Cultivating Doxastic Responsibility: Ameliorative Epistemological Projects and the Ethics of Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses some of the contours of an ethics of knowledge as it aligns with the more specific projects of *ameliorative* epistemology. Ameliorative epistemology describes projects aimed at redressing epistemic injustices, improving collective epistemic practices, and educating more effectively for higher-order reflective reasoning skills and the cooperative problem-solving which they afford. Social epistemologists, it is first argued, need to become more risk-aware, and the remaining sections of the chapter elaborate different aspects of the relationship between *epistemic risk* and *doxastic responsibility*. More positively, social epistemologists involved in such ameliorative projects need to provide guidance for agents which helps foster critical reflection, and the evolution of cooperation. These complementary critical and ameliorative tasks are argued to be key aspects of an ethics of knowledge.

1. Introduction: Amelioration and the Ethics of Knowledge

This chapter will outline some of the contours of an ethics of knowledge as I understand it, and will argue for the need for philosophers to take a "risk aware" stance towards epistemic practices, and to offer greater support for ameliorative projects, including especially the evolution of cooperation. [1] An ethics of

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[1] I prefer the active, "ethics of knowing" as the term best fitting my own, and Candiotto's approach. But I defer to this collection's title on the "ethics of knowledge." I take this term to marry the normative concerns of social, or applied epistemology (where "power and the ethics of knowing" was the subtitle to Miranda Fricker's 2007 book, *Epistemic Injustice*), to the recent emergence of *history of knowledge* as a methodologically diverse, but more social scientific field

knowledge would address knowledge claims, knowledge production, dissemination, gatekeeping, power relations and other topics, and overlap with contemporary topics in social epistemology. Ameliorative projects are those which have aims which include ameliorating epistemic injustices and promoting the critical reasoning dispositions. I will treat discussion of the ethics of knowledge as a kind of "applied" philosophy, at least insofar as it invites providing guidance to real-world agents as inquirers. In some sense all educational efforts are ameliorative, but the ameliorative projects of applied social epistemology aim especially at cultivating in agents effective tools for dealing with problems of life, with diverse and contrary systems of belief, and with uncertainty. Ameliorative epistemologists hold that promoting not just true beliefs, but also emotional and moral sensitivities, and effective, co-operative problem-solving are vitally needed today. Ameliorative projects illustrate one intersection between zetetic responsibilism (Axtell 2008; 2019; Axtell and Olson 2009) and the ethics of knowledge, and this intersection will be the focus of the current chapter.

Risk and responsibility are closely entwined, yet conceptual connections between them need of elucidation. Riskiness in people's moral and intellectual judgments invites examination, and can often be studied social scientifically; comparatively risky strategies of acquiring and maintaining beliefs is connected to censure of agents for adopting unsound habits of inquiry.

Dewey sometimes characterized philosophy, as he understood it, as "critique of bias." Critique and censure may apply to agents whose strategies of inquiry mirror known biases, or ill-fit their own questions and subject-matter. But the focus of our study remains largely positive: *Taking responsibility* for our epistemic practices is something ameliorative epistemologists want to encourage; this can cause commotion, discomfort, even crisis, as it leads to scrutiny of one's own assumptions and problem-solving strategies. An ethics of knowledge ought to provide insights on personal and institutional responsibility. This is the self-cultivation concern, the concern for developing intellectual, moral, and emotional sensitivities and abilities.

Section 2 explains the call for social epistemology to be risk aware, and argues that *zetetic* epistemology, or "inquiry-focused" epistemology, is able to support this better than some other approaches, internalist or externalist. My

of academic study. For an overview of the development and purview of history of knowledge as a discipline, see Verburgt (2020).

task in this paper is partly to extend the zetetic approach to take account of, and to contribute to, Candiotto's conception of the social dimensions of the ethics of knowledge. Section 3 will focus on Charlie Crerar's claim that there are important asymmetries between virtue ascriptions and vice ascriptions, asymmetries which prevalent forms of virtue ethics and epistemology have not been adequately attentive to. These asymmetries affect how philosophers ought to treat *intellectual* in comparison with *moral* character-traits (and trait-ascriptions). In order to assess Crerar's suggestions for improving character epistemology by taking better account of these asymmetries, we will need to pass through a thicket of thorny issues with respect to the meaning and function of "thick" evaluative concepts.[2] We will discuss why thick normative concepts serve as tools for inquirers, and how engaged agents are able to utilize thick concepts, concepts which typically entwine description and a positive or negative valence.[3] More specifically we will investigate certain recently-alleged *asymmetries* between virtue and vice ascriptions, and argue that recognizing these asymmetries actually aids ameliorative epistemology, by helping to

[2] As thick concepts, virtues and other evaluative terms such as "rude" and "charitable" contrast with thin concepts, such as "good," "bad," "right," and "wrong." Connecting directly back to rejection of a fact-value dichotomy, Julie K. Thorson (2016) clearly explains why virtue theorists (and pragmatists) reject *dichotomism* (which she terms "separatism"): "the view that thick concepts cannot be disentangled into two distinct parts, one of which is descriptive and one of which is evaluative. This is to assume that thick concepts cannot be broken down into components... Separatists claim that thick concepts are composed of a bare evaluative attitude (pro or con) and some descriptive content.... [By contrast] Bernard Williams said thick concepts 'seem to express a union of fact and value'" (361-2). There is no value-neutral way of applying thick concepts; one needs to be engaged with the concept such that they shared the evaluative stance or valence, in order to apply the concept in reflective judgment.

[3] Virtue theories do not abandon 'thin' evaluative concepts, like moral "goodness" or "badness," or "right" and "wrong" action. But their primary concern is with 'thick' evaluative and characterological concepts. As further background on the thick-thin normativity distinction, Bernard Williams and John McDowell both reject "two component" analyses of thick concepts, which were first proposed by emotivists and prescriptivists in metaethics. Battaly (2008) points out that Williams, McDowell and others including Peter Goldie "think that thick concepts are at once descriptive and evaluative: description and evaluation are entangled and cannot be separated into independent components." In criticism, Blackburn argues that ethical or epistemological "thickies" do not champion cognitivism, but rather leave us with no independent neutral description, no "semantic anchors" that they can share with others. Battaly (2008) and Elgin (2008) respond to Blackburn much as Dewey had earlier responded to C.L. Stevenson, on whose emotivist account of evaluative language most of the logical positivists leaned.

separating the "censure" or "critique of bias" which makes for a constructive reply that is the appropriate response in the majority of cases, from over-strong association with blame.

Section 4 provides discussion of cooperative vices, and in particular the vice which David Hume described as "knavery." Hume's little-noticed discussion of knavery is a forerunner of contemporary game theory's concern with behavior of 'free riding' on systems of trust or cooperation. There are many examples of this, perhaps in some instances even including non-cooperation on mask-wearing and vaccinations in a time of pandemic. Studying knavery, individual or corporate, and the objectively less and more risky choices of cooperators and non-cooperators in game scenarios like Tragedy of the Commons, helps us recognize impediments to ameliorative epistemology.

Our discussion of knavery invites a broader discussion over social dimensions of an ethics of knowledge, including the legitimacy of 'nudges,' and the broader debate over the legitimacy of epistemically paternalistic practices. Epistemic paternalists and their anti-paternalistic critics might both claim that their views reflect the aims of ameliorative epistemology, making this debate one of special interest for the ethics of knowledge. This is the topic of Section 5. I show how debate over epistemically paternalistic practices and their legitimacy raises questions central to the ethics of knowledge. I argue that the design or management of epistemic environments must value individual autonomy, such that paternalistically-justified interventions to one's inquiry are not merely manipulations that save people "from their own folly," as epistemic paternalists have argued, but also facilitate cultivation of virtues of good inquirers. Section 6 then winds up the chapter by arguing that individual growth as responsible inquirers, and not just right thinking or correct judgment, is central to epistemology as inquiry. The chapter tries to show how the guidance-giving tasks of ameliorative epistemology are able to draw support from empirical study of the ecological nature of rationality, and to apply both non-ideal and ideal theories of epistemic agency.[4]

[4] Max Weber was at pains to make it clear that "the ideal-type and historical reality should not be confused with each other" (Weber, 1949 [1904], 107). These are analytical constructs and are not *intended* to be empirically adequate but which nevertheless can be used for a variety of theoretical purposes. Analogously, it might be helpful to think of the epistemological status of N-theories (Morton 2012), and their associated conceptions of rationality as not intending to be empirically adequate but nevertheless being useful for a variety of theoretical purposes.

2. Emotional Support: Emotions, Virtues, and the Evolution of Cooperation

Following what some describe as was a nasty break-up with the fact/value dichotomy, epistemologists have been looking for some emotional support. As Laura Candiotto argues, emotions support the development and cultivation of doxastic responsibility, responsibility "towards truth in our social world, and should thus also be central to the development of the ethics of knowledge. In this regard, extent cooperation leads to epistemic transformations, as processes of redesigning cognitive environments through the emergence of new and different abilities."[5]

In tandem with pragmatists and enactivists, virtue theorists like Candiotto view emotions as ever-present in cognition and human judgment across the Kantian division between practical and theoretical reason.[6] While emotions along with values were seen almost exclusively as hinderances to objectivity and sound judgment in the heyday of logical positivist thought, their necessity and value is today widely accepted in the humanities and human sciences.

The sharp divide between analytic and emotional processing – a very unempirical assumption of many an empiricist – was reinforced by a fact/value dichotomy, which in turn prompted logical empiricists to conceive psychology as irrelevant to logic(s) and the "social" which the human sciences study as irrelevant to the "rational" (the "logic of science"). But philosophy of science, we can once again confidently assert, is not *philosophy enough* as the positivists held, and theory-choice is not merely algorithmic. Neither explanation nor theory-choice in the science is aided by a value-free conception of objectivity. Explanations embody questions, and value-charged interests in explanation; theory-choice among extant theories that are roughly equal in terms of empirical adequacy is dependent upon qualitative weighing of ampliative criteria, describable as the central "theory virtues" (virtues of robustness, fruitfulness, etc.). With the fact/value dichotomy in place it was not only difficult for philosophers to address the normative or evaluative tasks of epistemology and

[5] Candiotto (2019a, np). See also Candiotto (2017) on "boosting cooperation."

[6] "Participatory sense-making seems to be one of our best options for understanding the role of affectivity in epistemic cooperation... we need to endorse an enactivist approach—as participatory sense-making, for example—for properly grasping the function of emotions in social knowledge." Candiotto 2019c, 242.

ethics, but also the overlaps of theories, aims, and methods *across* these subfields of philosophy. As Alvin Goldman points out, while but a few decades ago ethics and epistemology were "positioned in opposite corners of the philosophical establishment, the former the epitome of 'theoretical' philosophy and the latter the epitome of 'practical' philosophy, with little contact made between them, today an active interest in both analogies and disanalogies between ethics and epistemology abounds."[7]

Goldman's comment helps us to put into context how a de-coupling of philosophy from the fact/value dichotomy has gone hand in hand with rediscovery of the necessity of emotional dispositions in embodied cognition; this fosters greater appreciation of the generally positive roles which emotion plays in human development, moral and intellectual. Emotional intelligence promotes effective problem-solving and the evolution of social cooperation. Psychological study of emotional intelligence and social intelligence has done much to illustrate how emotion and affect are partners in the achievements both of reflective morality and intellectual inquiry. Eastern virtue traditions, which emphasize the challenge of moral and intellectual "self-cultivation," also speak to this entwinement of emotional development and sound judgment as well. Without well-developed moral emotions, it would be near impossible for an agent to recognize their being in a situation of moral conflict or dilemma.

Awareness of these aspects of a situation is enabled through normal emotional development, and without them we would simply act from the stronger motive, or if reflective, apply a moral principle or follow a moral rule. The study of psycho and socio-pathologies, psychologists have found, often leads back to abnormalities in the development of core moral emotions such as sympathy, empathy, and antipathy. In philosophy today, the clash continues between non-cognitivism and cognitivism, or realism and fictionalism, etc. as meta-ethical theories; but ethicists are no longer tempted to frame the debate in terms of the fact/value dichotomy. Without the enabling effect of what Candiotto terms epistemic emotions, agents would lack sensitivity to epistemic means and methods. Similarly, without appreciation of the role of emotion for cognition, philosophical accounts of the "search" for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom might be similarly derailed.

The rejection of the fact/value dichotomy is implied also by Candiotto and Dreon's (2021) acceptance of the language of habits, including affective

[7] Goldman (2015, 132–3).

habits. "The Classical Pragmatists, in contrast to the behaviorist account of habits as a mechanical reaction to stimuli, stressed the creative power of habits to scaffold human behaviors. According to this view, habits play a positive role in supporting and orienting human sensibility, as well as in sustaining and nourishing cognition" (1). The authors find that the Deweyan focus on habits re-orients the debate from objects to interactions, and they draw strong support from Dewey for the view that "affectivity is a permanent feature of the active human experience of the world, supported by habits" (2). Taking affective scaffolding – those resources that set up, drive, and regularly contribute to affective regulation – as "habits" in the pragmatist sense, Candiotto and Dreon argue helps philosophers "to better appreciate affective habits' cognitive function, and to avoid reducing them to a bodily matter." It helps us "emancipate ourselves from a passive and routine view of scaffolded affectivity so as to bring the habits' power of transformation into the spotlight" (4).[8]

Candiotto's account of emotions is also informed by virtue theory, and by enactivist psychology. Virtue theory, or the study of character traits, has been revitalized in part because it directly addresses similarities (and differences) between the evaluative tasks which normative epistemology and normative ethics respectively engage. Candiotto ties virtue theory with enactivism, and the idea that "*sense-making* is the enactive notion of cognition in general; and *participatory sense-making* is enactive social cognition."[9] This combination of views brings empirical studies of the social evolution of cooperation into focus, and into partnership with the normative project she refers to as the ethics of knowledge. The recognition of the roles which emotions play in people's intellectual as well as moral development, has contributed to overcoming the sharp disparities once held to hold between practical and theoretical reason. The development of epistemic character and doxastic

[8] Eickers and Prinz (2019) argue that emotion recognition involves "scripts." And that scripts are skills because they are improvable, practical, and flexible. This perhaps fits Candiotti's point, because skills are characteristically practical, and active, whereas recognition is often thought of as paradigmatically passive.

[9] Candiotto quoted from https://www.springernature.com/gp/researchers/campaigns/philosophy-research/laura-candiotto. See also Candiotto (ed.) 2019b. In contrast to the behaviorist account of habits as a mechanical reaction to stimuli, the classical pragmatists stressed the creative power of habits to scaffold human behaviors. According to this view, habits play a positive role in supporting and orienting human sensibility, as well as in sustaining and nourishing cognition.

responsibility "assumes knowledge as an ethical commitment and brings the scientific results at the service of society" while also promoting rational thinking dispositions and 'unmasking' dogmatic or totalitarian thought.

In summary, pragmatist, enactivist, and *aretaic* theories are of course only a few of the alternatives to what they see as 'half-hearted' empiricisms that build in a fact/value dichotomy, and to other related bifurcations that make emotional and axiological contributions to theoretical judgment more difficult to see. I have argued elsewhere that marrying pragmatism to virtue theory is advantageous to both, and this chapter affords me a welcome opportunity to further develop a unique form of character epistemology I term *zetetic responsibilism,* housed within a conception of epistemology as theory of inquiry. In the remaining sections I compare it with some other accounts, and try to show how it approaches a number of questions central to the ethics of knowledge.

3. Putting the Occurrent/Characterological Ascription Distinction to Work

While some Western philosophers have been detractors of aretaic approaches in philosophy, others have adopted a virtue-theoretic approach, yet looked for alternatives to its predominant articulation. Situationist thinkers (Olin and Doris; Alfano; Ahlstrom-Vij) have tended to be especially critical of the "pure virtue theory" of Linda Zagzebski's highly influential *Virtues of the Mind* (1996), which is neo-Aristotelian for the manner in which it conceives intellectual virtue as a subset of moral virtue, as Aristotle understood them. So has Quassim Cassam, in his more recent but equally influential *Vices of the Mind* (2019). There is concern that Zagzebskian character epistemology, which I have elsewhere referred to as *phronomic* virtue responsibilism (Axtell 2008) for the central role it allots to personages taken as exemplars of moral virtue, is seen as setting an unrealistic and overly moralized conception of intellectual virtues. It is sometimes seen as driving responsibilist and reliabilist approaches in epistemology apart, rather than combining or uniting them.

Moreover, Cassam and Crerar both want us to be cautious of impugning people's motives, which they think the Zagzebskian account invites. They are thus at pains to show that vice attribution, as part of epistemological assessment of agents and groups, is unlike 'vice charging' in heated public debate, where poor or defective motives are often foremost. As Cassam points out, "Vice explanations can themselves be epistemically vicious to the extent

that they make it harder to understand people whose lives, values and political preferences are very different from our own."

This worry applies to vice ascriptions and explanations as the folk often make them, but it may also apply to philosophers. Cassam is pointing out that we are not immune from it:

> Vice explanations imply that the epistemically vicious suffer from a form of false consciousness but there is also a type of false consciousness to which some vice epistemologists as susceptible.... [V]ice explanations of recent political events are problematic in a number of ways. They tend to underestimate the significance of other factors, and are at odds with the principle that a democratic culture is one in which citizens assume that their fellow citizens have good reasons, or at any rate reasons, for acting as they do.[10]

This is one of a number of points in a recent paper where Cassam rethinks some of the assumptions of his own earlier development of vice epistemology which he now thinks were flawed. Cassam now more carefully distinguishes vice attributions from rhetorical vice-charging: "However, 'vice-charging' sounds more heated and accusatory than merely judging that another person is epistemically vicious. Vice attributions are judgements. They have an evaluative dimension but needn't be accusatory. [11]

Charlie Crerar (2018) makes a related challenge to a set of assumptions he identifies in Zagzebski's work, and in much self-described character epistemology. Crerar is sympathetic to character epistemology, but wants to challenge a set of assumptions about symmetry in the attribution of virtues and vices to an agent, and in the attribution of *intellectual* vices, in particular. His account thus adds substantial detail to the worries that we saw Cassam raise. Crerar's central worry is what he terms the Inversion thesis:

[10] Cassam 2020, 16-17. He continues, "Jeffrey Friedman criticizes the propensity of psychologists to ascribe beliefs with which they disagree to the irrationality of those who hold them. By the same token, one might criticise the propensity of some vice epistemologists – myself, in the past, included – to ascribe political choices with which they disagree to the epistemic vices of those who make them... [V]ice explanations can all too easily become a way to attack one's political opponents. It also draws attention to the false consciousness of vice epistemologists who see themselves as politically impartial while only ever focusing on the deficient epistemic conduct of conservatives."

[11] Cassam 2020, 19 note 3. See also Kidd's (2016) distinction between *robust* and merely *rhetorical* vice-charging.

"that in a range of theoretically significant ways, virtue and vice are straightforward opposites" (754). Among more specific claims associated with this thesis, commonly endorsed but rarely explicated or defended, is that the vices are (simply) inversions of vices, having otherwise the same structure. "Thus, Linda Zagzebski grounds criticism of intellectual vices in a 'defect of motivation' (1996: 209)."

As Crerar details in the work of Zagzebski and many other responsibilists, a "defect" of motivation and/or effort as a basic characterization of the intellectually vicious is an assumption which has been common. Intellectual (including more narrowly epistemic) virtues have a truth-connected epistemic motivation, and so vices are to be modeled on a lack, or defect in proper motivation.[12] For Zagzebski, virtues are ''deep traits'' (p. 89) or dispositions of persons, and thus vices will be as well. While this account helps to deliver the blameworthiness of vice, in contrast perhaps to simple error or non-culpable or non-willful ignorance, Crerar is skeptical of the tight symmetry which the Inversion thesis expresses. Crerar seems right that debate over the Asymmetry thesis may have important implications for the study of virtue and vice, moral and epistemic.[13] Are vice attributions properly seen as mirroring virtue attributions in the suggested way? If such a symmetry holds for moral virtues and vices, is it unproblematic to take it as equally sound for intellectual virtues and vices? Bringing empirical studies to bear, Crerar contends that intellectual vice "does not require a defective motivational state, either in the form of the presence of a motivation towards epistemic bads or the absence of motivation towards epistemic goods. Rather, the badness and blameworthiness of these character traits can be derived from other psychological and, perhaps, non-psychological features."

[12] Crerar (2018, 754) continues, "James Montmarquet identifies vice with a "lack of effort" (2000: 138-9), Jason Baehr claims that vices involve a "lack of desire for knowledge" (2010: 209), and Heather Battaly that they require "dis-valuable motivations" [2016b: 106; see also 2016a]. This assumption is the main target of this paper. In challenging it, however, I also draw attention to the limitations of a broader but similarly common assumption regarding the nature of vice and its relationship to virtue."

[13] Crerar, 765. One question would be whether the symmetry in regard to motivation is philosophically suspect even for moral virtues and vices, and not just intellectual virtues and vices. But another is whether intellectual virtues can be modeled as Zagzebski's neo-Aristotelian "pure virtue theory" did in *Virtues of the Mind*, or whether a more naturalistic approach is in order.

Crerar like Cassam appears to be looking for alternatives in more naturalist approaches than Zagzebski or the neo-Aristotelian provide, with the implication that study of vices is better off without the Inversion thesis.[14] While I find Crerar's criticisms of the Inversion thesis and its associated "motivational approach" rather convincing, his paper is largely critical, and does not get far in supplying alternatives. It appears to leave epistemologists caught between the vice consequentialism of Cassam, where motivational and developmental issues are perhaps *under-regarded*, and the neo-Aristotelian account where flawed or simply absent motivations are perhaps *over-ascribed* to agents, since motivations are so central to the dispositional account of virtue and vice which Zagzebski and some other character epistemologists employ. Crerar expresses hopes that we can develop middle positions in character epistemology allowing for the importance of emotions, both moral emotions and epistemic emotions, and this is where I would like to make some additional suggestions, while avoiding the inversion thesis.

A first alternative that I will just mention is that the supplementation of virtue theory with embodiment theory together helps to tie the cultivation of moral and epistemic emotions to cooperative problem-solving, and cooperative or pro-social virtues. One alternative may be to employ a taxonomy such as John Maier (2020) supplies. While I will take this taxonomy as consistent with the language of habits, including those of affective scaffolding we endorsed earlier, "Powers" is taken by Maier to be the most general concept, with Dispositions, Abilities, and Affordances its multiply-related major sub-types.[15] According to Maier, abilities (and competence-

[14] Cassam, indeed, has been as critical of certain assumptions in Zagzebski's neo-Aristotelian approach as Crerar (or for that matter, as situationist psychologists like Alfano and Doris). But a qualification is in order here, since there are also serious differences between Crerar and Cassam. While he does not hold Cassam to have made Inversion assumption, he notes that Cassam "approaches the analysis of character vices from a consequentialist perspective." Crerar goes on to express "reservations about employing virtue-theoretic language to describe purely consequentialist phenomena... The language of virtue and vice, at least within the responsibilist tradition, is distinctive and normatively strong; vice is more than simply a sub-optimal inability, it's a fault or flaw" (754, note 2).

[15] "Let us reserve the word 'power' for that general class. ... Being a power of an agent is not, however, a sufficient condition for being an ability. This is because agents have powers that are not abilities. Therefore, second, abilities need to be distinguished by their objects: abilities relate agents to *actions*" (np). So, this approach may go some distance towards responding to Robert Siscoe's further arguments alleging "No work for disposition" (2019) as an objection to robust

performance attributions) and other normative attributions are pertinent to agents, not non–agents. Abilities are distinguished by their objects: "abilities relate agents to actions," though importantly, agents also have powers that are not abilities. Abilities are diverse, and include cultivated habits and skills both physical and intellectual. Yet humans have many dispositions, bodily or otherwise, that are not well described as abilities. Affordances are ecologically-situated possibility for action, choice or experiences, and are what one system provides or furnishes to another system: For example, a chair affords sitting to a person. Affordances are modeled as reducible neither to dispositions nor to abilities, yet recognition of affordances as powers of human agents relates them to action in the natural and social world, and indeed is one of the formative ideas of contemporary enactivism (J.J. Gibson, 1979).

This general taxonomy, I would suggest, makes us less susceptible to treating vices as dispositions, or otherwise assuming the Inversion thesis in regard to their attribution to agents or their actions. It allows us to better see how emotional recognition is often a social skill, and how lack of such skill or habit, and lack of *motivation* toward some posited aim, do not always match up. Recognition of epistemic failings is not tantamount to robust vice-charging, in terms of insufficient or deficient love of truth. But I will largely set these taxonomical questions and their epistemological consequences aside in order to focus on another. One further major resource for motivating Crerar's concerns over vice attributions and the Inversion thesis, and for accommodating the asymmetries he draws attention to, is the rich and extensive literature on "thick" evaluative and characterological concepts. Virtue responsibilists are rightly said to be epistemological 'thickies,' (Axtell and J.A. Carter, 2008) in that they closely describe dual roles for evaluative thick concepts: a) for agents themselves; and b) for philosophical assessment of particular agents and their actions. But let us first sharpen Crerar's critique by quoting him at greater length:

> The upshot of my arguments against the motivational approach, combined with the orthodox picture of virtue, is that we are left with an overlooked but

virtue epistemologies, and perhaps anti-luck virtue epistemologies as well. Siscoe's negative arguments also support some of Crerar's case against the inversion thesis, since he focuses criticism on "proposals enlisting dispositions in a theory of epistemic justification," of which, similarly to Crerar, he finds exemplified in Sosa's early work, and in many other proponents of VE.

> fundamental asymmetry between virtue and vice. Whilst, for the reasons discussed, it makes sense to think of the virtuous agent as characterized by a particular motivational state, the same cannot be said for vice. A particular orientation towards epistemic goods is necessary for an agent to be intellectually virtuous. However, whilst certain such orientations might be sufficient for vice there is none that is necessary for, unifying amongst, or characteristic of the intellectual vices. Virtue, in short, enjoys a psychological unity that vice does not. (762)

One move to qualify the Inversion thesis which Crerar considers is to replace bad motives with insufficient motives. This would help account for some of the most apparent asymmetries between virtue and vice ascriptions. Abstinence from action, and not just wrongful action can be vicious, and harm and suffering are often carried on though culpable indifference which bring lack of awareness or care. So it goes some distance towards the foremost concerns of ameliorative philosophers such as Kathie Jenni (1997, 34) when she writes, "Inattention to morally significant matters is pervasive in our society. It is morally problematic in very serious ways. How might we combat it?" ...[W]e need a way of talking about transforming character: about moral self-improvement. Our lack of resources for thinking about such projects plays an important role in self-deception." Philosophical resources have been missing to analyze self-deception and the loss of integrity we find in every act of willful or affected ignorance.

Still, Crerar thinks that the replacement of bad motives with insufficient motives in the characterization of intellectual vices is not a very satisfactory "fix" to the problems facing the Inversion thesis. Attending to the relatively wider breath and relative lack of unity of vices (or vice attributions) which Crerar maintains is the more interesting feature of his challenge to the Inversion thesis. As with Jenni, and others such as Michele Moody-Adams (2017) who write on questions of the culpability of agents for their affective ignorance, there are deeper problems with self-deception, especially in regard to what things one ought to be attentive to, or concerned about. A big part of these deeper problems is that self-deception undermines the moral agency of the self-deceiver, often in a slow or piecemeal way.

The shift from poor motives to a mere "lack" or "insufficiency" of proper motivation to realize universal moral or epistemic aims still seems unable to help us analyze affective ignorance and similar cases. It seems still to leave us without helpful resources to analyze the failings which the concept of

affected ignorance draw attention to. If so, it is because this qualification still locates the fault as largely within the motivational structures of individual agents, rather than considering affective ignorance together with those agents' cultural context and the social influences and constraints that actual agents experience. The problem I want to highlight is that self-deception undermines agency in *episodic, limited ways*. Jenni describes it as fecund – self-spreading– since self-deception is maintained through rationalizations and self-serving "re-descriptions" of one's actions and attitudes. It erodes, but again in very episodic or compartmentalized ways, the ability for self-scrutiny.

For some of these same reasons, we need to worry about the relationship between performance failures, or exhibiting affected ignorance or related vices, and blameworthiness. "Blame" might be to misstate the aim of the sorts of censure or critique of bias which we develop as appropriate response to the performance failure, and as the natural complement to the cooperative problem-solving ameliorative epistemologists count as performance success. Ignorance, and even willed ignorance, this is to say, isn't "blameworthy" in a uniform or straightforward sense. Blameworthiness threatens not just to overstate, but to fundamentally *misstate* the aim of the sorts of censure that much ameliorative epistemology might be limited to.[16] To use the Deweyan description, philosophy as "critique of bias" is the natural complement to positive promotion of cooperative problem-solving, but the censure which such critique entails need not endeavor to place blame upon individuals for all of their shortcomings in reflective morality. Taking our own ways of ascribing and analyzing traits as the deeper problem, I suggest that philosophers need to look for better ways of parsing character-traits, ways which allow their important asymmetries with virtues, and in so doing help philosophers to make better sense of censure for the use of unsound or bias-mirroring strategies of inquiry.

Might we replace "blame" with "censure" as a first step to accommodating the worry than many forms of censure of discredit fall short of

[16] My argument is thus counter-point to Ball (2016). Applying Zagzebski's approach and extending it to theory of argumentation, Ball argues that "fallacies may not only be improper 'moves' in an argument, but may also reveal something lacking in the arguer's intellectual character." My claim is that this is not necessarily so, and that especially in cases of inattention or morally or epistemically relevant factors, it is often best *not* to take weak or fallacious argumentation as indicative of robust intellectual vice. The question is highly contextual, much as the informal fallacies themselves are.

blame, and that making blame-worthiness central to manifesting moral or intellectual vice is dubiously given to methodological individualism, and to over-ascribing poor motivations to individuals? One of the true originators and innovators of dual process theory, Jonathan Evans, writes, "From a pragmatic viewpoint, even if people fall prey to certain biases, it does not mean they are irrational [or generally unreliable, or 'vicious']. Making mistakes can still be part of a rational, or a reliable, or an intellectually virtuous agent's repertoire.[17]

When we ascribe virtues, ethical or epistemic, to an agent, there is a kind of charitability, rather than evidential sufficiency, for meeting the motivation component which the responsibilists have built into epistemic virtues. The ascription of sound motives may be evidentially underdetermined most of the time, yet charitably granted to an agent because the success component was met together with other conditions. Charitability is appropriate in such cases. But what about the apparent *uncharitability* of ascribing poor or lacking motivations on the basis of lack of successful inquiry? Here the underdetermination of the ascription by available evidence should be more troubling, as Cassam notes. It seems that *reticence about blameworthiness* is the charitable thing: Be reticent of ascribing poor or normatively-lacking motivations, without better evidence than just correlations with overt judgments of actions (occurrent ascriptions).

This conclusion goes together with the further point that many philosophically useful thick evaluative concepts describe action-types, rather than people. People may exemplify them, but that does not mean we may attribute vice as a character-trait as often as we attribute virtue. This seems especially so in respect to our intellectual faults or shortcomings. Our epistemic faults, I suggest, are typically more akin to thick, negatively-valenced evaluative concepts like "rude," "crude," and "lewd," than to full blown personological traits on analogue with moral vices. With many such perceived faults, it is better to attribute them to unfitting or uneducated choice of strategies of inquiry, rather than to failings in the make-up of the individual. We as philosophers should mark this difference and be clearer whether we are talking about the character-traits of particular people, or act-exemplified negative thick concepts: A rude remark, a crude joke, a lewd gesture, an ill-adapted strategy, dysfunctional or bias-mirroring doxastic method. Arguably,

[17] Jonathan Evans quoted in Sternberg and Ben-Zeev (2010, 194).

these *occurrent* ascriptions are ascriptions enough in many cases, and going on to a more robust vice ascription is unnecessary and potentially counter-productive.

The claim here is *not* that only with moral judgments do act-descriptions point culpability at the agent(s) who performed the action. But this is relatively *more so* with moral (and any adopted religious) virtues than with intellectual virtues. Attributions of "blasphemy" and even more so of "heresy" are examples of act-focused thick evaluative concept, clearly negatively valenced, which points culpability at an agent and not just their action. To avoid modeling intellectual vice attributions on examples of this kind, I am suggesting that occurrent trait-ascriptions are ascriptions enough: a) when assessors do not have solid insight on the individual's motivational states; b) when it is quite unclear how to parcel individual and cultural or collective responsibility in a particular case; or c) when rhetorical vice-charging is rampant in a particular debate, or in a domain of discourse.

To summarize thus far, characterological thick concepts (virtues and vices) ascribe something different, and often stronger, than act-focused thick concepts such as "rude." The latter take an action or behavior occurrence as their *object,* while the former 'get personal' by attributing a personal disposition. We have suggested reasons to think that this difference between dispositional and occurrent attributions is as important in epistemology as it is in ethics, but that virtue theorists often neglect the resources that come with distinguishing these attributions. More clearly distinguishing them, and restricting the tendency to reduce virtues (and especially vices) to dispositions I suggest is important for the advancement of the ethics of knowledge.

It would only be inhibitive of the ameliorative projects of virtue responsibilists to ignore the value of occurrent ascriptions, and focus only on characterological ascriptions as if all the important philosophical work, or even just all concern with epistemic justice/injustice, reside there. If character and conduct are indeed ultimately inseparable as pragmatists like Dewey hold, then philosophers need to think of dispositional and occurrent attributions as existing on a spectrum (rather than virtue theorists focusing on the former, and consequentialists on the latter). If we ask how we should go about making virtue epistemologies adequately social and risk-aware, one key is to recognize the range or spectrum – the dispositional-occurrent attribution spectrum – and not to think that if one is a virtue theorist they must only or primarily be

concerned with attributions at one end of this spectrum, and not also the spectrum as a whole.[18]

This proposal I think still strongly supports the thick descriptive projects which character epistemologists develop, but expands them beyond just the characterological subset of them. Our later discussion of 'knavery' as an occurrent attribution will serve as a brief example of this. The proposed self-restriction to occurrent attributions, when they are all that is needed, is more than just the charitable thing to do. I would argue that it is also more in keeping with social epistemology's concerns with group and collective virtue and vice: Groups don't have motives or emotional dispositions in the same way individuals do, and there is no way to go 'inside' them. Character and conduct are especially hard to distinguish when it comes to groups or collectives. Because of this, talk of collective virtue and vice logically takes occurrent ascriptions as its starting point. At the social level of the ethics of knowledge, occurrent ascription is a default position, unless and until faulty motivation is clearly in evidence. Our suggested default presumption of agents being reasonably well-motivated to hold true beliefs is more than just the charitable thing to do. It accepts certain epistemic arguments supporting reasonable disagreement, which John Rawls (1993) referred to as the 'burdens of judgment.' It insists on more 'friendly' treatment of others. A risk-aware social epistemology needs to be very attentive to what Kidd (2016) terms the distinction between explanatorily robust, and largely rhetorical vice-charging.

If the kind of censure which is appropriate to intellectual, just as of moral failings is highly contextual, we need to approach it in a way that avoids overgeneralizing the connection between judgment and emotion. To elaborate on other lines of support for Crerar's asymmetry thesis, we might find it in the work of Peter Goldie, whose papers on emotions and thick concepts explicitly point out the faults of overgeneralizing the connection between judgment and emotion. To begin with, Goldie points out that "Thick concepts are not a philosopher's construct, but rather something pervasive in our everyday lives." In several of his last papers, Goldie talks of intellectual as

[18] Schwitzgebel (2019, np) points out that philosophers often distinguish *dispositional* from *occurrent* believing. "This distinction depends on the more general distinction between *dispositions* and *occurrences*."

well as moral emotions. [19] He thinks of intellectual emotions and their relationship to epistemic virtues as pretty much parallel to what one would say in respect to moral emotions and moral virtues. But the view he develops is not a version of the Inversion thesis: Vices and weaknesses are caused not in the "mirroring" way that would require a bad motive or a lack of good motive. Rather he points to the many "vicissitudes of emotional dispositions" which can undercut the cultivation of more robust and global virtues. The explanation of the failure of habituation to the virtues which Goldie offers is one that pays close attention to the "vicissitudes of emotions," including things like depression, apathy, weakness, accidie, sloth, tiredness, and so on. These often lead to a situation where "both judgement and action lack the emotionality that is a requirement of virtue." For Goldie as for the proposal just outlined, explanation of failure still invites a kind of censure, but the appropriate censure may fall well short of the blameworthiness associated with attribution of a vice-qua-disposition.

In Goldie's 2008 paper "Thick Concepts and Emotion," he explores the many kinds of failings we associate with vice. He affirms a very close connection between emotion and grasping thick concepts, whether positively or negatively valenced, and whether characterological (virtues and vices) or occurrent ("helpful," "rude," 'crude," etc.). But what he (along with Bernard Williams) is sharply critical of is the "Generality" which certain philosophical accounts aim for: an "ambition of making a general, and, to my mind overly simple, connection between judgement and emotion."

Accounts which assert or presuppose such generality he finds to be subject to clear counter-examples, especially where the 'virtue' is culturally-specific (local) rather than universal, or when it is applied to a group of people with whom one has a special relationship (an ingroup) but not others (for instance honor or loyalty among thieves). The problem with presenting an overgeneralized account of emotion in the application of thick concepts is that they do not recognize the problems of "a limited domain of fully engaged application." The father is kind to his children, but cruel to his spouse; a

[19] "A number of philosophers have recently argued persuasively for the existence of intellectual emotions. These include emotions such as de-light, wonder, awe, fascination, courage, surprise, worry, doubt, curiosity, concern, tenacity, and hope, some of which are found elsewhere, other than when directed towards intellectual objects, and some of which are more exclusive to intellectual matters" (Goldie 2011, 96).

woman is kind to her family, but mean to her employees at work; a child is honest in school, but dishonest with friends; a nationalist is loyal to countrymen, but bigoted towards non-citizens or ethnic sub-groups he chooses to see as cultural aliens.[20] Such examples are common-place, and very real. Goldie is right that the father is so narrow in his "focus of caring" that we should be mistaken to judge him a caring *person*: He has failed to expand his 'moral circle' in ethically appropriate ways, and fallen into a trap that hindered and limited his moral development.[21] But he also seems right that the prevalence of such examples is something virtue theorists have yet to adequately address.

It is hard to know what to say about these people in characterological terms of virtue and vice, because their 'virtues' are so compartmentalized by domain or "focus." But a closer look still reveals the resources of thick concepts, when we are careful to distinguish their different types, and functions. In connection with this, Goldie finds ample room for philosophical and psychological study of "intellectual emotions."[22] Emotion and

[20] All of these examples of pro-attitudes but of "limited domain" are reasons why Goldie would say that virtue ascription to an individual should often be withheld, despite there being some good aim and motive in respect to a favored ingroup or special relationship. For they are often equally as well failures to extend this same pro-attitude more broadly. Psychologically, then, "full engagement with a thick concept, and correlatively its action-guidingness in application by that person, need not apply across all domains. One can be fully engaged with a concept here but not there." Yet philosophically this engagement, even if it seems to involve the expected emotional disposition, is not virtue in the universal or human sense if its scope is arbitrarily curtailed on unprincipled grounds or morally-irrelevant factors.

[21] Comparing Asian virtue ethics, "Devotion to family is a virtue" (*Mulan,* Disney 2020); but so it would also be of devotion to "clan" or "tribe." Surely, for the wise, the attribution of devotion or related, other-regarding virtues come with qualification, with recognition of traps of "nepotism," "tribalism," etc. where no more inclusive units are granted moral status. Indeed, it is by *expanding the moral circle,* which Tu Weiming (1994) associates with the ancient Chinese "Great Learning," that we can most gain perspective, and judge the father in Goldie's example to have fallen into one of the most basic of "traps" ensnaring reflective morality. For the father, the focus to which his kindness is limited has limited his success in moral self-cultivation; it has left him ensnares by a strong bias. It is not as if all 'wound morals' are whole partial or impartial. Peter Singer develops an analogous use of the *expanding moral circle* in his book by that title (Singer 2011).

[22] "These include emotions such as de-light, wonder, awe, fascination, courage, surprise, worry, doubt, curiosity, concern, tenacity, and hope, some of which are found elsewhere, other than when directed towards intellectual objects, and some of which are more exclusive to intellectual matters" (Goldie 2011, 96).

imagination cannot be divorced from sound moral development, and they often play positive and even crucial roles in inquiry. But overgeneralization about the connection between judgment and emotion in reflective morality, Goldie thinks, is psychologically unmotivated, and makes these tough cases of sharply curtailed or localized 'virtue' harder for philosophers to analyze. Goldie sees this as another reason to reject "Generality," arguing that they are not able to accommodate these and other features of our use of thick concepts.[23] Proponents of Generality he says are those who settle for *sincerity* in the agent, understood as the connection between a) strength of feeling displayed on moral issues, and b) the strength of the moral view taken. But this notion of sincerity, *because it is over-generalized,* offers only a poor tool to help us account for vices and bigotries which result from failing to extend one's kindness, honesty, etc. beyond a specific ingroup.

Here we more clearly see Goldie's aim in his paper – to undercut overly generalized treatments of connection between judgement and emotion – as thematically connected with Crerar's concerns with the Inversion thesis. Goldie indicates that there is often a *logical* inconsistency behind the *moral* inconsistency of an agent's judgment encapsulating narrow or seeming arbitrary choice of focus. Indeed, both the logical and moral inconsistency are likely to be features which the independent observer will perceive, and take as explanatory, but which are not evident to the individual, such as a father figure, again. So, what I take Goldie to be arguing is that Generality (and especially the kind of generality carried by the holder of the Inversion thesis), cannot help us with the kind of insight which J.S. Mill presents in *On Liberty* when he writes that "the *odium theologicum,* in a sincere bigot, is one of the most unequivocal cases of moral feeling..." An affective-attitudinal component is indeed present, and even indulged as the source of authority for doctrine in this example of religious enthusiasm. With this affective-attitudinal component comes the sincerity and engagement with the thick concept (kindness; love of country). Yet all of these cases remain ones of failing to

[23] States of character, Goldie holds, should be distinguished from their associated emotional disposition: "[A] a state of character does not have a focus in the same way as an emotional disposition." A compassionate person, one with the character trait, "will be compassionate towards all sorts of things; his disposition does not have a particular focus. Whereas a person who is compassionate towards vagrants does have a focus, namely vagrants, and this person might not be disposed to express compassion towards other kinds of things." In such cases "we rightly withhold the attribution of a general character trait—a virtue or a vice—to that person."

expand our moral circle; they are cases where the agent has failed to avoid one of the many traps to self-cultivation.[24] Each such case invites detailed discussion of doxastic risk and responsibility. In ameliorative epistemologies, inductive risk management involves concerns with the real-life risks that our doxastic practices might harm others or their legitimate interests. An adequately risk aware social epistemology will engage examples of such biases with reasoned censure, yet also with commitment to educating for habits and skills of fluid rationality, and for the cooperative problem solving which such virtues empower.

To summarize and conclude this section, we have focused on Crerar's thesis that there is substantial asymmetry between virtue and vice attributions, and that this is especially so in respect to intellectual virtue and vice attributions. Crerar, like Cassam helps us to see a "disunity" to vice. On theses grounds he points out the greater scope of vice attributions, in part due to the many blind spots of reason, and how virtues tend to be attributed only with a certain breadth and robustness. In replying to Crerar's argument, we highlighted the importance of what Goldie terms "emotional dispositions," and the close connections between emotions and reflective judgment which "engage" with thick concepts. But at the same time, we have sought to avoid overgeneralizations about the role of emotions. We have agreed with Goldie that thick concepts are key tools for agents engaged in inquiry, and that engagement with them is often the agent's best chance at recognizing their own inconsistencies and failures. And for philosophers we have suggested that it is not a fundamental flaw of character epistemology that virtue and vice attributions tend to be asymmetrical, but that such asymmetries do demand our study, and that we properly distinguish the descriptive, explanatory, and normative issues that arise with these concepts and their use in evaluating agents and their actions. We need, more specifically, to better put the dispositional-occurrent attribution distinction to work! When we do, we will not be surprised that attributions of a local virtue may at the same time help identify and analyze an agent's blind-spots and associated moral or intellectual vices. This does not

[24] It is often better to think of agents who defect or act knavishly as ensnared by afflictive, in contrast to healthy emotions, and emotional processing, and their dysfunctional choices as indicative of weak emotional and intellectual development or self-cultivation. I do not find the language of self-cultivation, or expanding moral circle, associated with Asian virtue ethics, out of place. Indeed, in the first statement of enactive cognitive science, *Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience,* the authors Varela, Rosch and Thompson (1991) integrate a number of Buddhist themes. To these I add the usefulness of the distinction in Buddhist thought between Healthy and Afflictive Emotions.

negate the philosophical value of concepts of virtue and vice. It rather confirms Goldie's claim that thick evaluative concepts "not only help to explain the connection between depth of feelings and sincere judgements involving thick concepts; they also help to explain, in ways that no general account can aspire to do, our individual inconsistencies" (2008, 94).

4. Knavery and Contemporary Game Theory

Biological and cultural evolution share a Darwinian explanatory framework involving concepts of variation, selection, and reproduction/transmission. But they differ in many important respects, including that "cultural selection is subject to a whole range of 'biases' that have little or no analogue in biological evolution."[25] Biases and heuristics are studied by cognitive as well as social psychologists because, generally speaking, they are species wide. In this respect, psychology has been showing us with stronger and stronger evidence that, as Michele de Montaigne put it, "we are all of the common herd."[26] Culture shapes all of our virtues and vices, all of our skills and non-basic abilities or powers. Social epistemologists should be especially concerned with knowledge self-ascriptions in domains of controversial views (domains of politics, morals, religion, and philosophy), and this means studying the impact on judgment of traits which are classified in psychology as social biases. Whether expressed in some form of claimed superiority, or the right to dominance of a particular race, gender, nation-state, or religious sect, beliefs and attitudes associated with fundamentalisms or absolutisms invite examination as exhibiting us/them or other known group biases.

Cooperation, our best inheritance from nature, remains frightfully clustered into ingroups, where competition rather than cooperation is allowed to define the relationship to other groups. Enculturation is a wonderful thing, where an individual's values and personal identity are formed. But the moral emotions may never develop to appropriately expand our moral circle. In the Chinese classic, *The Great Learning*, we are born cloistered in upon ourselves

[25] From https://philevents.org/event/show/85906.

[26] Montaigne (Frame, 611; 429). We expect some effects of bias, because biases are sometimes just heuristics, that is, ecological shortcuts in how we come to make judgements. But biases affect the judgments of individuals by degrees, and because we are social creatures, individual bias cannot be conceived wholly independently of social bias.

but in order to cultivate our character must each overcome various recognizable "traps" or barriers to moral development. Sympathy, empathy, antipathy, and other moral emotions may not develop in people, or egocentric, ethnocentric, anthropocentric biases will take hold and become more pronounced marks of their character and their outlook on life, and their politics.

Virtue theory is centrally concerned with description of thick evaluative and characterological concepts. This is one way of incorporating psychological study of emotional and affective experiences into the ethics of knowledge. In connection with the social evolution of cooperation, let us introduce one vice which Hume gave name to, manifesting in a person with a disposition to prioritize or maximize short-term self-interest, and to devalue collective good, cooperation and long-term thinking.

> Political writers have established it as a maxim, that in contriving any system of government, and fixing the several checks and controls of the constitution, every man ought to be supposed a *knave*, and to have no other end, in all his actions, than private interest. By this interest we must govern him, and, by means of it, make him, notwithstanding his insatiable avarice and action, cooperate to public good.... It is, therefore, a just *political* maxim, *that every man must be supposed a knave*; though, at the same time, it appears somewhat strange, that a maxim should be true in *politics* which is false in *fact*.[27]

Hume's "knave" is no doubt an idealized agent as understood in what would become classical economics, raising issues which his colleague Adam Smith and others were writing on. But by juxtaposing this idealized reasoner with actual agents, Hume is utilizing both ideal and non-ideal theories. Acting always to maximize short-term self-interest can be made a rule, and the knave is a figure who is at least a self-consistent, and in this sense 'rational' agent. But Hume also provides fascinating insights into what is today known in Game theory as the problem of free-riders on cooperative systems. It is these connections between knavish actions and 'cheaters' on systems of trust which we will pursue.

Game theory studies how interdependent decision makers make choices. It models strategic behavior by agents who understand that their actions affect the actions of other agents. Game theory is also a tool in the study of the evolution of cooperation, where it draws attention to how individual and collective rationality often collide, leading to the prioritization of different aims and choices. In thought experiments like *Tragedy of the Commons*, *Prisoner's*

[27] David Hume (1963 [1741]), 40-42.

Dilemma, *Dictator Games,* and *Unscrupulous Diner Dilemma,* it is easy to see the tensions between personally wanting to "optimize" (maximize) a personal outcome, and willingness to "satisfice" (take less; compromise), reflecting acknowledgment of mutual dependence on others, and mutuality of interests. The tensions between different strategies in playing these games are oft-studied in psychology and in decision theory. Co-operative strategies in these games involve willingness to weigh long-term over short term rewards, and collective as well as personal wants or interests.

Humean knavery has instances in corporate actions, as well as in individuals. Instances and certainly patterns of corporate knavery we would hope are marked as criterion for exclusion or divestment by financial institutions responsive to growing investor demand for ESG (environmental; social; governance) investments. Yet much of the practical import of Hume's study is not backwards-looking blame or culpability, but forward-looking anticipation and planning: It is of vital importance for decision-making bodies to anticipate knavery in its many forms, in order to contain its ill-effects and to maintain the advantages of cooperative reasoning and satisficing rationality. Planning, Hume suggests, establishes effective constraints to discourage cheating and free riding on systems of trust, while effectively demonstrating the shared advantages of cooperation for public good. [28] It is vital to promote *satisficing* as key to sustainability and long-term planning, and win-win cooperative thinking, in contrast to satisfaction or profit maximization, and short-term thinking about one's own good.

Some authors have contested Garrett Hardin's argument that lack of a strong regulatory framework of management can be anticipated to lead to a Tragedy of the Commons with respect to our forests, fisheries and other natural resources. [29] There is a political debate, of course, between libertarian and communitarian thought, and Hume would need arguments to support public

[28] Trust and epistemic dependence go hand in hand. But trust is hard won, and often more easily damaged than constructed. The assessment of testimonial claims and sources of claims is anyway an area where our judgments are often parochial and deeply influenced by directional thinking and a range of cultural influences. Cooperation isn't all on the side of trust against distrust, since favoritism and in-group bias is not proper trust but rather *mistrust.* Mistrust carries negative valence stronger than distrust, which could be said just to be descriptive of the quality of a relationship.

[29] See Hardin (1968), Mark Van Vugt (2009) for an excellent article on anticipating and controlling knavish behaviors.

good as sufficient grounds to design institutions to curtail opportunities for knavish actions. But we arguably can find many instances of the clash which Hume draws attention to, the clash between individual and collective rationality in many places –even perhaps in the ethics of mask-wearing and vaccination-acceptance in an age of pandemic. Of course, attitudes people take on these matters often involves further assumptions about the proper balance between positive and negative rights, and it is often over these issues that people's choices get politicized. But the balances or trade-offs between claims on behalf of negative rights (sometimes called "liberty rights") and positive rights (sometimes called "welfare rights") are another topic that is pertinent to the ethics of knowledge, and studyable by social psychologists.[30]

In summary of this section, risk-aware social epistemologists draw critical attention to major obstacles to justice, and to social cooperation. Humean knavery and the harm produced by knavish actions, is one such obstacle, and one which Game theory has recently helped elucidate. Hume thought that policy makers should model and anticipate cooperation-undermining choices, and design institutional practices so that such behavior is discouraged, and public good is promoted. In the service of his ameliorative efforts, Hume's discussion of this cooperative vice of knavery recognizes and balances ideal and non-ideal theory, which in the next section we will see are instead too often juxtaposed as incompatible by scholars in their assumptions about human rationality/irrationality.[31]

[30] That others wear masks in public spaces during a pandemic will likely benefit me even if I opt out, since my risk of contracting a disease might be substantially lower than if more people all acted as I do. If I don't wear a mask, or get an available vaccination, then I raise the risk to others, including others who take such precautions either for their own sake, for the sake of those who they have a special relationship with, or simply for the sake of public health and respect for others. So, at least when those who don't comply with health guidelines base their decision to opt out largely on convenience to themselves, or an estimate of only their personal risk of disease contraction and without also weighing collective interest or public good, it is easy to see aspects of Game theory's free-rider or 'cheater' strategies behind their behavior.

[31] Co-responsibility for harms is a related concern, though I haven't space to do discuss it in detail. Many large-scale harms appear to fall into a category where contributors to the harm may have little in common apart from their causal involvement of that harm. Greenhouse effect, over-farming or over-fishing, etc., are oftentimes overdetermined by non-collective sets of acts, complicating attributions of responsibility. Bjorn Petersson (2013) notes that with such cases, "Disproportionality between size of causal contribution and intuitions about fair share of blame show that justifications of blame should be sensitive to a variety of factors besides causal

5. Epistemic Paternalism: Between Care and Control

I want to suggest that social epistemologists should also ask themselves when their view of human agency may issue from too skeptical a psychology, or eventuate not in meliorism but in an overt epistemic paternalism, where this implies that interferences to inquiry are justified without the knowledge or consent of those whose epistemic environment is engineered, or manipulated.

The ubiquity of human cognitive biases has been and remains a key motivating argument for interfering in their inquiry for their own epistemic good. One the one hand, caring and altruistic motivations seem to invite, or even to demand epistemically paternalistic interventions. EP's defenders locate it within ameliorative epistemology, and argue that intelligent interventions and choice architectures can in fact be a form of epistemic justice and legitimate caring. EP is justified when its specific applications, aims and methods respect persons as actual knowers, facilitate their epistemic capacities, and ameliorate epistemic injustices. On the other hand, the need for agents to develop skills and cultivate virtues of good inquiry and to become mature and self-reliant, might suggest that paternalistic interventions are as likely to thwart individual growth as they are to achieve positive effects.

Today we know that restricted access to information sometimes improves people's reasoning, and supports veritistic outcomes, as for instance in "blinded" scientific experiments and in judicial rules prohibiting the disclosure of a defendant's past criminal profile to a jury. Alvin Goldman introduced and defended epistemic paternalism (EP) early in social epistemology's emergence (1991; 1999), arguing that while these norms produce a kind of ignorance, they arose in recognition that it is good for scientists and jurors and sometimes others to be protected from their own biases – "their own 'folly'" (1991, 126). Humans often reason better with less information, and if so, there is sometimes *epistemic* value in ignorance. Defenders of EP argue that we cannot depend upon ourselves for self-improvement, and align their defense of it with the aims of ameliorative epistemology (Ahlstrom-Vij, 2014). So, both defenders and critics of EP have counted themselves as proponents of ameliorative epistemology. While epistemic paternalists argue that we cannot count upon ourselves for epistemic

involvement" (865). These complicating factors include intent, but also whether causal links between acts and effects were detectable by agents.

improvement, Goldman acknowledges that legitimate instances of EP must be qualified by such serious concerns the scope of control, the rights of citizens, and as the status and power of the controlling agent.

Injustices are sometimes facilitated through surplus of attributed credibility of testifiers, as well as through testimonial credibility deficit. So, an ethics of knowledge should consider when an undue skepticism about the robust efficacy of character-trait, or agent competence more generally, might become a hinderance to education for doxastic responsibility. When might interventions into epistemic practices be legitimate examples of the application of social intelligence (Deweyan social experimentation)? And when, instead, might such interventions or policies become so over-weaning that they produce or re-enforce the very conditions of citizen complacency and incompetence which these interventions ostensibly aim to correct?

As argued in a recent collection on the topic of epistemic paternalism (Bernal and Axtell, 2020) *care* and *control* are sometimes entangled in institutional policies, not unlike how they are entangled in parenting, or responsibility for others. A sound ethics of knowledge might support, on grounds of proper care, various educational or other 'nudgings' to redress epistemic injustices and conditions which promote radicalization and/or group polarization. Yet, as we witnessed with recent debate over the "content moderation policies" of social media firms like Facebook and Twitter, paternalistic interventions (through tagging or removal of immoderate content) often bring harsh responses as being inconsistent with principles of freedom of speech. While these policies have been a political football during the last U.S. election cycle, risk-aware social epistemologist can help make debates such as this more tractable. But to do so they must ask themselves when certain epistemic justice-seeking projects of ameliorative epistemology contribute to epistemic justice, and when they might instead become doubtfully epistocratic.

In summary, the issues of a vibrant ethics of knowledge should include questions of care and control, and the differences between a vertical or hierarchical conception of knowledge-systems, and a horizontal or democratized conception. The debate over justified epistemic paternalism is important if we hope to bring psychology, philosophy, and education together to do a better job of debiasing ourselves and others. Even understanding philosophical activity as involving "conceptual engineering and conceptual

ethics" involves some aspect of epistemic paternalism.[32] Attending to the social dimensions of the ethics of knowledge leads to examination not just of the justification, but also of the proper *limits* of epistemic paternalism. Attention to social dimensions of the ethics of knowledge is potentially transformational both for individual agents and for collectives. It provides stimulus for emotional, moral, and intellectual development of agents, and potentially also for reform of practices of collective deliberation and decision-making. Especially in its connections with institutional reforms and with justice, an ethics of knowledge must forget neither the importance of forethought and planning in choice architectures, nor the importance of the individuals' autonomy, or ability to self-cultivate and think for themselves rather than merely to be paternalistically steered toward veritistic goals. So, the present study agrees with Candiotto when she writes of the transformative potential for redesigning cognitive environments through the emergence of new and different abilities; but it argues that 'imposed' situation management and educational efforts aimed at growth of character and acquisitions of reasoning skills need to be balanced concerns. The final section will argue that this proper balance is exhibited by those who take a Meliorist position on human rationality, as pragmatists and virtue theorists typically have.

6. Skepticism, Meliorism, and Ecological Agency

Ecological rationality challenges expectations that human reasoners are rational or justified only meeting normative evidential standards derived independently of empirical and social psychology. It suggests that demands upon rationality be

[32] Critique and censure are paternalistic activities, in so far as their aim is to ameliorate something in the addressee – to tell them what they need to do, or to hear. Debate over epistemic paternalism is implied in what Herman Cappelen, David Plunkett & Alexis Burgess (2019, 1) refer to as "conceptual engineering and conceptual ethics": "Conceptual engineering and conceptual ethics are branches of philosophy concerned with questions about how to assess and ameliorate our representational devices (such as concepts and words). It's a part of philosophy concerned with questions about which concepts we should use (and why), how concepts can be improved, when concepts should be abandoned, and how proposals for amelioration can be implemented." And as Pollock (2019, 81) points out, projects of conceptual engineering "seek conceptual change in order to contribute to the dismantling of oppressive social structures, institutions, and systems of belief.... Many ameliorative projects aim at moral goods such as social equality. For example, the amelioration of the concept MARRIAGE forms part of efforts to achieve equal rights for the LGBT+ community."

perfectly feasible for agents, computationally speaking, and that norms of epistemic assessment, while still truth connected, not be 'free-floating' impositions. This split or schism Gigerenzer thinks has served to wrongly elevate logic and probability above heuristics; the result is "contrasting the pure and rational way people *should* reason with the dirty, irrational way people in fact *do* reason." This understanding of the norms of reasoning puts thinking and reasoning into tension; it *dichotomizes* them.

If we start from such maximizing expectations of what constitutes rationality it is easy to fall into skepticism about human rationality once biases and heuristics are revealed by experimentation. Gigerenzer holds this view as intellectualist and as failing to model agents in the actual world of pervasive uncertainty. Many of the issues we have already discussed are caught up in what psychologist Keith Stanovich aptly describes as the 'Great Rationality Debate.' It is a debate which has spanned the sciences, philosophy, and the humanities. As mentioned previously, situationist psychology emphasizes the ubiquity of human cognitive biases, and automaticity theorists, are describable as Skeptics. Skeptics express deep worries about human self-ignorance, and the implications it has for normative theories in ethics and epistemology.

Enculturation or upbringing or situational factors are often taken as so influential over our moral judgments that Skeptics and Panglossians come to hold different versions of what Moody-Adams calls the "Inability thesis," which broadly exculpates people from moral responsibility for their beliefs, attitudes, and actions. Here the flow of causality is one way: people are shaped by the cultural influences which came before, but somehow do not also re-shape their culture through their choices and the reasons they have for them. But for those Skeptics who become strong paternalists, moral or epistemic, the determinism under which they see us laboring is also an invitation for paternalistic interventions. Behavior can be improved and epistemic aims enhanced though intelligent design of choice architectures. But the determinism which informs the Skeptical stance tends to find issues of doxastic responsibility hollow, and favors situation management over, or even in place of character education.

Meliorism is the stance which dual-process theorists ascribe to, of course together with many others. Meliorists acknowledge the data of psychology, but remain optimistic that cognitive developmental approaches in psychology will continue to reveal intellectual aspects of moral judgment, and emotional aspects of epistemic inquiry. John Dewey is as another example, along with Mill mentioned earlier. Risk-aware social epistemology utilizes social and

cognitive psychology, and does not take ideal theories as most useful to its normative projects. Rejection of an over-broad Inability thesis re-opens critical reflection on cases of willed, or "affected ignorance." Moody-Adams defines affected ignorance as "a matter of choosing not to be informed of what we can and should know."[33] "Affected ignorance- choosing not to know what one can and should know- is a complex phenomenon, but sometimes it simply involves refusing to consider whether some practice in which one participates might be wrong" (767).

Neither Skeptics nor Panglossian seem to understand the maxim, "We live forward!" This seemingly simple theme of pragmatist thought actually brings with it a temporal and embodied conception of agency, where some of its closest connections with virtue theory are to be found. Deweyan/Addams Meliorism and its associated educational experimentalism are realistic as to the frailties of the human condition. But they respect and highlight active student participation in learning and the role of the imagination in effective learning. Deweyan "experimentalism," as one expression of a melioristic approach, is optimistic and committed to educational innovations. It emphasizes that much of what we learn in inquiry, is how better to conduct it. We must start from where we are, and learn how to learn; we start with problems of practice, and recognize ourselves as approaching these problems with uncertain or incomplete information, varying explanatory goals and methods, etc.

Dual-Process theorists (hereafter DPT) such as Stanovich also support a modest "Meliorist"[34] stance in the Great Rationality Debate): "Researchers working in the heuristics and biases tradition tend to be so-called Meliorists.... A Meliorist is one who feels that education and the provision of information could help make people more rational – could help them more efficiently further their goals and to bring their beliefs more in line with the actual state of the world."[35] Meliorism as Stanovich and his co-authors develop it, contrasts with overtly Skeptical automaticity, 'vicious mind' (Olin & Doris) or situationist (Alfano) views on the one hand, and frailty-ignoring Apologist/Panglossian views on the other. DPT shows that by our nature we tend to conserve the more

[33] Moody-Adams, 768. As she writes, "One of the most influential philosophical views about cultural impediments to responsibility involves the claim that sometimes one's upbringing in a culture simply renders one unable to know that certain actions are wrong" (764).
[34] See especially Stanovich, West, and Toplak (2008) and (2012).
[35] Stanovich 2012, 347.

taxing cognitive effort that comes with engagement of hypothetical reasoning and memory-intensive thinking. We are all energy economizers and want to fit strategies to problems ecologically when we can, rather than doing all the 'expensive' reasoning of ideal inquirers *qua* unbounded reasoners.[36] But DPT remains optimistic that cognitive developmental approaches in psychology will continue to reveal intellectual aspects of moral judgment, and emotional aspects of epistemic inquiry.

Part of the reason for their cautioned optimism is their confirmation through numerous studies that "the intelligence of the new mind is quite variable across individuals" (Evans, 2010, 209). These differences are largely located not IQ, but in habituation to what Stanovich et. al. refer to as "rational thinking dispositions," and unlike the situationists they reaffirms "individual differences as essential components of heuristics and biases research" (Stanovich, 2011). Skeptics find us predictably irrational, but Stanovich like many others perform studies showing the piecemeal improvability of human reasoners and how DPT helps explain it.[37] We would see this if we stopped dichotomizing between logic and psychology and instead emphasized the relative independence of thinking biases and cognitive ability (Stanovich and West, 2008). "What has been ignored in the Great Rationality Debate is individual differences."

Meliorists see empirical evidence for competence-performance differences as being ignored not only in the dour attitude which influence of Skeptics take towards human rationality, but also in rosy attitudes which Panglossians and Apologists take. Social epistemologists, we have argued, need to reflect upon the philosophical implications of ecological rationality. They

[36] See also David Matheson (2006). The standard view in the cognitive sciences is associated with unbounded rationality. Criticizing ideal theories as much in psychology as philosophy, Gigerenzer objects that ″Mortal beings figuring out how to act in the world are routinely modeled as if they have unlimited computational power, possess complete information about their situation, and compute the optimal plan of action to take″ (2012, 497). In yet another reference to the ill-effects of the fact/value dichotomy, Gigerenzer blames the institutionalized division of labor between principles based upon the ″is″ and ″ought″ division: ″Until recently, the study of cognitive heuristics has been seen as a solely descriptive enterprise, explaining how people actually make decisions. The study of logic and probability, by contrast, has been seen as answering the normative question of how one should make decisions″ (496).

[37] Stanovich 2012, 359. Nancy Snow relatedly responds to situationism by conceding that virtues "might start out by being local," while explaining why "they need not remain so" (2009, 37).

relatedly would benefit from paying more attention to the distinction, well-recognized in the psychological sciences, between thinking and reasoning (also Manktelow 2012; Elqayam and Over 2013). Criteria of censure reflect things like an agent or group relying upon a specific strategy of inquiry and inference which is not ecologically sound. This often occurs when agents fail to exhibit Type or System 2 mental processing when their context of inquiry is one in which our default type of system 1 processing is usually ineffective, or when affective processing is ineffective. Overconfidence is often describable psychologically in the language of *miscalibration.* This is closely connected with acting presumptively, and making "risky decisions."[38]

More positively, social epistemologists could tie the normative upshot of their work habituation to the "critical reasoning dispositions of fluid rationality" which Stanovich and other leading cognitive scientists describe. They could offer thicker descriptions of these virtuous thinking habits, and integrate them into the strengthened educational tools of the 'new critical thinking' which takes account of ecological rationality (Thagard 2011; Facione and Gittens 2016; Lyons and Ward 2017).[39] More specifically, the relationship between virtue ascriptions and vice ascriptions, as used both by agents themselves and by philosophers in assessment guidance, needs to be constantly re-conceived.[40]

[38] There are many effects of knowledge miscalibration (i.e., a found or hypothesized inaccuracy in subjective knowledge relative to objective knowledge) which scientists have investigated, ranging from consumer purchase decisions and consumption patterns to affects in domains of controversial views. The evaluation of evidence that is unknown or missing has enormous effects on overconfidence; recognition or neglect of unknowns is shown to be an important determinant of judged confidence (Razmdoost et. el., 2015).

[39] More educators of critical thinking are accepting that we need to teach to biases and 'mind-traps,' and not just informal and formal fallacies. Education for virtuous intellectual habits and skills needs to acknowledge Paul Thagard's point that philosophers should not expect thinking to be like formal argumentation, and that deductive inferential abilities are not the standard against human judgment in the wild should be measured: "From the perspective of research in psychology and neuroscience, human inference is a process that is multimodal, parallel, and often emotional, which makes it unlike the linguistic, serial, and narrowly cognitive structure of rationality" (2011, 152).

[40] This relationship has been thought of in terms of differences between ethics and epistemology, and sometimes between virtue reliabilists and responsibilists, or even virtue epistemologists and vice epistemologists. But these distinctions are far less prescient, and while epistemological tasks of assessing and providing guidance are themselves to be distinguished, both are best approached in psychological awareness of the relative independence of thinking biases and a person's cognitive ability (Stanovich et. al.).

While the debate over legitimate epistemic paternalism will continue to evolve, self-described Meliorists such as Gigerenzer have been cautious of paternalism, and rightly critical of justifications of it which presuppose Skepticism about character development or educational resources: "The claim that we are hardly educable lacks evidence and forecloses the true alternative to nudging: teaching people to become risk savvy" (2015, 361). Meliorists understand themselves as caring about the agents intrinsically, and as enabling greater epistemic justice through both education and design of institutions and choice-architectures. They take evidence from the social sciences and humanities to provide an empirical foundation for ameliorative projects in philosophy and education, even if innovations of this sort are always experimental. Education accounts for a good deal of the competence-performance differences people show, on tasks which require higher-order reasoning abilities. Virtue theorists are part of this movement, and indeed some of the philosophers most associated with the 'turn' to thick description of particular virtues and vices have taken this as illuminating the effects of our ecological, or even dual-process mode of cognition on moral psychology and philosophy. FitzGerald and Goldie (2012) therefore include this complementarity of the findings of contemporary cognitive science as one of the main "positive reasons for recommending the use of thick concepts when researching moral psychology." The three main positive reasons for the centrality of thick concepts moral psychology and philosophy are: a) that their study is fruitful in "opening up the moral/non-moral distinction"; b) that "thick concepts [operate at] the intersection of emotional response and moral judgment"; and c) that "thick concepts and their relation to emotion will throw light on the manner of interaction between the two systems in dual process thinking."[41]

In summary, it has been argued (starting from the sides of the 'Great Rationality Debate' as Keith Stanovich describes it) that our ethics of knowledge should be neither unhelpfully Skeptical nor self-servingly Panglossian / Apologetic. It should be Melioristic in its motivations and aims, and respectful of agency in the means it adopts. It should be steadfastly optimistic about efforts to ameliorate the human condition through cooperation, but realistic about

[41] FitzGerald and Goldie, 2012, 231-232. For more on education and "thick" epistemology, see Kotzee 2011.

human thinkers in light of psychology, and resigned that for philosophy to mediate between worldviews, it must produce a critique of prejudices.

In the form of inquiry-focused epistemology, this melioristic effort I have tried to show, supplies specific tools for the critique of prejudice to develop and put to work. Thick evaluative and characterological concepts are some of the best of these tools. To encourage the evolution of social cooperation, and to be less blind to our own bias blind spots, we need 'new virtues' which habituate us to doxastic responsibility, and lead us to sensitive awareness of testimonial and hermeneutic injustices. Epistemologists need to be "risk aware" on several fronts, including that of their own efforts at amelioration; they need to be able to convey the importance of doxastic responsibility though educational tools which draw attention to agents employing strategies of inquiry and inference which ill-fit their subject matter, and to the epistemic injustices which reliance upon these ill-fitted strategies so often sustain.

To conclude, if metacognitive abilities and emotion are ultimately inseparable as enactivists hold, then social epistemology should put the thought-reason distinction to work in their ameliorative projects. As part of this, it has been argued that they need to be moral and epistemological 'thickies,' but also make good use of the distinction between dispositional and occurrent belief in philosophy of mind. They need to put this distinction to work, in order not to conflate projects of assessment and guidance. Navigating flawed thinking and effective skill-building, especially with uncertain or ambiguous evidence, or contested beliefs and ideologies, is a communal project for psychologists and philosophers. When taken on board by philosophers it ensures that normative epistemology and psychology will not proceed as separate cultures.[42]

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[42] The work of Adam Morton also helps bridge this divide; Morton (2012) recognizes the varied role of "N-theories" and how they can help with normative assessments, but also their limitations especially with respect to guidance, and their blindness with respect to the roles of emotion and imagination (2013).

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