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Generous Virtues

Rethinking the Value of Intellectual Virtues in Social Terms

The classical Virtue Epistemology, one of the most interesting contributions of late 20th century American philosophy, proposed to analyze knowledge and epistemic evaluation in general in terms of intellectual virtues. In this approach, these virtues were understood as faculties or personal traits that contribute to the production of knowledge and other epistemic goods. However, the value of some plausible candidates for intellectual virtues, which can be called "generous virtues," cannot be explained in those terms. This paper proposes a novel account of the general value of intellectual virtues that includes other-regarding ones. To that end, it considers three strategies of socialization of Virtue Epistemology, and proposes original solution: Epistemic Social Environmentalism.

Keywords: virtue epistemology, social epistemology, generosity, intellectual virtues, epistemic value, responsibilism, reliabilism, epistemic environment

1. Introductory Remarks

Classical Anglo-American epistemology has focused on the analysis of knowledge as the highest epistemic good, examining the necessary conditions for a given belief to be considered knowledge. This task was only invigorated in 1963 by Edmund Gettier's famous paper, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" which questioned the classical account of knowledge as justified true belief. In the following decades, a whole generation of American epistemologists took up the challenge, as intriguing as it seems hopeless, of improving the classical account of knowledge so that, on the one hand, it corresponded to shared intuitions on which tokens of beliefs should be properly recognized as knowledge, and, on the other one, be resistant to counter-examples. The apparent inconclusiveness of these debates, along with the crisis of classical empiricist paradigm in epistemology have led some to announce the death of epistemology and propose replacing it with empirical science (cognitive science, in particular) (Goldman; Papineau; Kim; Fraassen; Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding"). More moderate ones, such as the British philosopher Timothy Williamson, argued that knowledge is a primary concept and should not be further analyzed (Williamson), giving rise to Knowledge-First movement (Carter et al.; Littlejohn; Simion).

Among the variety of constructive responses to this crisis, one of the most interesting and fruitful has been Virtue Epistemology, proposed in the 1980s and 1990s and developed by American philosophers such as Ernest Sosa ("Knowledge and Intellectual Virtue"; *A Virtue Epistemology…*; *Reflective Knowledge*; *Epistemic Explanations…*), Lorraine Code ("Toward a 'Responsibilist' Epistemology"; *Epistemic Responsibility*), James A. Montmarquet (*Epistemic Virtue…*), John Greco ("Virtues and Vices…"; "Knowledge as Credit…"; *Achieving Knowledge…*; *The Transmission of Knowledge*), and Linda Zagzebski (*Virtues of the Mind…*; "From Reliabilism…"), to name the most prominent founding figures of the movement.

Even if for some of them the Gettier problem was not the main motivation for their account (for example, Zagzebski), Virtue Epistemology has offered an attractive theory of knowledge that extends far beyond the initial questions. In general, for belief p to be knowledge, it must be produced by an act of intellectual virtue.[1] Correspondingly, the value of intellectual virtue would plausibly be explained in terms of the production of knowledge (and other epistemic goods, to make space for a broader epistemological perspective). To be more precise, a faculty or trait of character v is a virtue of an agent S provided it contributes to the acquisition of knowledge by S, or alternatively, provided that it contributes to the production of epistemic goods for S.

However, there seem to be intellectual virtues that cannot be explained in these terms. An interesting subset of these are the virtues of intellectual generosity. By this, I mean those plausible candidates for intellectual virtues that are indeed other--regarding. They do not contribute to the agent's good (at least directly), but it seems that we would still want to recognize them as (i) virtues, and – moreover – (ii) intellectual ones (Roberts and Wood 286-304).

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[1]   In fact, this is a very simplified picture, and most virtue epistemologists would have much more to say about the connection between knowledge and virtue. For the present purposes, we can confine ourselves to it here.

The point of departure for the present paper is the question of how to make sense of our intuitions about the value of generous intellectual virtues. I shall seek an expanded model of intellectual virtue that includes generous virtues. However, if the project starts here, its ambition is broader. Some themes in Roberts and Wood, and Baehr, the development of vice epistemology (Kidd et al.), and the emergence of social epistemology all suggest a need for a broader, social account of the value and purpose of the intellectual virtues in general. Thus, I shall further examine how to socialize virtue epistemology. Finally, I shall ask how a new account of the nature of intellectual virtues translates into the value question for the intellectual virtues (especially generous ones).

To this end, I shall discuss and evaluate three strategies of socializing virtue epistemology. In Section 2, I start with Particularism, which distinguishes a subset of intellectual virtues whose value derives from their contribution to the social knowledge structures, rather than directly from an individual's success (Kawall). In Section 3, I construct a more general model that makes sense of the social value of all the intellectual virtues, yet in transitional terms. Finally, in Section 4, I study two proposals for a robust social virtue epistemology that allow for the social value of intellectual virtues not to be merely built upon basic personal epistemic value, but to stem from the profoundly social character of the knowledge. The first, teleological approach, has been suggested by Baehr, and the second one is my own.

Before going into the details of the three main strategies (with their variants), a few general remarks should be made explicit. First, what is common to all of them is the recognition of the social character of knowledge, but the nature and scope of this socialization will differ. At the ground level, it is just recognized that knowledge (and other epistemic goods) can be shared and thus contribute to the common welfare. However, socialization may involve the very process of knowing (optionally or essentially), and thus at the more advanced stages knowledge will be social because of the social character of its acquisition, maintenance, and transmission (=AMT). Second, the differences between the strategies also concern two levels: (a) the scope of the socialization of intellectual virtues (particular vs. universal), and (b) direct vs. indirect contribution to social goods. In the first approximation, the aforementioned strategies can be presented in the following scheme.

Third, in examining the constitution of the value of intellectual virtues, I shall encounter two possible transitions that have to be strictly distinguished: (a) epistemic to moral (value, good, etc.), and (b) personal to social (value, good, etc.). Keeping these distinctions conceptually separate will be essential for Sections 3 and 4. Forth, what should probably be stated from the very beginning, I must clarify what is meant by "social." Recently, Alfano et al. have proposed a 12-way taxonomy of social-epistemological virtues (doubled by a parallel taxonomy for vices). To simplify, one way to treat a virtue as social is by referencing its subject (bearer). In that sense, social intellectual virtues would be just group virtues, such as solidarity (Battaly). Alternatively, an intellectual virtue could be social because of its object, that is, knowledge about social matters, as illustrated by social intelligence (Braaten). In what follows, I do not use "social" in either way. What makes a virtue social is the character of the goodness to which it contributes. In other words, a virtue is social (or has a social dimension) if it contributes to social goodness (minimally, it is not purely self-regarding) and consequently inherits a social value.
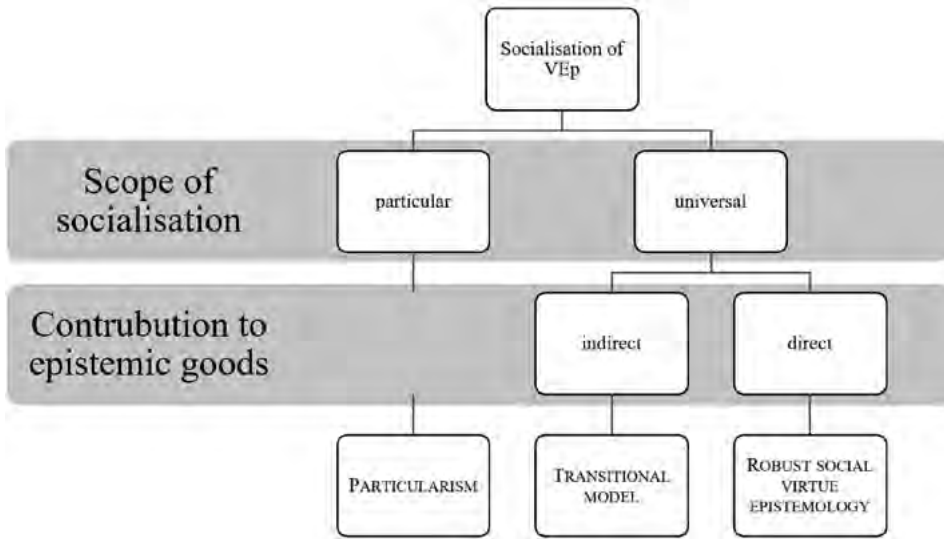
2. Particularism

The first strategy is the most modest one. It recognizes that there is a subset of intellectual virtues whose value relates to social structures of knowledge, rather than stems from their contribution to an individual's epistemic success (Kawall). Its ambition is not to socialize intellectual virtues in general, but to make sense of the value of the virtues that cannot be explained in egocentric terms (be it reliabilist or responsibilist). Some illustrations of these generous virtues have been proposed in Roberts and Wood.[2] In turn, Kawall (258-260) enumerates their three potential subtypes: (i) particular virtues: honesty, sincerity, integrity; (ii) duties to develop the skills of a good teacher; (iii) duties to develop the skills of a good listener.[3] Thus, the scope of the socialization is limited to a subset of intellectual virtues. By definition, these virtues contribute to the social good directly (they are other-regarding). What needs an explanation is in what sense they can be recognized as intellectual virtues. Theoretically, one could say (as has been proposed by various scholars, see below) that since generosity in general is a moral virtue, its species – intellectual generosity (and

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[2]   Linus Pauling and Rosalind Franklin, for example, unlike James Watson and Francis Crick (who are portrayed as villains in Roberts' and Wood's story), were much more concerned with solving the riddle of DNA than getting credit for it. Even more remarkably, Barbara McClintock, a notable geneticist, was generous in giving new students the best and most promising problem she had, thus tutoring them in making groundbreaking discoveries that would establish their career.

[3]   This catalogue is ontologically confused, but I quote Kawall's account as it stands for the sake of illustration. It seems to me that it would not be difficult to put it in order by making virtues their elements. In consequence, (ii) and (iii) would include the virtues of a good teacher and listener, respectively, and possibly some meta-virtues that aim at their formation. More on these last categories can be found in Byerly.

any other virtue that would originate from it) – is still a moral virtue, but applied in the domain of cognition. It would be just like the case of human resource policy at the Department of Philosophy, which should be properly understood as an application of general rules of human resource policy within one of the departments, rather than a part of philosophy. My current goal is to argue that it is, in fact, possible to explain the value of intellectual generosity (and affiliated virtues) in epistemic terms. This would require reviewing the account of the value of intellectual virtues.

Let us start with virtue responsibilism. For Zagzebski, the very demarcating line between moral and intellectual virtues corresponds with self- and other-regardingness:

> Since the primary aim of the motivation to know is to possess something for oneself and only indirectly for others, its contribution to the flourishing of its possessor is straightforward, even if there are exceptions, as already noted. In the case of the other-regarding moral virtues, their place in the flourishing life is not credible without a more extensive story. (*Virtues of the Mind…* 201)

On the intellectual virtue side, this is primarily because of the very understanding of the nature of the virtues and the link between their function and the production of knowledge. The very context for the introduction of virtue epistemology was the construction of a definition of the agent's knowledge. A virtue is supposed to be a warrant that a (true) belief produced by its exercise (by a given agent S) is indeed knowledge and not, for example, an undeserving guess. It was originally linked also to the intuition that knowledge is a term of honor or achievement, and therefore involves merit on the part of an agent (Zagzebski, "The Search for…" 24-25; Greco, *Achieving Knowledge…* 97-98). The virtue of an agent as the source and explanation of success answers the question of what makes us honor the knower. As a consequence, the value of intellectual virtue has originally been linked to the acquisition of knowledge. This is captured by what could be considered as reliabilist account of the value of intellectual virtues:

> VALUEREL: The value of an intellectual virtue v possessed by S stems from the fact the v contributes to AMT of epistemic goods <u>for S</u>.

This is shared by reliabilism and Zagzebskian responsibilism. However, Zagzebski – who strongly bases her Virtue Epistemology on an analogy between intellectual and moral virtues – goes further. She eventually relates the value of virtues to the human flourishing of their possessors. Taken holistically, human beings realize themselves on various levels, one of which is the epistemic level. Expanding on the Aristotelian motto "All men by nature desire to know," Zagzebski argues that part of human flourishing is what we might call epistemic flourishing. The fully fulfilled agent achieves this by developing and practicing the intellectual virtues. Intellectual virtues, both through the production of epistemic goods, which fulfill natural human desires, and through the enhancement of humanity, ultimately contribute to human flourishing and the life of *eudaimonia*.[4] Therefore, it is in terms of this flourishing that their value is ultimately explained:

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4   Actually, Zagzebski considers two possible approaches: happiness-based and motivation-based (*Virtues of the Mind…* 197-211). The first one is more substantial, the second

VALUERESP: The value of an intellectual virtue *v* possessed by S stems from its <u>contribution to</u> the S's life of *eudaimonia*.

This poses a certain challenge for the epistemic value of intellectual other-regarding virtues. For Zagzebski, they surely contribute to human flourishing and life of *eudaimonia*, but *qua* moral virtues. How can we explain their epistemic import to this life, given that knowledge production seems to be self-regarding action: the one who possesses an intellectual virtue is the same one who gains knowledge through it? (If she did not gain knowledge through *v*, *v* could not be considered an intellectual virtue. It could be some other species of virtue, a neutral trait of character, or even an intellectual vice.)

This challenge can be addressed if one departs from the traditional, individual-centered understanding of epistemology (and knowledge) and adopts a more social stand on knowledge. Of course, this socialization (as I shall show later) can be more or less robust. Initially, one can start with the most modest approach. It is sufficient to recognize that at least some knowledge is gained through testimony and collaboration is a reliable strategy of knowledge AMT. This is how the proposal of Kawall can be read:

> Embracing other-regarding epistemic virtues would allow us to bridge our goals of accumulating knowledge for ourselves, <u>and sharing knowledge with others being an honest, clear testifier would be seen as part of our epistemic flourishing</u> in the same way as being patient, or open-minded in forming our own beliefs. (Kawall 269)

The idea is as simple as this: There are different ways to improve one's epistemic standing (through the acquisition of knowledge and other epistemic goods). One way is to do it oneself. However, given one's limitations and the abundance of data to process, it is wise to do it through a division of epistemic labor. In order for others to do their part of the job, one should share their epistemic goods first. In that way, generosity (as a virtue connected to epistemic sharing) ultimately improves one's own epistemic position. Thanks to membership in an inquiring community, others-regarding intellectual virtues are revealed to be derivatively self-regarding as well.

This possibility will be further analyzed in Section 4. For the sake of the argument, at this moment, I can propose the possibly weakest account of intellectual virtues that could embrace both self-regarding and other-regarding virtues, without making any stronger claims about the social character of the knowledge. All that is needed is to generalize VALUERESP so that it also covers other-regarding intellectual virtues, applying something along the Kantian rule of generalization:

> **VALUERESP'**: The value of an intellectual virtue *v* possessed by S stems from its contribution to the life of *eudaimonia* of <u>a person (be it S or S')</u>, where S and S' belong to the same epistemic community.

In that way, it is said that a virtue is blind in the sense that it aims at the epistemic goodness regardless of its beneficiary. Sometimes (and maybe in most cases) its possessor is the beneficiary, but this is not always the case.

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one functional. She eventually prefers the latter one, because of controversies about and lack of good theoretical concept of *eudaimonia*. However, since then a considerable work has been done in clarifying this concept (to name just Russell), and the suggested conceptual gap is no longer an issue that would speak against the happiness-based approach.

Analogically, a reliabilist version of this strategy can be proposed as follows:

VALUEREL′: The value of an intellectual virtue v possessed by S stems from the fact that v contributes to AMT of epistemic goods <u>for a person (be it S or S′)</u>, where S and S′ belong to the same epistemic community.

Note here that reliabilism is more prone to socialization since the value of virtue is not agent-related, but object-related. An intellectual virtue is valuable for its contribution to epistemic goods and only secondary to the welfare of their possessors.

To sum up, the first strategy is very modest. It simply proposes to generalize the account of the value of intellectual virtues so that it leaves aside the direct beneficiary of epistemic goods and epistemic welfare. Contrary to the initial prejudice illustrated by Zagzebski, it is possible to include in the list of intellectual virtues the generous virtues that will be at the same time rightfully recognized as valuable intellectual virtues, and directly other-regarding virtues. For the moment, it is only a question of a subset of virtues, but, as it has been suggested, this already opens the way to a more robust social virtue epistemology, although a few more steps need to be taken first.

3. Transitional Model

The preceding model was quite simple, if not simplistic. However, it is a good starting point to ask whether there are only some socially oriented intellectual virtues or if we could develop this account so as to attribute social value to every intellectual virtue. In order to give a proper answer, the distinction of self-regarding and other-regarding virtues should first be clarified. Then, I shall propose the transitional model for the socialization of intellectual virtues.

Interestingly, in moral literature, it is recognized that the border between self-regarding and other-regarding virtues is not strict, but it is more a question of emphasis (Oliveira de Sousa 322). However, it is not uncontroversial whether this applies to intellectual virtues as well. For example, while examining a possible demarcation between intellectual and moral virtues, Baehr considers self-orientation as a distinctive feature of intellectual virtues, in line with what seems to be suggested by Zagzebski as well:

we should think of intellectual virtues, not merely as epistemically oriented in the relevant sense, <u>but also as strictly *self-oriented* or *egoistic*</u>, that is, as aiming strictly and necessarily at their possessor's own acquisition of knowledge, understanding, or the like (Baehr 215-216)

This is an opinion expressed by Driver:

Moral virtues produce benefits to others – in particular, they promote the well-being of others – while the intellectual virtues produce epistemic good for the agent (381)

Baehr ultimately refutes this option. However, he adopts the opposite condition to characterize moral virtues instead. Thus, even if intellectual virtues do not have to be self-regarding, other-regardingness appears to be a proper and exclusive feature of moral virtues. This has implications for his study of the relation between both

types of virtues. If other-regarding virtues are moral virtues, then were intellectual virtues also other-oriented, they would be a subset of moral virtues:

> They are [a subset of moral virtues] in the sense that all intellectual virtues apparently can, as such, be oriented towards the (epistemic) well-being of others. (Baehr 218)

For the sake of the present argument, I will leave open the question whether the distinction between moral and intellectual virtues, on the one hand, and between other-regarding and self-regarding virtues, on the other, goes like this. I take Baehr's considerations as an inspiration for how intellectual virtues could be socialized thanks to an additional transition: between intellectual and moral values. Let us call the present model "Transitional Model." In brief, it can be formulated as follows:

> TRANSITIONAL MODEL: Intellectual virtues (a) contribute to the value of the person (b) in the cognitive domain and (c) this has implications for the overall intellectual well-being of the person (instantiated in epistemic goods) and, more broadly, (d) of the community to which the person belongs.

The present approach makes sense of the social value of intellectual virtues thanks to a double transition. First, the value of intellectual virtues (b) is explained in responsibilist terms of human flourishing (a). Intellectual virtues contribute to the welfare of their possessor (c) and thus the epistemic value translates into a more general personal value (transition from epistemic to moral). At this stage, the value is framed in pure individualist terms. Next, the personal good of a member of a community translates into the social good (d) by its contribution to the welfare of the aforementioned community.[5]

Let us see how this reshapes the notion of the value of intellectual virtues. I propose to start with Baehr's account of this (personal) value:

> A character trait T is an intellectual virtue just in case T contributes to its possessor's personal intellectual worth (on account of its involving a positive psychological orientation towards epistemic goods). (102)

Accordingly, the proposed socialization would proceed as follows:

VALUEPERS: The value of an intellectual virtue v stems from its contribution to the possessor's personal epistemic worth.

P1: Personal epistemic worth co-constitutes personal worth.

VALUEPERS': If a character trait v is an intellectual virtue, v contributes to the possessor's personal worth. [epistemic → moral]

P2: If S is a member of community C, then their personal worth contributes to the community's worth.

VALUEPERS'': If a character trait v of S is an intellectual virtue, then v contributes to the worth of community C whose member S is. [individual → social]

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[5]   This is still a very general model, as more needs to be said about the conditions for that double transformation to take effect, especially the second one.

In that way, we have a transition from epistemic value to social value. If a trait is an intellectual virtue, it has value by virtue of contributing to the overall social goodness. Let us make this symmetrical to the definitions of values of intellectual virtues from Section 2 above:

ᴠᴀʟᴜᴇTʀᴀɴs: The value of an intellectual virtue v possessed by S stems from the fact that v contributes to the worth of community C whose member S is.

It is still quite a simplistic model of the relation between the individual and the social. Here, society is just a set of its members. Hence, it is a static model where the particular goods and values are merely summed up. In that sense, it does not do justice to social interactions within a community and possible conflicts of interest. Correspondingly, it seems vulnerable to criticism of non-ideal epistemology. It is "angelic" in ignoring both epistemic vices and the possible (social) corruption of otherwise reliable virtues. In this respect, it cannot do justice to the whole subject of epistemic injustice.

In what follows, I do not intend to reply to this criticism or to develop the model further. If I present it in this form, it is more in order to illustrate consecutive stages and scopes of the socialization of intellectual virtues. The first, particularistic model has shown how a minimal modification of the received account of the value of intellectual virtues can already appropriate the generous virtues. It was, however, simplistic and offered no explanation of how the social impact of a virtue contributes to the goodness of its possessor. The present model takes the opposite direction and explains in the simplest terms how personal goodness constituted by an intellectual virtue may be translated into social terms. It has not yet offered any explanation in its own terms of how generous virtues can contribute to personal worth. This could be easily remedied by either complementing the second model with the first one or – more appropriately – by arguing that in the present model the value of the virtue is always and fundamentally social. In the case of the generous virtues, this social value is straightforward, in the case of the other virtues, it is indirect, following ᴠᴀʟᴜᴇTʀᴀɴs. In a way, it echoes the reflection of Russell on the apparent conflict between the alleged egocentrism of eudaimonism and other--regarding constraints of ethics: "… some of the most rewarding ends that humans can have for the sake of their eudaimonia are ends of caring about others for their own sake". (26)[6]

To sum up, the present model, while far from perfect, already permits us to make sense of the social value of any intellectual virtue (in this respect, intellectual virtues are not different from moral virtues). In Baehr's words, "it is important that we not conceive of intellectual virtues as necessarily directed at their possessor's own epistemic well-being" (111). Indeed, intellectual virtues are also directed at the epistemic flourishing of others. Thus, the scope of socialization is universal, yet it is still a very modest socialization. It is modest because the very account of the social dimension of knowledge is a modest (minimalist) one, and, in fact, the very notion of society is strikingly simplistic. It appears to be just a sum of individuals. In that sense, it

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[6] Russell replies to an argument originally formulated by Hampton (157), based on the cases of a housewife and mother apparently self-sacrificing her happiness for the sake of her family.

is a kind of utilitarian notion of society, and correspondingly of social goodness. The normatively appraisable society will be the one where the majority of individuals are self-satisfied. Definitely, there is no further account of the dynamics within society and interrelations within it. Interestingly, this model can be seen as a counterpart of an early, modest social epistemology, that is, the one where testimonial knowledge was permitted, but the social character was not a general feature of knowledge. Consequently, the following strategy will have to adopt a more robust social epistemology where knowledge is essentially acquired, maintained, and transmitted through socially distributed interactions.

4. Robust Social Virtue Epistemology

In this final section, I propose to take one step further in the socialization of intellectual virtues and explore how the notion of intellectual virtues would change if we adopt a more robust social epistemology. Here, I take it for granted that knowledge is fundamentally social from the very beginning: it is created through cooperation within the division of epistemic labor, and success-oriented virtues can only be defined in social terms (Green; Goldberg, "The Division…"; *To the Best of Our Knowledge…*).

The Transitional Model proposed an account of the social value of intellectual virtues *via* moral values. Each intellectual virtue received a social value due to the fact that its contribution to individual human value gained a moral value, which was further inherited by the corresponding community. Moreover, at least some intellectual virtues contributed directly to the flourishing or well-being of others, but it was still because they were at the same time moral virtues. Thus, in a way, social values were considered as a subset of moral values. This was definitely in line with Baehr's solution to the demarcation problem between moral and intellectual virtues in terms of other-regarding and self-regarding virtues. In the present section, I do not intend to address this demarcation problem. In fact, I do not want to propose any strong thesis about the relation between moral values on the one side and social and epistemic values on the other. The task is different. It is the question of how to give an account of the value of intellectual virtues in (1) social and (2) purely epistemic terms. The second *desideratum* is that the account should include both responsibilist and reliabilist intellectual virtues. To achieve this, I shall explore two approaches: the teleological approach, and epistemic social environmentalism.

4.1. Teleological Account

One way to accomplish the task has already been suggested by Baehr (210) in his attempt to address the demarcation problem. He proposed that both groups could be defined in terms of their ultimate aims and goals (a teleological account). Consequently, we get a general teleological account of intellectual virtues:

> **(IntVTeol)** Intellectual virtues are personal qualities aimed at distinctively epistemic ends.

With that general definition, I can propose an account of individual value and then extend it to generous virtues (echoing Particularism):

VALUETEL: The value of an intellectual virtue v possessed by S stems from realizing (contributing to) AMT of epistemic goods by S.

VALUETEL': The value of an intellectual virtue v possessed by S stems from realizing (contributing to) AMT of epistemic goods by a person (be it S or S').

Therefore, just like in the case of Particularism, the value of virtue is independent of the beneficiary of the goods to which it contributes. These goods are valuable no matter who their beneficiary is, and, correspondingly, the value of a virtue is inherited from their goodness. In that sense, the value of virtue is supra-personal. Remark that at this stage, we are at the same point as Particularism. It is formally the same account of virtue but connected with a different definition of intellectual virtue. Proper socialization still has to take place. Here is how it can be done:

P1: If an epistemic good G possessed by S, who is a member of community C, is made available in the network of knowledge of the C, then G is a part of the aforementioned network of knowledge.

P2: Each epistemic good belonging to the network of knowledge contributes to the goodness of the network of knowledge.

VALUETEL'': The value of an intellectual virtue v possessed by S – a member of community C – stems from realizing (contributing to) AMT of epistemic goods that constitute the goodness of the network of knowledge of C.

The teleological account echoes the Transitional Model in explaining the social value of an intellectual virtue by its contribution to social goodness, but with a few important modifications. First, the social value is explained in purely epistemic terms. We do not have to pass from epistemic value to personal flourishing and then, through moral value, to social value. Second, the socialization of a personal epistemic value does not follow the additive, simplistic model of the Transitional Model, which imagined something like atomistic personal values. Epistemic goods, by their nature, participate in the network of knowledge. Whatever brings them about contributes to the goodness of this social network.

The present approach makes sense of a more deeply social epistemology by recognizing the social character of epistemic networks and the holistic nature of epistemic goods.[7] It does not, however, go far enough in underlining the social nature of the particular epistemic goods and the activities that constitute them. Would it not be possible to expand what counts as a relevant contribution to AMT of knowledge and other epistemic goods without losing a proper account of epistemic responsibility? What I am looking for is indeed an account that starts with the community and then proceeds to cognitive activities within it, and not the other way around.

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[7] By the way, at this stage I allowed myself one more improvement compared to the former strategies by generalizing knowledge to any sort of epistemic goods. Certainly, the present argument could continue without this modification, but it is a reasonable one, which I shall adhere to moving forward.

4.2. Epistemic Social Environmentalism

I take the inspiration for what I propose to call "epistemic social environmentalism" from vice epistemology. In his account of epistemic corruption, Kidd (75-77) has identified epistemically corrupting conditions and proposed a diagnosis of a vicious epistemic environment. Some of these conditions are due to intellectual vices (prejudices, epistemic injustice, etc.), attributable to individuals and groups. As a consequence, intellectual vices can be understood as factors that block knowledge AMT. Kidd's proposal, along with the pivotal contribution of American philosophers Miranda Fricker (*Epistemic Injustice…*), José Medina (*The Epistemology of Resistance…*; *The Epistemology of Protest…*), as well as philosophers based in the United Kingdom, such as Quassim Cassam (*Vices of the Mind…*; *Conspiracy Theories*; *Extremism…*), Alessandra Tanesini ("'Calm Down, Dear'…"; *The Mismeasure of the Self…*), and Robin McKenna (*Non-Ideal Epistemology*), laid the foundations for the now extremely fertile field of non-ideal epistemology. This approach abstracts from the idealizations that characterized the classical approach and takes into account social, economic, political and psychological factors that interact with purely epistemic factors in such a way that sometimes epistemically innocent behavior can produce moral harm, while corrupt political and social conditions can sanctify less-than-optimal epistemic attitudes. In particular, this approach has proposed unprecedented diagnoses and evaluations of disturbing phenomena such as conspiracy theories, extreme beliefs, fake news, and epistemic bubbles. Epistemic vices have been a crucial element of this diagnosis.

Interestingly, while the analysis of the negative elements of the epistemic environment has allowed for fruitful collaboration between vice epistemology and social epistemology, a similar collaboration has not occurred with virtue epistemology. It seems that while epistemic vices (as anti-virtues) contribute to the degradation and corruption of the epistemic social environment, the proposed remedies appeal to structural and political solutions. At first glance, however, given the symmetry of virtues and vices, it is not apparent that this must be the case. My idea is to complement the negative part of the evaluation of the epistemic social environment with a positive one.[8] If vices are understood as degrading factors of the epistemic environment, let the role (and value!) of intellectual virtues be explained in terms of environmental amelioration.[9]

Let us try to put these ideas in order. First, I propose the following definition of what I mean by the epistemic social environment:

> EPISTEMIC SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT is a system of persons, groups, and institutions connected by social (epistemic and non-epistemic) links in which epistemic goods are acquired, maintained, and transmitted.

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[8]   I suggested that path for the first time in Jarczewski.

[9]   A similar idea is present in Ryan. However, he focuses on institutional ways of ameliorating the epistemic environment, whereas I concentrate on personal ones. That being said, I presume that a fuller account of the social epistemic environment could and should include both approaches, along with some other issues that cannot be covered by a single paper. Since the present concern is about intellectual virtues, I will confine myself to them.

As suggested above, this epistemic environment is not an insensitive container in which epistemic agents operate, but, as is the case with the physical environment, the way agents behave changes it dynamically. Furthermore, since it is a species of social environment and not a physical one, the epistemic social environment itself is a social being and it is constituted by human networks, institutions, paradigms, habits, valuations, and, ultimately, individual actions. In particular, virtues and vices, as stable dispositions of individuals and groups, can ameliorate or deteriorate this environment. Based on this, a slightly modified definition of intellectual virtue can be proposed that brings environmental impact to the fore:

> **(IntVEnv)** An intellectual virtue is
> (a) mechanism for AMT of epistemic goods, or
> (b) a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person aimed at distinctively epistemic ends
>
> that contributes to the creation of a healthy epistemic social environment. This includes, but is not limited to, AMT of epistemic goods by its possessor or another member of the social environment, creation of institutions, procedures, and other factors facilitating AMT of epistemic goods, and protecting the environment against factors of its degradation.

In building this definition, I want to stay as neutral as possible. I do not take a stance in the dispute between (a) the reliabilist and (b) the responsibilist conceptions of intellectual virtues. My point is to show that whatever approach one takes, they can accept my general account of the value of intellectual virtues in terms of the epistemic social environment as proposed in the next step.

Next, by way of illustration, I explicate some ways of contributing to a benign social environment, the list being far from exclusive. However, it is important to note that it includes all the previous ideas of what may constitute the import of intellectual virtues. In particular, I want to embrace the received intuition that one of the simplest and uncontroversial ways in which intellectual virtues contribute to a healthy epistemic environment is by producing epistemic goods (or, to be more precise, by AMT of epistemic goods, knowledge included).

The proposed understanding of intellectual virtues suggests a solution to the question of their social epistemic value:

> VALUEENV: The value of an intellectual virtue v of S stems from its contribution to the creation of a healthy epistemic social environment.

It is needless to say that this comprises all the benefits of the aforementioned models. For the record, the scope of socialization is universal since the very epistemic life is profoundly and essentially social. Concerning the value question, in this approach, intellectual virtues by their definition directly contribute to the social good. They are evidently other-regarding, and this is done in purely epistemic terms (no transition is required). For the sake of accuracy, it should be said that here the contribution to particular and social goods seems reversed with respect to virtue epistemology at the starting point. It can be said that whereas by definition intellectual virtues contribute to the social good, they contribute to particular epistemic goods (individual's knowledge, but also shared and group knowledge) only indirectly. In that sense, we take on the responsibilist insight, which connects the value of virtue with a more holistic stand on personal goodness, although the "personal" has been replaced by the "social."

The proposed account also meets all our *desiderata*, as proposed in Section 1. It includes generous virtues and explains their value. Indeed, it may even be said that the whole idea of the value of intellectual virtues is modeled on the notion of generosity. What makes an intellectual virtue valuable is its generosity in fostering the shared epistemic environment. In this sense, it seems to be the strongest socialization not only among the three main strategies but also within the two approaches discussed in the present section. For both approaches, knowledge is profoundly social by nature. Consequently, both can explain the value of all virtues on social grounds and do so in purely epistemological terms. Here, however, virtues are social not only because their goal is social but also because of how they function as such. Indeed, they are not so much directed at the object of cognition but at its conditioning environment.

5. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the goal of the present paper was twofold. At the basic level, it intended to propose an account of intellectual virtues that could include generous virtues and explain their value. These are virtues that do not necessarily contribute to the epistemic goods of their possessor but are other-regarding. Then, at a more ambitious level, it asked how to further extend this program in order to make sense of the supposed social value of all intellectual virtues. To this end, three main strategies have been explored: Particularism, the Transitional Model, and two approaches within a more robust social epistemology: the Teleological Account and Epistemic Social Environmentalism. The first concerned only a subset of intellectual virtues, while the others were universal, but the Transitional Model achieved it *via* additional transformation of epistemic values into moral ones. The approaches analyzed in Section 4 succeeded in giving an account of a proper epistemic social value. This would not have been possible without embracing the fully social nature of knowledge (both as a good and as an activity).

In the last subsection, I proposed my own project of Epistemic Social Environmentalism. It owes to Particularism the blindness of intellectual virtues in the sense that they aim at epistemic goods regardless of their beneficiary. It also honors the holistic insight of the Transitional Model, but does so on purely epistemic terms and takes the welfare of society, rather than that of individual persons, as a departure point. In contrast to the Teleological Account, the value of intellectual virtues here relates not so much to the goods they generate, but to a healthy epistemic social environment which, in turn, fosters any epistemic activity and contributes to particular epistemic goods. Finally, if generous virtues have been a pretext for the present analysis, we can close the arc by recognizing that in the proposed environmentalist account of epistemic virtues, it is ultimately generosity to which they owe their value.[10]

Statements and Declarations:

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