

VIRTUE EPISTEMOLOGY

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Abstract

Virtue epistemology is a contemporary epistemological discourse which uses the language of virtue and vice to elucidate the concept of knowledge. The central thesis of virtue theory of knowledge is that knowledge is cognitive success or true belief that is attained as a result of the exercise of intellectual virtue or ability. The aim of this theory is to overcome skepticism and the problem of justification in order to guarantee epistemological certainty. However, because of the substantial differences between the various epistemological approaches to virtue epistemology, the paper focuses its discussion on responsibilism and reliabilism as the two major strands of this theory, thereby, pointing out its central thesis or tenets. The paper equally raises the various objections to this theory, and argues for the incorporation of the responsibilist' character traits in the reliabilist' conception of intellectual virtue in order to have a robust virtue epistemology. The study adopted the logical-formal descriptive design. Data sourced were analyzed using the methods of logical analysis and historical hermeneutics.

Keywords: Virtue Epistemology, Responsibilism, Reliabilism, Intellectual Virtue

Introduction

The name “virtue epistemology” has come to designate a class of recent theories that focus epistemic evaluation on properties of persons rather than properties

of beliefs or propositions. This new or contemporary approach in epistemology uses the language of virtue and vice to elucidate the concept of knowledge. According to Fairweather, virtue epistemology shifts the focus of epistemic theorizing away from the analysis of familiar concepts like epistemic justification, warrant, and knowledge and toward the concept of intellectual virtue (3). Some virtue epistemology theorists make this move in order to eliminate challenging concepts like justification and even knowledge itself, while others use intellectual virtue as a means of illuminating these concepts. However, the central thesis of virtue theories of knowledge is that knowledge is cognitive success or true belief that is attained as a result of the exercise of intellectual virtue or ability. Proponents of virtue epistemology include: Ernest Sosa, John Greco, Alvin Goldman, Lorraine Code, Linda Zagzebski and James Montmarquet.

The field of virtue epistemology is routinely characterized as the epistemological analogue of virtue ethics. While there are indeed obvious similarities between the two fields, there is also an important dissimilarity. Virtue ethicists generally agree about the basic structure and paradigm cases of moral virtue. They think of moral virtues as acquired excellence of (moral) character like generosity, courage, honesty and temperance. Virtue epistemologists, on the other hand, are divided about the nature of an intellectual virtue. Virtue responsibilists conceive of intellectual virtues as the intellectual counterpart of moral virtues. These include traits like Fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, intellectual carefulness, intellectual courage and the likes: ‘virtue reliabilists’ conceive of intellectual virtues as any reliable or truth-conducive quality of a person. They cite as paradigm cases of intellectual virtue certain cognitive faculties or abilities like vision, memory, introspection and reason. According to Jason Baehr cited in (Owolabi 63)

This disagreement has resulted in two rather disparate approaches to virtue epistemology since the proponents of each approach tend to focus exclusively on the qualities they regarded as intellectual virtues and to say little about the qualities that interests the other group. Virtue reliabilists, for example, generally do not concern themselves with traits like open-mindedness or intellectual courage. When they do, it is often just to point out that these qualities are not very relevant to their preferred set of epistemological projects. Likewise, virtue responsibilists, by limiting their interest to the character traits of a good knower, usually have little to say about the cognitive faculties like memory and vision.

One of the intractable issues in the history of epistemology is the problem of justification. It is worthy to note that justification is one of the conditions of knowledge in the traditional account of knowledge, as “justified true belief”, even

without satisfying the fourth condition of knowledge demanded by post-Gettier analysis of knowledge, the problem of justification is still a nagging one. Philosophers throughout history have given so much attention to this problem to the extent that John Kekes was tempted to say that epistemology is more of a theory of justification than a theory of knowledge (89). Accordingly, in his *Knowledge and Human Interests*, (Habermas 36) asserts; if we imagine the philosophical discussions of the modern period reconstructed as judicial hearings it would be deciding a single question; how is reliable knowledge possible. Hence, in order to guarantee reliable and certain knowledge, various theories of epistemic justification have been put forward. Traditionally, the enterprise of epistemology has been dominated by foundationalism and coherentism, internalism and externalism. However, we are not committed to discuss these theories in this paper.

According to Fairweather and Zagzebski, the motive to avoid scepticism was the impetus for another dispute that dominated epistemology during the last decades of the twentieth century—the dispute between foundationalism and coherentism on the nature of a rational cognitive structure (4). This dispute also appeared to be intractable, and by 1980 Ernest Sosa proposed in his important essay, “The Raft and the Pyramid”, that the concept of intellectual virtue could be used to bypass the controversy between foundationalists and coherentists. In that essay Sosa introduced the term “intellectual virtue” into the contemporary epistemological literature. What Sosa meant by an intellectual virtue was a reliable belief-forming faculty, and so virtue epistemology began as a species of reliabilism. Reliabilism entered philosophical discourse as a competitor to the JTB theory and it was naturalistic since it held that normative epistemic properties are reducible to natural, non-epistemic properties. Reliabilism was therefore both a form of externalism and of naturalized epistemology. (Fairweather, A. and Zagzebski, L. (Eds): 4.)

Conceptual Analysis of Basic Terms: Virtue and Epistemology

According to *Oxford Dictionary*, virtue is the “conformity of life and conduct with the principles of morality: voluntary observance of the recognized moral laws or standards of right conduct; abstention on moral grounds from any form of wrongdoing or vice.”

According to Fairweather (65), Aristotle’s view is that virtue is excellence of character, an enduring state of a person that disposes one to behave in certain ways and also to have certain motivational states directing and controlling this behaviour. In *Gorgias and Republic* (Bk. 1), Plato’s defines virtue as an acquired skill—as *techne*. In her virtues of the Mind, selections, Linda Zagzebski defines virtue as a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end. (90)

Epistemology, according to the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* is the theory of the origin, nature and limits of knowledge (Baldwin 603). It is that

branch of philosophy that investigates the process of human cognition and all problems associated with its acquisition and justification. Hamlyn defined epistemology as the “branch of philosophy which is concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge, its preoccupation and basis and the general reliability of claims to knowledge (Hamlyn,12). Having defined virtue and epistemology, it is now pertinent to define virtue epistemology.

According to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, virtue epistemology is the subfield of epistemology that takes epistemic virtue to be central to understanding justification or knowledge or both (Baldwin 603). An epistemic virtue is a personal quality conducive to the discovery of truth, the avoidance of error or some other intellectual valuable goal (Andi 959). It can also be seen as a collection of contemporary approaches to epistemology that give intellectual virtue concepts a vital and fundamental role in knowledge acquisition. These intellectual virtues concepts include vision, introspection, memory and reason, for the virtue reliabilists. And for the virtue responsibilists, they include: attentiveness, fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, intellectual tenacity, and courage.

Virtue Epistemology and its Tenets

Standard characterization of virtue epistemology divides the field into two camps: virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism. Virtue reliabilists think of intellectual virtues as reliable cognitive faculties or abilities, while virtue responsibilists conceive of them as good intellectual character traits (Baeur193). These substantial and complicated differences between the various virtue epistemological views make it difficult to point out but relatively little about the central tenets of virtue epistemology. However, virtue reliabilists and virtue responsibilists alike have claimed to have the more accurate view of intellectual virtue and therefore of the general form that a virtue based epistemology should take. And also, both have appealed to Aristotle, one of the first philosophers to employ the notion of an intellectual virtue in support of their claims. Hence, both prioritized and give importance and fundamental role to intellectual virtue in their analysis of knowledge.

Ernest Sosa is perhaps the most familiar and prolific advocate of virtue epistemology and of virtue reliabilism in particular (Sosa, 144) He introduced the notion of an intellectual virtue into the contemporary epistemological discourse in his paper, “The Raft, and the Pyramid.” In this important essay, Sosa argued that an appeal to intellectual virtue could resolve the dispute between foundationalists and coherentists over the structure of epistemic justification. Hence, he claimed that a true belief is justified and is an instance of knowledge only if it is produced or sustained by an exercise of intellectual virtue (144).

Sosa and other virtue reliabilists, like Greco and Goldman tend to conceive of an intellectual virtue as roughly any stable and reliable or truth-conducive property of a person. They take as paradigm instances of intellectual virtue certain cognitive

abilities or faculties like memory, introspection, reason and vision. They held that such abilities or powers are germane or helpful in arriving at the truth.

Another group of virtue epistemologists like Lorraine Code and James Montmarquet conceives of intellectual virtues as good intellectual character traits, traits like fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, intellectual carefulness, tenacity and thoroughness (101). These character-based versions of virtue epistemology are referred to as instances of “virtue responsibilism”, since the traits they regard as intellectual virtues might also be viewed as the traits of a responsible knower. However, virtue responsibilist like Linda Zagzebski has adopted an approach similar to the reliabilists by regarding reliability as a component of virtue (5). According to (Fairweather and Zagzebski 4)

What distinguished Code and Montmarquet from the reliabilists was that they both treated intellectual virtue on the classical model of virtue as a trait of character such as open-mindedness or intellectual fairness. Both stressed the importance of being a responsible and conscientious believer, and Code focused on the importance of the knowing subject in an epistemic community.

However, according to Greco, the central claim of virtue epistemology is that, Gettier problems aside; knowledge is true belief which results from a cognitive virtue. A virtue in one important sense is ability (455). Ability, in turn, is a stable disposition to achieve certain results under certain conditions. Further, when we say that a subject *S* has an ability to achieve certain results, we imply that it is no accident that *S* achieves those results. *S*'s disposition to achieve the relevant results is grounded in certain properties of *S*, such that under the appropriate conditions any subject with those properties would tend to achieve those results.

Virtue Responsibilism and its Proponents

As we have stated earlier, virtue reliabilism is the version of virtue epistemology that conceived of intellectual virtue as reliable cognitive faculties or abilities. According to reliabilist theories, what makes a true belief an instance of knowledge (or alternatively, what makes a belief justified) is that it arises out of a reliable faculty or process for obtaining the truth. (Fairweather, 4)

Virtue reliabilists are committed to a formal conception of intellectual virtue according to which intellectual virtues are personal qualities which under certain conditions, and with respect to certain propositions, are helpful for reaching the truth and avoiding error (Bauer 194). According to them, a personal quality is an intellectual virtue only if it plays a critical or salient role in getting a person to the truth, only if it best explains why a person reaches the truth (Bauer 194). Thus, a personal

quality is not an intellectual virtue if it tends to play only a minor or supporting role in reaching the truth.

Ernest Sosa, as a prolific advocate of virtue reliabilism and of virtue epistemology in general contributed tremendously to this field of epistemology. He argues that an intellectual virtue is a quality bound to help maximize one's surplus of truth over error (43). He often points out that the reliability of faculty virtues is not unconditional rather, it is relative to certain kinds of truths or certain 'propositional fields' as well as to certain environmental conditions. Sosa identifies perception, introspection, memory and reason as qualities that necessarily satisfy these conditions. Hence he argues as follows:

One has an intellectual virtue or faculty relative to an environment E if and only if one has an inner nature I in virtue of which one would mostly attain the truth and avoid error in a certain field of proposition F, when in certain conditions C (Sosa, 45).

In his 1980 paper, "The Raft and The Pyramid", Sosa appealed to intellectual virtue aiming specifically at resolving the conflict between the foundationalists and the coherentists over the structure of epistemic justification. According to Sosa, traditional formulations of both foundationalism and coherentism have fatal defects (45). He argues that the main problem with coherentism, is that, it fails to give adequate epistemic weight to experience. The coherentist claims roughly that a belief is justified just in case it coheres with the rest of what one believes. He argues that it is possible for a belief to satisfy this condition and yet be disconnected from or even to conflict with one's experience. In such cases, the belief in question intuitively is unjustified, thereby indicating the inadequacy of the coherentist's criterion for justification (Sosa, 46).

Sosa also considers standard foundationalist-account of knowledge as inadequate and flawed. According to Sosa, an adequate version of foundationalism must explain the apparent unity of the various foundationalist principles that connect the ultimate sources of justification with the beliefs they justify. But traditional versions of foundationalism, Sosa argues, seem utterly incapable of providing such an explanation, especially when the possibility of creatures with radically different perceptual or cognitive mechanisms than our own (and hence of radically different epistemic principles) is taken into account (50).

In view of the above criticisms, Sosa sketches a model of epistemic justification which according to him would provide the required kind of explanation. This model of justification attaches primary justification to intellectual virtues like sensory experience and memory are secondary to beliefs produced by these virtues. According to this model, a belief is justified just in case it has its source in an intellectual virtue (Sosa 51).

John Greco is also a chief proponent of reliabilism and of virtue reliabilism in particular, like Sosa, Greco offers a definition of knowledge which gives a central role

to intellectual virtues conceived as reliable abilities or powers', like perception, memory and reason (455). According to Greco, S has knowledge regarding P if and only if S believes the truth regarding P because S believes P out of intellectual virtue (455). In his "virtues and vices of virtue epistemology", Greco offers a more exact definition of cognitive virtue as follows:

A mechanism M for generating and/or maintaining beliefs is a cognitive virtue if and only if M is an ability to believe true propositions and avoid believing false propositions within a field of propositions F, when one is in a set of circumstances C (Greco 455).

Greco attempts the breakdown of the above claim as follows: according to the above formulation, what makes a cognitive mechanism a cognitive virtue is that it is reliable in generating true beliefs rather than false beliefs in the relevant circumstances. It is correct to say, therefore, that virtue epistemology is a kind of reliabilism. Whereas generic reliabilism maintains that justified belief is belief which results from a reliable cognitive process, virtue epistemology puts a restriction on the kind of process which is allowed. Specifically, the cognitive processes which are important for justification and knowledge are those which have their bases in a cognitive virtue (Greco 455). He further uses the term "positive epistemic status" to designate that property (whatever it may be) which turns true belief into knowledge, Gettier problem aside. Then an important corollary of virtue epistemology is as follows (455).

S's belief that P has positive epistemic status for S if and only if S's believing that P is the result of some cognitive virtue of S. (Greco 455)

According to Greco, the claim embodied in virtue epistemology has a high degree of initial plausibility. By making the idea of faculty reliability central, virtue epistemology explains nicely why beliefs caused by perception and memory often have positive epistemic status, while beliefs caused by wishful thinking and superstition do not. Second, the theory gives us a basis for answering certain kinds of scepticism. Specifically, we may agree that if there were brains in a vat, or victims of a Cartesian demon, then we would not have knowledge even in those rare cases where our beliefs turned out true. But virtue epistemology explains that what is important for knowledge is that our cognitive faculties are in fact reliable in the conditions we are in. And so we do have knowledge so long as we are in fact not victims of a Cartesian demon, or brains in a rat (Greco 455).

Virtue Responsibilism and its Proponents:

In his essay "Cognitive Responsibility and the Epistemic Virtues," Duncan Pritchard asserts:

Not all virtue-theoretic accounts of knowledge are modelled along reliabilist lines, however, and more

recent work on virtue epistemology has tended to move towards an epistemologically internalist version of the thesis which understands the epistemic virtues in a way that is more in keeping with our ordinary conception of them, and which thus does not treat mere cognitive faculties as epistemic virtues. Such views are often called “responsibilist” or “neo-Aristotelian” and stress that agents should not only exhibit reliable cognitive traits but that they should also be in a position to take the kind of robust reflective responsibility for their true beliefs that is noticeably lacking in externalist views of knowledge. Since epistemic virtues are reliable cognitive traits which also demand a certain level of reflective responsibility on the part of the agent, they fit the bill perfectly (470).

One of the first contemporary philosophers to discuss the epistemological role of the intellectual virtues conceived as character traits is Lorraine Code. Code (40) claims that epistemologists should pay considerably more attention to the personal, active and social dimensions of the cognitive life and she attempts to motivate and outline an approach to epistemology that does just this. The central focus of her approach is the notion of epistemic responsibility as an epistemically responsible person is especially likely to succeed in the areas of the cognitive life that code says deserve priority. Epistemic responsibility, she claims, is the chief intellectual virtue and the virtue from which other virtues radiate (Code 20). Some of these other virtues are open-mindedness, intellectual openness, honesty, and integrity.

Code argues that intellectual virtue is fundamentally a matter of orientation toward the world, toward one’s knowledge-seeking self, and toward other such selves as part of the world (20). To be intellectually virtuous on Code’s view is thus to regard reality as genuinely intellectually penetrable; it is to regard ourselves and others as having the ability to know and understand the world as it really is. It is also to view such knowledge as an important good, as worth having and pursuing.

It is pertinent to state that Code’s suggested approach (epistemic responsibility) is to epistemology is unconcerned with traditional epistemological problems. According to Code, the scope of traditional epistemology is too narrow and that it overemphasizes the importance of analyzing abstract doxastic properties, such as knowledge and justification (41). Her view focuses alternatively on cognitive character in its own right, the role of choice in intellectual flourishing, the relationship between moral and epistemic normativity, and the social and communal dimensions of the intellectual life. The result, she claims is a more rich and “human” approach to epistemology (Code 41).

Linda Zagzebski treatment of the intellectual virtues in her book *Virtues of the Mind* (1996) is one of the most thoroughly and systematically developed in literature. Zagzebski is unquestionable—a virtue responsibilist, as she clearly thinks of intellectual virtues as traits of character. That said, her view bears a notably resemblance to several virtue reliabilist views because its main component is a virtue-based account of knowledge. In corroboration, according to Zagzebski:

My version of virtue epistemology is explicitly modelled on virtue ethics. Like Code and Montmarquet, I think of virtues as traits such as intellectual autonomy and courage, intellectual carefulness, and fairness, and open-mindedness, but like Sosa and Greco, I regard reliability as a component of virtue (443).

Zagzebski begins her account of intellectual virtue with a detailed and systematic treatment of the features of a virtue. According to her, a virtue is an acquired excellence of the soul, or to use more modern terminology, it is an acquired excellence of the person in a deep and lasting sense. She also sees a virtue as that which has a component of motivation. A motivation is a disposition to have a certain motive, and a motive is an emotion that initiates and directs action to produce an end with certain desired features. Motivations can become deep parts of a person's character and provide her with a set of orientations toward the world that emerge into action given the appropriate circumstances. She added further that "virtue" is a success term. The motivational component of a virtue means that it has an end, whether internal or external. A person does not have a virtue unless she is reliable at bringing about the end that is the aim of the motivational component of the virtue. Accordingly, Zagzebski asserts:

An intellectual virtue, like a moral virtue, has a motivational component as well as a component of reliable success in reaching the end (if any) of the motivational component. What makes intellectual virtues intellectual is that they (or most of them) include motive dispositions connected with the motive to get truth, and reliability is entailed by the success component of the virtue. This strategy shows how the internalist feature of responsibility and the externalist feature of epistemic success can be combined in a unified concept—indeed, a concept that has a long history in ethics (444)

According to Zagzebski, justification is not the most important concept in epistemic evaluation: a justified belief ought to be analysed as the parallel of a right act in pure virtue ethics (445). The issue of whether a rational cognitive structure is

foundationalists or coherentist is also a derivative matter, determined by what intellectually virtuous persons do. She holds that the evaluative component of knowledge is not justification, but an “act of intellectual virtue.” (Zagzebski 445) An “act of intellectual virtue” involves having an intellectually virtuous motive, doing what an intellectually virtuous person would do in the situation, and reaching the truth as a result.

However, she has been criticised by Goldman as having a “high church” virtue epistemology. According to him, “high church” virtue epistemology is a form of virtue epistemology that models itself closely after virtue ethics, which many theorists view as a rival to ethical consequentialism and deontology (Goldman 31). He holds that we should resist the temptation to insist that virtue epistemology must conform to the model of ethical theory. For him, epistemology and ethics are different fields, and it should not be presumed that what holds in one must also hold in the other (Goldman 31).

Objections to Virtue Epistemology

The Evil Demon Problem for Virtue Epistemology

The first objection faced by virtue epistemology is that virtue epistemology seems too strong. This objection arises if we think that positive epistemic status is closely related to epistemic justification. More specifically, it seems possible that an epistemic agent could be justified in believing that P, even when her intellectual faculties are largely unreliable. Suppose, for example, that Kathy is the victim of a Cartesian deceiver. Despite her best efforts almost none of Kathy’s beliefs about the world around are true. It is clear that in this case Kathy’s faculties of perception are almost wholly unreliable. But we would not want to say that none of Kathy’s perceptual beliefs are justified. If Kathy believes that there is a tree in her yard, and if she bases belief on the kind of experience usually caused by trees, then it seems that she is as justified as we would be regarding a similar belief (Greco, 445).

The problem for virtue epistemology is to account for this intuition. There is something about Kathy’s belief which is epistemically valuable, for example valuable in a way which is relevant for having knowledge. Yet it is clear that Kathy’s belief is not the result of a cognitive virtue¹ in the following sense: what makes a cognitive mechanism a cognitive virtue is that it is reliable in generating true beliefs rather than false beliefs in the relevant field and in the relevant circumstances (Greco, 445).

Sosa’s strategy for addressing the evil demon problem is to make justification relative to an environment. Thus Sosa recognizes that there is something valuable about Kathy’s belief even though that belief has its origin in wholly unreliably cognitive faculties. What is valuable about Kathy’s belief, Sosa argues, is that it is produced by cognitive faculties which would be reliable in our environment (Greco, 445).

The Problem of Epistemic Irresponsibility

The second objection to be considered is that virtue epistemology is too weak. Specifically, we can imagine cases where S's cognitive faculties are high reliable with respect to his belief that P, but where S is epistemically irresponsible in believing that P. such a case may arise when S has substantial but misleading evidence against his belief that P (Greco, 445).

Consider the case of Mary, who is in most respects a normal human being. The relevant difference is that Mary's cognitive faculties produce the belief in her that there is a tiger nearby whenever there is a tiger nearby, and in cases where Mary does not see, hear or otherwise perceive a nearby tiger. Mary's brain is designed so as to be sensitive to an electromagnetic field emitted only by tigers, thus causing her to form the relevant belief in the appropriate situation, and without any corresponding experience, sensory or otherwise. We can image that this cognitive feature was designed by natural processes of evolution, or that it was literally designed by a beneficent creator, one who realises that tigers are dangerous to beings like Mary and who therefore wishes to equip her with a reliable warning device(Greco, 445). Now suppose that a tiger is walking nearby, and that Mary forms the appropriate belief. Addthat Mary has no evidence that there is a tiger in the area, nor any evidence that she has such a faculty. Rather, she has considerable evidence against her belief that there are tigers in the area. Clearly, Mary's belief that there is a tiger nearby does not have positive epistemic status in this situation, even though the belief is caused by properly functioning faculties in an appropriate environment. Mary does not know that there is a tiger nearby. Again, the explanation for this is that Mary's belief is epistemically irresponsible. Given the way things look from Mary's point of view, she ought not to believe that there is a tiger nearby (Greco 457).

Sosa's strategy for addressing this kind of example recognizes the importance of S's point of view by invoking S's epistemic perspective. Sosa makes a distinction between animal knowledge and reflective knowledge. For animal knowledge, it is sufficient that S's true belief be caused by a reliable faculty. For reflective knowledge, we must add that S has a true grasp of the fact that her belief is grounded in a reliable cognitive faculty. This grasp must in turn result from a faculty of faculties, which gives rise to the required epistemic perspective (Sosa 45).

Similar to the Gettier's attack against the traditional account of knowledge as "justified true belief" that is anchored on epistemic guess or luck, is the argument of Pritchard against virtue epistemology. He argues that cognitive success could be as a result of intervening luck and environmental luck. Hence cognitive success as a result of intellectual ability is not sufficient for knowledge.

According to Pritchard, suppose Archie, a skilled archer, goes to a shooting range, select a target at random and fires a skilled shot which hits the target right in the centre. Intuitively, Archie's success constitutes an achievement. His success is due to the exercise of his arching ability. He maintains at the same time that, this

intuition remains even if we suppose, additionally, that unbeknownst to Archie, he is shooting at the only target at the range that has not been fitted with a force field that would repel any shot fired at it (Pritchard 31).

Pritchard claims that, it is formally analogous to the case of Henry who drives through the countryside, looks at the only real barn in a field otherwise full of barn facades and forms a true belief that he is facing a barn. The sabotaged targets in Archie's case play the role of the barn facades in Henry's case, while the one non-sabotaged target in Archie's case plays the role of the one real barn in Henry's case. Pritchard's claim here is that, since the two cases are formally analogous and since it is plausible that Archie's success is because of the exercise of his arching ability, we must now concede that Henry's true belief that he is facing a barn is because of his barn-spotting ability also. At the same time, however, intuitively, Henry's belief does not qualify as knowledge. Therefore, he concludes that, cognitive success that is because of intellectual ability is not sufficient for knowledge (Pritchard 31).

Conclusion

This paper has focused an extensive discussion of virtue epistemology along line with the reliabilist and the responsibilist version. We have seen in this work that while the virtue reliabilists conceived of intellectual virtues as reliable cognitive faculties of the knower or the inquirer, virtue responsibilists, on the other hand, conceived of them as good character traits of a person. However, they both emphasized on intellectual virtues as the only reliable sources of human knowledge. But, in order to have a robust virtue epistemology, the virtue reliabilists must give adequate attention to the domain of intellectual character. By so doing, Gettier problem aside may ensure a holistic account for the full range of human knowledge. In corroboration, I conclude by quoting Jason Baehr as follows:

It appears that since virtue reliabilists are principally interested in those traits that play a critical or salient role in helping a person reach the truth, they cannot reasonably neglect matters of intellectual character. They too should be concerned with better understanding the nature and intellectual significance of the character traits that interest the virtue responsibilist. Indeed, the most plausible version of virtue reliabilism will incorporate many of these traits into its repertoire of virtues and in doing so will go significant lengths toward bridging the gap between virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism (477).

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