defined by

reference to intellectual virtues. That is the second circularity problem. Yet, this problem will not arise if we pay close attention to responsibilist virtues.

As Jason Baehr prominently argues in his book *The Inquiring Mind* (2011), we will barely reach the truth solely by using our intellectual virtues. Baehr argues that responsibilist intellectual virtues are “(...) unlikely to play a central role within traditional epistemology at large” (Baehr 2011: 13). Whereat traditional epistemology here roughly means epistemology on the Cartesian tradition that focuses on the nature, structure, limits, and sources of knowledge (Baehr 2011: 10). Rather than being able to provide an answer to traditional epistemological questions, intellectual virtues play a secondary role in connection to these issues, which Baehr refers to as the thesis of Weak Conservative Virtue Epistemology. This, however, is not to say, that intellectual virtues are not relevant in epistemology. The contrary is the case, in that, an independent focus on intellectual virtues complements (but cannot replace) traditional epistemology (Baehr 2011: 191–205). This is the thesis of what Baehr calls Weak Autonomous Virtues Epistemology.

The bottom line is that although responsibilist virtues will not by themselves solve traditional epistemological problems, they should complement theories such as virtue reliabilism and others to answer these questions. Even though responsibilist virtues aim at true-belief, justified true belief, and knowledge, they are unlikely to *explain by themselves* what it is to know, what it is to be justified in believing something, what it is to believe the truth, etc. Rather responsibilist virtues abet effective inquiry and it is effective inquiry – which encompasses the right standing to the evidence, using one’s faculties, capacities, skills, and exercising one’s responsibilist virtues – that gets us nearer to the truth and is, hence, what is truth-conducive.

Thus, by understanding intellectual virtues in that they abet effective and responsible inquiry and effective inquiry as truth-conducive, this is not to claim that truth-conduciveness is reductively defined solely in terms of responsibilist virtues, and neither that to possess responsibilist virtues alone is necessary for reaching the truth. I can possess the virtue of conscientiousness to a very high degree, but due to my lack of evidence and missing skills to evaluate the relevant data in my field of inquiry, never reach the truth. As well as I can reach the truth without possessing any responsibilist virtue. The simplest examples are those in which I arrive at a true belief or knowledge solely because of my abilities and faculties. Again, my truly believing or knowing that there is a cup of coffee in front of me is due to my reliable visual faculty. I do not need to

be conscientious, courageous, or open-minded to know or to truly believe that there is a cup of coffee in front of me. Although, using my intellectual virtues will often have a great impact on my inquiry when I regard more complex matters at issue.

Thus, truth-conduciveness is not reductively defined solely in terms of intellectual responsibilist virtues and intellectual responsibilist virtues are not necessary for attaining true beliefs. This, however, does not diminish the claim that intellectually virtuous traits are praiseworthy, admirable, or good because they abet effective inquiry. There still is, as has been pointed out by the case of Laura and the six cases of Jason Bahr, a close connection between possessing an intellectual virtue and being an effective inquirer. Intellectual virtues still make a great impact on effective inquiry and effective inquiry is one that gets us closer to the truth. Yet, an adequate conception of epistemic virtues seems to require that an inquiry, in addition to being effective, is responsible. The next section regards the question of why responsibilist virtues abet responsible inquiry and what this amounts to.

4.1 Virtues Abet Responsible Inquiry

To understand intellectual virtues in that they abet effective inquiry alone does not suffice, as the following evil demon scenario indicates. What is needed is that virtues, in addition, abet responsible inquiry.

Let us assume that a Cartesian “evil demon” has, unbeknownst to us, made our world such that truth is best attained by thoroughly exemplifying what, on our best crafted current accounts, qualify as intellectual vices. Presumably, we would not therefore conclude that these vices are and have always been virtues. (Montmarquet 1997: 482)

Mr. Magenta and Mr. Green are investigating the claims of modern flat earth societies, proclaiming that the earth is flat rather than a sphere. Mr. Green is an attentive, open-minded, careful, and thorough investigator and comes to the conclusion that earth is a sphere. Mr. Magenta, in contrast, is close-minded, lazy, negligent, gullible, and dogmatic and comes to the conclusion that the earth is flat. Even though Mr. Magenta and Mr. Green possess the same traits in our world as in the evil demon world, Mr. Magenta is in the evil demon world more likely to be reaching the truth, while Mr. Green is less good at attaining the truth. However, just because Mr. Magenta is better at attaining the truth, this does not turn his traits of closed-mindedness, laziness, negligence, gullibility, and

dogmatism into intellectual virtues and Mr. Green's traits of attentiveness, open-mindedness, carefulness, and thoroughness into intellectual vices. Despite Mr. Green's lack of epistemic success, it still seems clear that he is an intellectually praiseworthy person. Intellectual virtues should not be affected by skeptical scenarios.

There are two reasons why one should still regard Mr. Green's intellectual traits as virtuous and Mr. Magenta's intellectual traits as rather vicious, one regarding the claim that intellectual virtues abet effective inquiry, the other that intellectual virtues abet responsible inquiry. I will start with the latter, by evaluating what responsible inquiry amounts to.

Cassam argues that a "(...) responsible inquiry is one that is guided by the evidence and recognizes the obligations that come with being an inquirer. These include the obligation not to be negligent and to exercise due care and attention in the investigation of the matter at hand. A responsible inquirer has a certain attitude towards the business of inquiry, knows what he is doing, and has the necessary skills. Responsible inquiry is in these respects just like responsible driving, which also takes a combination of knowledge, skill, and attitude" (Cassam 2016: 166). But arguing that what makes virtues valuable or good is that they abet responsible inquiry seems again to be circular if responsible inquiry is in turn defined as one an intellectually virtuous person would conduct. But as Cassam states "(...) while it is undeniable that a responsible inquiry is indeed the kind of inquiry that an intellectually virtuous person would participate in, it is neither the case that responsible inquiry is *defined* as intellectually virtuous inquiry nor that all there is to say about responsible inquiry is that it is one that is conducted in the way that an intellectually virtuous person would conduct it" (Cassam 2016: 166; author's emphasis). As Cassam, as well as Baehr, point out, possessing and exercising one's responsibilist virtues alone does not suffice for being a responsible inquirer. One, in addition, also needs to make use of one's skills and faculties, etc. It seems conceivable that one can only make use of one's skills and faculties regarding a particular inquiring question and be a responsible inquirer without possessing responsibilist virtues, as the example of a scientist, who is primarily motivated by fame and recognition indicates. Thus, claiming that epistemic virtues abet responsible inquiry is not circular. But how exactly does the claim that virtues abet effective as well as responsible inquiry help us with the case of Mr. Magenta and Mr. Green?

Even though Mr. Magenta's belief that the earth is flat in the evil demon world would turn out to be true, we would still not regard him as being a responsible inquirer. Rather, because Mr. Magenta is close-minded, lazy, negligent, gullible, and dogmatic, despite his true belief about the earth, we would still regard him in the evil demon world as an irresponsible inquirer. Even in the demon world, when one disregards one's evidence and continues to believe whatever because one is lazy, dogmatic and so on, these traits still impede rather than abet responsible inquiry, and hence the agent is an irresponsible rather than a responsible inquirer.

But despite Mr. Magenta being irresponsible, one could still argue that Mr. Magenta's character traits make him a more effective inquirer in the evil demon world than Mr. Green. That is because Mr. Magenta is due to his trait of dogmatism closer to the truth than Mr. Green. Is it not precisely for this reason that Montmarquet, as well as Cassam, conclude that truth-conduciveness cannot be the distinctive mark of epistemic virtues (Montmarquet 1987: 482)?

To address this worry, let us pay closer attention to evil demon cases since there are two ways one can conceive of them: First, evil demon cases cast doubt on the truth-conduciveness of a trait of a particular person; second, evil demon cases cast doubt on the truth-conduciveness of a trait in general.

Concerning the first reading, evil demon cases amount to claiming that even though everyone who possesses the trait ψ would, under normal conditions, be more likely to reach the truth, only unlucky Mr. Green is deceived by an evil demon so that all the beliefs he forms due to his trait ψ are false. Recall here that it will hardly be a responsibilist virtue itself that causes Mr. Green to form a belief. Rather, it is the interplay between various factors, such as evidence, faculties, abilities, and the traits he possesses. But let us, for the sake of the argument, assume that the trait ψ is the most salient factor for Mr. Green to form his belief. But if everyone, besides Mr. Green, who possesses the trait ψ is more likely to attain the truth, we would still regard the trait ψ as abetting effective inquiry and effective inquiry as one that gets us nearer to the truth. Just because unlucky Mr. Green is deceived by an evil demon does not amount to saying that the possession of the trait does not *generally* abet effective inquiry and hence *enables* to attain a higher ratio of true to false beliefs. If evil demon scenarios amount to this first reading then this will hardly diminish the claim that responsibilist virtues abet effective inquiry, meaning inquiry that is truth-conducive. The virtue ψ still abets effective inquiry and, thus, *generally enables*

us to get closer to the truth, even if that is not the case for unlucky Mr. Green. But what about the second stronger reading of evil demon cases?

Regarding the second reading, not only Mr. Green comes due to his trait ψ to a false belief, but everyone who possesses the trait ψ and forms a belief on that basis attains false beliefs. This amounts to the claim that everyone who, for example, possesses the trait of conscientiousness and forms a belief due to that trait is conceived by an evil demon so that everyone's beliefs are false. Furthermore, this amounts to the claim that everyone, who is like Mr. Magenta dogmatic and forms a belief on the basis of this trait gains true beliefs. This indeed seems to be a far-fetched case. But let us assume for the sake of argument that this is the case. Dealing with the second kind of evil-demon cases involves two lines of reasoning. First, it needs to be shown that traits such as Mr. Magenta's dogmatism, do not qualify as virtues, although Mr. Magenta and everyone else who possesses the trait, will attain a higher ratio of true to false beliefs. Second, it needs to be shown that traits such as Mr. Green's although Mr. Green and everyone else who possesses the trait will not attain true beliefs, might still abet effective inquiry. I will start with the former and, for simplicity, focus on the traits of dogmatism and attentiveness.

The first thing to note is that even though Mr. Magenta's trait of dogmatism is partly responsible for him being an effective inquirer in that he will attain more true than false beliefs, the trait of dogmatism, as stated before, will *not abet responsible inquiry*. That is because Mr. Magenta's trait is not responsible for his belief. That is to say that the trait of dogmatism does not justify his beliefs (Cassam 2016: 167). Mr. Green's traits, in contrast, are responsible for him to be justified in his beliefs. So even though Mr. Magenta's traits might make him an effective inquirer because he attains more true than false beliefs, we would hardly say that he is justified in his beliefs.³

Secondly, traits as dogmatism will hardly involve good epistemic motives. That is, a dogmatic person will, even in evil demon cases, hardly be motivated to believe the truth based on which she acts dogmatically. And someone who does not have good motives and does not reliably succeed to act upon her good motives does not qualify as possessing a virtuous trait in the first place. After all, responsibilist virtues necessarily, as has been argued in section two, require good epistemic motives and to reliably act upon those good motives.

³ For the discussion and denial of the claim that there are vices because of which one can acquire knowledge (in the actual world), see Cassam's paper "Vice Epistemology" (2016), page 167–169.

But if traits such as dogmatism neither abet responsible inquiry nor involve good epistemic motives, then such traits will not qualify as virtues in the first place.

Let us now turn to question whether traits such as Mr. Green's still abet effective inquiry. As has been argued what makes epistemic virtues good is that they abet effective and responsible inquiry and that effective inquiry is one that gets us closer to the truth. Let us grant for the sake of argument that Mr. Green is a responsible inquirer and has good epistemic motives based on which he acts in accordance to the epistemic end of the virtue in question. The question remaining is, if traits as attentiveness in the second kind of evil demon scenarios still abet effective inquiry. Recall here Jason Baehr's claim that epistemic character traits will hardly be alone responsible for someone to achieve true beliefs, knowledge, justified true beliefs, etc. Rather, to attain those states involves a combination of the relevant skills, abilities, evidence, and responsibilist virtues. Although responsibilist virtues themselves do not explain why one attained a true belief, knowledge, etc., they still play a significant role for inquiry. The virtue of attentiveness, for example, is in part responsible for the inquiry to be focused: the trait of attentiveness will lead to being considerate to certain subject matters and alertness to certain details. By understanding virtues as such, this amounts to the claim that although Mr. Green attains only false beliefs, this is not solely due to the traits he possesses but also because of misleading evidence, malfunctioning faculties, and abilities, etc. Rather than claiming that whether a trait is a virtue is what is called into question by evil demon cases, it is the effectiveness of the inquiry. After all, it is effective inquiry that is truth-conduciveness and effective inquiry not only encompasses responsibilist virtues but also the relevant skills, abilities, faculties, etc. Let me elaborate.

As has been argued it is not the virtues themselves that are truth-conducive, but rather it is effective inquiry. Whereat the truth-conduciveness of effective inquiry is not to be understood in that effective inquiry necessarily leads to true beliefs, but rather in that effective inquiry leads to a higher ratio of true than false beliefs. Moreover, it is not only responsibilist virtues that abet effective and responsible inquiry but also our faculties, evidence, skills, etc. And since virtues abet effective inquiry in the sense that they facilitate or promote effective inquiry (among others) and the truth-conduciveness of effective inquiry is to be understood as a ratio, responsibilist virtues *generally enable* the attainment of true rather than false beliefs. As has been argued in reference to the first evil demon case, a trait someone possesses, but who due to dumb luck

never attains a true belief, might still be a virtue if it generally enables us to get closer to the truth because it abets effective inquiry. As well as a trait might still be a virtue if it abets effective inquiry even though the unsuitable environment, missing skills, evidence, etc. diminishes the effectiveness of the inquiry. Yet, I grant that *a trait that never abets effective inquiry, should indeed not be called an epistemic virtue.*

I will return to this point in the next and final section, in which I consider the question of whether it is a necessary condition for intellectual virtues that they abet effective and responsible inquiry and what the instrumental value amounts to. That to abet responsible and effective inquiry is not sufficient for a virtue, has already been covered in the previous sections.⁴

5. It Is Necessary for Responsibilist Virtues to Abet Effective and Responsible Inquiry

Before turning to the question of whether to abet effective and responsible inquiry is necessary for intellectual virtues, I want to make the following remark. What makes a virtue valuable should be seen as distinct from the defining features of a virtue. For example, it is necessary for a virtue to have good motives out of which one reliably succeeds to act in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question. What makes the trait intrinsically valuable are, however, only the good motives. Similar holds for other values of virtuous traits. A virtue is a trait that abets effective and responsible inquiry. And to abet effective and responsible inquiry is epistemically good. But what exactly makes effective and responsible inquiry good? Is effective and responsible inquiry, for example, intrinsically valuable or constitutively valuable?

As has been argued at length, responsibilist virtues will hardly be alone responsible for acquiring more true than false beliefs. Rather it is the interplay

⁴ To shortly illustrate that to abet effective and responsible inquiry is not sufficient, consider a scientist, who investigates the long-term effects of a virus, but who lacks good epistemic motives. While investigating the long-term effects of the virus, she is only motivated by fame or recognition. As has been argued in section two, responsibilist virtuous traits, however, necessarily require good epistemic motives.

Whereat it should be noted that I do not state that the scientist does not at all have good epistemic motives. Rather her good epistemic motives are not the most salient factor. Yet, virtues (by definition) necessarily require good epistemic motives and to reliably act upon those motives (see section 1).

between various skills, faculties, and responsibilist virtues. Nonetheless, responsibilist virtues are a significant part for a person to acquire true rather than false beliefs especially when it comes to high-grade knowledge because they abet effective and responsible inquiry.

Retrieve now the two readings of the evil demon case. There seem to be two ascriptions of value: one to the virtue generally, the other to the virtue a (specific) person possesses. Virtues are epistemically good because they abet effective and responsible inquiry and an effective inquiry is one that gets us closer to the truth. That is to say that virtues *generally enable* their possessor to attain more true than false beliefs because they are a significant part of what makes inquiry effective and responsible. This, however, is not to say that when someone possesses the intellectually virtuous trait, she is necessarily going to attain more true than false beliefs, because the virtue in question abets effective and responsible inquiry. Rather, because the virtue in question abets effective and responsible inquiry it is possible for her to attain more true than false beliefs. Clearly, someone can possess a virtue and, although the virtue abets effective and responsible inquiry, not attain true beliefs. But still to abet effective and responsible inquiry is epistemically good as well as necessary for a virtue someone possesses.

To give an intriguing example, consider Isaac Newton. When Newton formulated his theory of universal gravitation he was attentive, courageous, careful with his investigations, and so forth. That is to say that he possessed various epistemic virtues and performed various virtuous acts. But even though Newton's theory turned out to be false and has been superseded by Albert Einstein's general relativity theory, we would nonetheless say that Newton was an effective and responsible inquirer, because of the epistemically valuable traits he possessed. Not the epistemic virtues themselves diminish the effectiveness of Newton's inquiry, but rather his missing evidence and knowledge.

Cases such as Isaac Newton reinforce that intellectual virtues necessarily abet effective and responsible inquiry and are precisely for that reason epistemically good. Yet, intellectual virtues do not necessarily lead its possessor to acquire more true than false beliefs, even though intellectual virtues generally enable the attainment of more true than false beliefs because they abet effective and responsible inquiry.

Recall at this point the distinction between, constitutively valuable, final value, and valuable because of its constituents made in the first section, which provides a more fine-grained picture of what the value of intellectual

virtues amounts to (Baril 2018). By claiming that epistemic virtues necessarily abet effective and responsible inquiry, the value of virtues can be understood as follows: First, virtues are valuable because of their constituents: because of the good motives intellectual virtues require, they are intrinsically valuable. Second, virtues are constitutively valuable because they abet effective and responsible inquiry, and it is effective inquiry that is instrumentally valuable.

At last, I want to address a final objection. Is it really necessary for a virtue to abet effective and responsible inquiry? Consider here the example of Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Brown is a biology teacher and has a genuine concern that her students understand photosynthesis. While she teaches her students, Mrs. Brown is intellectually careful, patient, and precise, because she does have good motives. Mrs. Brown seems to possess various intellectual virtues. Not only do these virtues not abet effective and responsible inquiry, but they are also, contrary to what many claim about virtues, *other-directed*. Mrs. Brown's virtues are, hence, not epistemically good because they abet effective and responsible inquiry. Rather, the intellectual virtues of Mrs. Brown are epistemically good because they support the transmission of knowledge. As Roberts and Wood (2007) prominently point out, epistemic virtues can be epistemically good because they promote the transmission of knowledge, such as by teaching, reporting, or other intellectual practices.

The example of Mrs. Brown suggests an additional refinement of what makes virtues epistemically good. Virtues require that the agent has good motives and reliably acts upon her good motives. Because this is a defining feature of virtues, virtues are necessarily intrinsically valuable. *Self-directed* epistemic virtues necessarily abet effective and responsible inquiry, which is epistemically good. And since it is effective inquiry that leads us closer to the truth, it is effective inquiry that is instrumentally valuable. Moreover, as the example of Mrs. Brown suggests, virtues can also be *other-directed*. Other-directed epistemic virtues are epistemically good for different reasons, such as because they promote the transmission of knowledge, justified belief, etc. But again, other-directed virtues *promote* the transmission of knowledge, justified belief, etc. which is not to say that everyone who possesses such a trait necessarily needs to be successful in transmitting knowledge, justified belief, etc. Again the transmission of knowledge, justified beliefs, etc. includes not only other-directed responsibilist virtues but also the relevant skills, faculties, etc. Thus, other-directed epistemic virtues *generally enable* the successful transmission of knowledge, justified belief, etc. We probably all know a teacher

or parent, who failed to transmit knowledge, justified belief, etc. although she tried her best, maybe because the matter under dispute was too clear or too obvious to her. But although one was unsuccessful in transmitting knowledge, justified belief, etc., one might still possess other-directed epistemic virtues. The view provided is, thus, compatible with claiming that virtues can be valuable for different reasons.

6. Conclusion

What has been argued in this paper is that clarifying what is the epistemic good of intellectual virtues, not only illuminates the theoretical and practical demands of intellectual virtues but also provides a plausible account of what the instrumental value of intellectual virtues amounts to. Rather than necessarily leading to a higher ratio of true than false beliefs, self-directed intellectual virtues generally enable the attainment of more true than false beliefs because they necessarily abet effective and responsible inquiry. Epistemic responsibilist virtues play a significant role for (successful) inquiry (especially regarding more complex matters at issue). Whether (i) to have good motives based on which one reliably succeeds to perform acts that are in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question, (ii) to abet effective inquiry, and (iii) to abet responsible inquiry are sufficient for self-directed epistemic virtues has been left an open question. Yet, (i) to (iii) are (at least) necessary for self-directed intellectual virtues, and, as has been argued, can deal with a variety of troubling cases.

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