

EPISTEMOLOGY AS A PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

LA EPISTEMOLOGÍA COMO ACTIVIDAD PRÁCTICA

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Abstract. Epistemology and logic are essential to Philosophical Practice, although in Practical Philosophy congresses and literature they are rarely addressed. Philosophical practitioners play an important role in enhancing their clients' epistemological skills. Those skills are important for discerning issues involving valid knowledge and truth in everyday life. A virtue epistemology, which privileges intellectual virtues instead of particular beliefs, is more suitable to the Philosophical Practice setting than other epistemologies. As intellectual virtues are moral virtues, the moral role of Philosophical Practice is furthered by an epistemology of virtues.

Keywords. Epistemology, intellectual virtue, moral virtue, Philosophical Practice.

Resumen. La epistemología y la lógica son esenciales para la Filosofía Aplicada, aunque en los congresos y literatura de Filosofía Aplicada sean tratadas con poca frecuencia. Los orientadores filosóficos juegan un rol importante en mejorar las habilidades epistemológicas de sus clientes. Estas habilidades son importantes para discernir asuntos, puesto que proporcionan tanto un conocimiento como una verdad válidas para la vida cotidiana. Una epistemología de las virtudes, la cual da privilegio a las virtudes intelectuales sobre las creencias particulares, es más adecuada para el escenario de la Filosofía Aplicada que otras epistemologías. Como las virtudes intelectuales son virtudes morales, el rol moral de la Filosofía Aplicada es ampliado gracias a una epistemología de las virtudes.

Palabras clave. Epistemología, virtud intelectual, virtud moral, Filosofía Aplicada.

Introduction

Epistemology is one of the most representative and professional fields of philosophy. It is common knowledge that it has been traditionally concerned with two major questions, what is knowledge? And what can we know? And that these questions about the nature and scope of

knowledge quickly led to others¹. Yet epistemology is also a practical discipline for in everyday life we have to address epistemological issues, such as, what is the basis of my decision to trust my doctor? Should I take this trip although astrology says that Scorpios should avoid traveling this week? Should I cling to my view that all women are stupid and deem a man or a lesbian a woman who is not so? Should I take this umbrella although the weather news said it would not rain? Should I hold to the view that one invites illnesses from the cosmos, that what goes around comes around, and that only my wishes create the world? The problem is not so much with these beliefs, as with the question: how I have come to such a view and whether that process was a sound basis for the view. As these examples show our intellectual lives are not devoted exclusively to acquiring beliefs; we also are concerned with maintaining, communicating and applying our beliefs to practical affairs. David Solomon rightly observes that 'just as moral philosophers find themselves asking epistemological questions, epistemologists are centrally concerned with questions about our practical life. ... the central problems of normative epistemology are problems about what to do.' (Solomon 2003, p. 60).

Epistemological virtues such as intellectual carefulness, perseverance, humility, vigor, flexibility, intellectual courage, and thoroughness, and the virtues opposed to wishful thinking, obtuseness and conformity, are required on a day to day basis. Intellectual virtues are privileged by a virtue epistemology. I believe that this sort of epistemology, which addresses the cognitive set-up of the agent rather than episodes of cognitive activity in isolation – to use Solomon's apt

¹ Other epistemic questions are, assuming that knowledge is superior to mere opinion, what is it that distinguishes the two? What makes knowledge 'justified' or 'warranted'? A related question concerns the structure of knowledge: is knowledge like a pyramid, with a sure foundation supporting the remaining edifice? Or is knowledge more like a raft, with all parts of the structure tied together in relations of mutual support? More generally: what is the nature of the mind-world relation that constitutes knowing rather than merely believing? Given that knowledge involves a mind representing the world, how must mind and world be related for knowledge of the world to be possible?

characterization - is more suitable for furthering adequate thinking within Philosophical Practice.

After introducing epistemology as a practical activity, I suggest that a virtue epistemology is more suitable than other epistemologies in general, and especially for Philosophical Practice. I then probe the history of intellectual virtues along with their motivations and their relationship with moral virtues, and propose ways in which intellectual virtues may be furthered within the Philosophical Practice.

Epistemology as a practical activity

Philosophical Practice is valuable in many areas yet in only a few it is indispensable. It is indispensable when no one else does what Practical Philosophers do, but more so when no one else can do what those philosophers do. One area in which philosophers are indispensable is moral education, a view I have defended elsewhere (Amir 2005a; 2005b; 2009b), the other is critical thinking. Philosophers have been trained for clearer thinking on issues that have immediate relevance for everyday life, in contradistinction to theoretical mathematicians, for example, whose thinking does not have such relevance. It is also an area in which philosophers operate according to their credentials in a way that is not disputed by others disciplines, for Philosophy can hardly be differentiated from critical thinking.

Any introductory book on philosophy explains what all Philosophical Practitioners know well. Philosophy teaches

to weigh up positions, beliefs, and arguments, to ask whether there are good reasons for holding a belief or position, whether reasons that are put forward in support of them are adequate or relevant, and whether the arguments being presented conform to principles of sound reasoning. To question beliefs and positions that have become closed and dogmatic, to show up the limits of such thinking, its failure or inability to deal with certain facts, considerations or arguments, and to open the way to thinking differently (Falzon 2007, pp. 204-241)

Critical thinking provides us with a way of defending ourselves against manipulation and control by others. When we become self-critical in this

way, we are no longer simply at the mercy of whatever others tell us to believe. We no longer take things at face value. We can critically weigh up the positions being presented to us to see whether there are good reasons for believing them. Given that we continue to be subject to various social and cultural influences, critical reflection continues to have a role to play in adult life. In the face of influences from advertising, the mass media, cultural pressures, and political propaganda, along with the seductive messages coming from all manner of experts, gurus, and demagogues, a capacity to be critical, to critically weigh up the claims and arguments we are presented with, remains vital if we are to maintain a degree of independence. Indeed, critical thinking is at the very heart of philosophy and is a key to our freedom.

Adequate reflection is what differentiates philosophy from psychology, then, as well as from New Ages theories. Philosophy's difference from psychology lies in reflection, while its difference from New Age thought lies in adequacy. The New Age movement has become important for philosophers for its popularity, for its possible confusion with philosophy, and for the dangers for adequate thinking that the movement's views represent - almost the sole danger this otherwise peaceful and love-oriented movement represents. It is important for practical philosophers, then, to become acquainted with the main tenets of what is known today as the New Age movement²: Our inner states, attitudes and beliefs have a fundamental role in influencing our circumstances. The basic "stuff" of the cosmos is non-material "energy". The self is a unity of body, mind and spirit; by treating this unity as a whole many of our problems in life can be solved. By combining the ecological with the spiritual, we can repair the ills that we have inflicted on the earth. Each of us has a unique role in this holistic cosmos, and this role can be discovered through various procedures, ranging from divination to meditation. Each of us evolves over a succession of lives. These basic ideas are not available to us primarily through rational thinking but through other means. One way to arrive at these "truths" is through personal experience; another is through embracing the spirituality of various non-Western peoples. The specific path that any of

² For the New Age sociology, see York (1995).

us will follow in order to gain these insights is an idiosyncratic one. Our experiences and feelings are the primary guides on our spiritual path, and since all individuals are different, many paths are valid.

Despite the fragmented religiosity, there is a shared cosmology underlying numerous New Age books and many works of the esoteric tradition. It is a "hermetic idealism", idealist in the sense that it sees spiritual impulses rather than material causes as the primary mechanism operative in the cosmos (Hammer 2001, p. 51). It is hermetic through its implication that these spiritual impulses affect the material world by other means than through mundane chains of cause and effect, such as through Jungian synchronicities or through correspondences. Synchronicity is an "acausal connecting principle" which links seeming coincidences through deeper meanings. Correspondence is based on the idea that "as above so below"; in analogy with a hologram, man and the cosmos mirror each other (Hammer 2001, pp. 307-310). It is a cosmology with deep roots in Western esotericism.

Epistemological criticisms target the New Age movement's use of science and the spiritual techniques it advocates. The latter is best represented by the attitudes of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), epitomized by Henry Gordon's unequivocal declaration that the field encompassed by the New Age is "nonsensical drivel" (Gordon, 1988, p. 28). The criticism of the New Age movement's use of science needs some elaboration. The guiding motivation of New Age scientists is the search for a new worldview. For this reason the term "New Age science" is actually a misnomer. Its real domain is not natural science, but philosophy of nature or *Naturphilosophie*. New Age's epistemology is therefore circular, according to Olav Hammer:

Science is made to rhetorically support certain claims that are a priori doctrines within the Esoteric tradition. A specific view of the world is clothed in scientific terminology and expressed by means of carefully selected bits and pieces of science in what is essentially a scientific [or pseudo-science] *bricolage*. Conversely, the underlying worldview is then said to be supported by the scientific edifice thus constructed. In an age where science carries an enormous rhetorical weight, but is devoid of fundamentally appealing qualities

such as goal, meaning and purpose, it remains tempting to claim scientific status for what are essentially religious beliefs. (Hammer 2001, pp. 339-360)³

Epistemological criticism targets also the dogmatism of the movement's adherents. Joseph Chuman accuses New Agers of refusing, or being powerless, to correct their assumptions, thus committing the "error of solipsism, or the belief that the outside world is exclusively an object of our consciousness" (Chuman 1992, p. 20). Indeed, most New Agers think that one's beliefs create one's world, making the problem of verifiability redundant. New Agers are berated for turning off their critical faculties and for proclaiming "a metaphysical dualism with an exuberance and gusto that would have caused St. Augustine to blush", while the New Age is further charged with being "founded upon an utterly unsubstantiated metaphysics and a disreputable epistemology", and for "irresponsibly confusing imagination with fact" (Faber 1996, p. 58).

Philosophers might opt for a minimal response to the New Age movement⁴ that involves construing Logic and Epistemology as practical fields, that could be taught in a way that seems relevant to most persons' concerns. Teaching practical logic and critical thinking in that way outside the academe might be an example of a preventive action undertaken by philosophers. But how should such teaching be construed?

I think that the goals of imparting critical thinking outside the academe are better served by an epistemology rooted in intellectual virtues, which addresses the cognitive set-up of the agent rather than episodes of cognitive activity in isolation. As Jay Wood argues, epistemology rooted in the virtues is an epistemology in the service of life. Intellectual virtues pertain to the entire range of our intellectual endeavors. In everyday life we have to address epistemological issues and display epistemological virtues such as wisdom, understanding, and foresight. Intellectual vices, on the contrary, include traits such as gullibility, superstition, closed-mindedness, and being prone to self-serving beliefs (Wood 2000, p. 63). As interest in virtue epistemology has

³ See Hammer (2001) chapter 5: "Scientism as a language of faith", for a thorough explanation of the relationship New Age's theorists entertain with Modern Science. See also Hanegraaff (1996), chapter 4.

⁴ I have proposed a maximal response to the New Age movement as well as a critical analysis of its views in Amir (2009a).

only recently been rekindled, I would like to explain it within an historical perspective.

Virtue Epistemology

Over three decades ago Roderick Chisholm observed that 'many of the characteristics which philosophers and others have thought peculiar to ethical statements also hold of epistemic statements' (Chisholm 1969, p. 4). In the last twenty years, parallel to a revival of interest in virtue ethics, there has been an interest in virtue epistemology.

Virtue theories make the properties of persons most fundamental, and then understand other normative properties in terms of these. We can exemplify this with virtue ethics. Different kinds of moral theory make different kinds of evaluation most fundamental. Consequentialist theories make the following valuations most fundamental: what things are good (valuable)? For example, Hedonistic utilitarianism claims that only pleasure is essentially good. The normative properties of actions, persons and lives are then understood in relation to this fundamental value. Deontological theories in ethics change this direction of analysis, making the following evaluations fundamental: which actions are right (appropriate, required, permitted)? Virtue theories, by contrast, make the following evaluations fundamental: What makes a person good (virtuous, admirable)? What makes a life worthwhile (desirable, enviable)? What sort of life constitutes human flourishing?

Virtue theories in epistemology mirror the structure of virtue theories in ethics. They make the epistemically normative properties of persons fundamental, and understand other sorts of epistemically normative properties in terms of these. For example, a virtue theory tries to understand key normative notions such as justified belief, knowledge, and evidence in terms of the intellectual virtues.

As characterized by David Solomon, virtue epistemology 'would not be belief-based; it would be agent- or end-based in that virtue would be more basic than belief. It would focus on the cognitive set-up of the agent rather than on episodes of cognitive activity in isolation.' (Solomon 2003,

p. 80)⁵. In a similar vein, another virtue epistemologist suggests that instead of focusing on static states such as belief and the evaluation of these as justified or knowledge, we might instead focus on evaluating and regulating the activities of inquiry and deliberation and the role of virtues in such evaluation and regulation (Hookway 2003).

Virtue theory in epistemology made its contemporary debut as a contribution to the debate between foundationalism and coherentism: Ernst Sosa argued that the sources of foundational knowledge could be understood as various noninferential cognitive powers (Sosa 1980; cf. 1991). Coherence-seeking reason could also be understood as an intellectual virtue or power, but one that required other sources for its virtuous operation. The new focus on epistemic normativity, on what people *ought* to believe, brought with it a focus in intellectual agency as well. Epistemologists at the end of the century turned their attention to such issues as the relations between intellect and will, the cognitive role of the emotions, the social dimensions of intellectual agency, and the relations between intellectual agency and luck. Epistemology also saw a new focus on the intellectual virtues themselves, and a renewal interest in long neglected intellectual goods such as wisdom and understanding. These issues are of special importance for the Practice of Philosophy for they reflect questions that arise through experience in Consultancy.

Different versions of virtue theory emerge depending on how the intellectual virtues are understood. At the end of the last century, there were two dominant understandings of the virtues that addressed a broad range of epistemological problems and issues. The first way of understanding the intellectual virtues follows Aristotle in making a strong distinction between intellectual virtues and moral virtues. Whereas the moral virtues are acquired traits of character, such as courage and temperance, the intellectual virtues are broad cognitive abilities. Epistemologists in the twentieth century added to Aristotle's list of cognitive powers, by including accurate perception, reliable memory, and various kinds of good reasoning (Sosa 1991; Goldman 1992; Plantinga 1993; Greco 2000). The second way of understanding the intellectual

⁵ Among contemporary philosophers who have written on epistemology, a few seem to be moving in the direction of a radical virtue epistemology: Jonathan Knaving (1992), Linda Zagzebski (1996), and Alasdair McIntyre (1990).

virtues rejects Aristotle's distinction between intellectual virtues and moral virtues. On this second view, the intellectual virtues are also acquired character traits such as intellectual courage and intellectual carefulness (Code 1987; Montmarquet 1993; Zagzebski 1996).

A virtue-based epistemology is preferable to a belief-based epistemology for the same reasons that a virtue-based moral theory is preferable to an act-based moral theory (cf. Statman 1997). A virtue-based epistemology amends the contemporary neglect of epistemic values, such as understanding and wisdom, which have been very important in the history of philosophy (cf. Zagzebski 1996, p. 2, 43-51) and which are especially relevant to Philosophical Practice. Linda Zagzebski rightly notes that the most interesting parts of works from the virtue ethics tradition are often the detailed, perceptive treatments of specific virtues and vices. The same holds for epistemological virtues⁶.

What are, then, the main intellectual virtues? What are the motivations that generate them? Are intellectual virtues different from moral virtues? Answers to these questions are important in order to understand whether intellectual virtues can be acquired and if they can, how it may be possible to develop intellectual virtues effectively. Let's then begin with intellectual virtues along with their motivations within the history of Philosophy.

⁶ To take an example, in 'Humility and epistemic goods', Robert Roberts and Jay Wood (2003) provide a model for the kind of rich discussions of a specific virtue. Humble as opposed to vain people, they argue, are unconcerned with and inattentive to how they appear to others. This does not mean that humble people are ignorant of their good qualities, just that they are not particularly interested to be recognized for having these qualities. The reason for this is that their attention is focused on other, more important things. In the case of intellectual humility, one such thing would typically be the truth. Thus, for example, while vain persons might seek to hide their errors for fear of what others might think of them, the humble will be more concerned that any mistakes be brought to light so that they can correct their errors and get their inquiries back to track. Humble persons are not distinguished from arrogant persons by being unaware of or even unconcerned with entitlements. The distinction turns on what motivates the awareness or concern. Paradigmatic cases of arrogance involve an excessive interest in entitlements motivated by what Roberts and Wood call their ego-exalting potency. In contrast, when humble people do have an interest in some entitlement, the interest is pure, in the sense that they are concerned with the entitlement because it serves some valuable purpose or project. Roberts and Wood close their essay by considering a wider variety of ways in which intellectual humility promotes the acquisition of epistemic goods.

Intellectual Virtues and Motivations

Intellectual virtues have been neglected in the history of philosophy, but there were discussions of them in the early modern period as part of the general critical examination of human perceptual and cognitive faculties that dominated that era. Both Hobbes and Spinoza connected the intellectual as well as the moral virtues with the passions, and both traced the source of these virtues to a single human motivation, the motivation for self-preservation or power. In the early part of the 20th century John Dewey stressed the place of the intellectual virtues in what he called 'reflective thinking', arising from the desire to attain the goals of effective interaction with the world. Hobbes in *Leviathan* and Emerson in 'Intellect' (Essay 11) describe how a deficiency in the desire for truth leads to cognitive vices such as lack of autonomy, closed-mindedness, and dogmatism.

Few philosophers have given positive directions on how to think that are intended to circumvent the pitfalls in forming beliefs. The emphasis has generally been on the mistakes. A well-known exception is Descartes in *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, and another is Dewey in *How We Think*. Dewey lists in page 32 'attitudes' or intellectual virtues, among them open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility. In the contemporary literature Laurence Bonjour (1980) and Hilary Kornblith (1983) introduced a motivational element into the discussion of epistemic responsibility, defined by Kornblith as follows: 'An epistemically responsible agent desires to have true beliefs, and thus desires to have his beliefs produced by processes which lead to true beliefs; his actions are guided by these desires' (Kornblith 1983, p. 34).

A more extensive treatment of epistemic virtue and its connection with motivation has been given by James Montmarquet (1986a; 1992; 1993, chap. 2). He connects a large set of intellectual virtues with the desire for truth, claiming that these virtues are qualities a person who wants the truth would want to acquire. He classifies epistemic virtues as impartiality, or openness to the ideas of others; the virtues of intellectual sobriety, or the virtues of the careful inquirer who accepts only what is

warranted by the evidence, and the virtues of intellectual courage, which include perseverance and determination⁷.

John Dewey is probably right is thinking that human beings are naturally credulous, which means that all too often learning the truth involves unlearning a falsehood. In her groundbreaking *Intellectual Virtues*, Linda Zagzebski rightly emphasizes that 'the difficulty in getting at the truth means that the right way to behave cognitively requires the motives needed when there are internal or external obstacles to overcome, the motives constitutive of autonomy, courage, perseverance, humility, fairness, open-mindedness, and other intellectual virtues. The motive of valuing truth is probably primary, but I suspect that for many categories of truth we are not going to get truth at all unless we have the motives that are constituents of these other virtues' (Zagzebski 2003, pp. 153-4).

The problem of motivation is important for without an appropriate motivation one might be skeptical about the urge to combat wishful thinking, to go out of one's comfort zones, to live with uncertainty and to look actively for one's errors.

Moral and Intellectual Virtues

It is a commonplace of Western philosophy to regard human cognitive and feeling processes as distinct and relatively autonomous. At least it is usually thought that the former is capable of operating independently of the latter and that it ought to do so in the rational person, whether or not the latter is independent of the former. This part of our philosophical heritage is so strong that philosophers have maintained what Michael Stocker (1980) calls a 'purified view of the intellect' long after it was given up by cognitive psychologists and in spite of the fact that a few philosophers like Hume and James called attention to the close connection between believing and feeling.

⁷ Notice that there is an overlap between these sets of virtue and Dewey's. The major difference is in Dewey's virtue of wholeheartedness and Montmarquet's virtues of courage. Montmarquet calls the desire for truth 'epistemic conscientiousness' and argues that some intellectual virtues arise out of this desire.

Related to the alleged independence of the cognitive and feeling processes is the alleged distinctness of the intellectual and the moral virtues, a position we owe to Aristotle. Although it is no longer usual to draw the distinction in precisely Aristotle's fashion, few philosophers have doubted that the division is deep and important. At any rate, few philosophers have opposed Aristotle's claim that such virtues as courage and temperance differ in nature from such qualities as wisdom and understanding. An exception was Spinoza, who connected both the passions and virtue with adequate ideas of God's nature, and who made understanding, an intellectual virtue, the key to all the virtues. Perhaps no other philosopher has unified the moral and intellectual virtues as solidly as Spinoza, who had the following to say about understanding:

Again, since this effort of the mind, by which the mind, in so far as it reasons endeavors to preserve its being, is nothing but the effort to understand...it follows...that this effort to understand is the primary and sole foundation of virtue, and that... we do not endeavor to understand things for the sake of any end, but, on the contrary, the mind, in so far as it reasons, can conceive nothing as being good for itself except that which conduces at understanding. (Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part. IV, prop. 26, parenthetical references removed).

Another apparent exception was David Hume. Hume insisted that the distinction between the intellectual and the moral virtues is merely verbal, and that such qualities of intellect as wisdom, a capacious memory, keenness of insight, eloquence, prudence, penetration, discernment, and discretion should count as among a person's "moral" virtues since they are as much objects of praise as his honesty and courage (1983, App. 4). But since Hume also said it is merely a verbal matter whether the class of virtues includes all the human talents and the class of vices all the human defects, it is clear that he is using a much broader notion of virtue than that which dominated philosophy both before and after (*ibid.*, App. 4, par. 1). Hume's inclusion of intellectual virtues within the class of moral virtues therefore loses most of its drama.

Julius Moravcsik has recently argued that Plato makes no sharp distinction between moral and non-moral virtues, whether in terms of the source of virtue or its function (Moravcsik 1992, p. 300). Aristotle, however, does make such a division. What's more, he makes a further

division within the intellectual virtues between those that aim at speculative insight or theoretical knowledge and those that pertain to practical thinking aiming at the production of artifacts or the performance of acts. The latter are art (*techne*) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*). When we consider how entrenched the distinction between moral and intellectual virtue is in Western philosophy, it is remarkable that Aristotle's grounds for distinguishing them are so unpersuasive⁸. Linda Zagzebski challenges these grounds, and in the process addresses the issue of distinguishing 'the moral from the intellectual virtues on the grounds that the former but not the latter involves the proper handling of feelings, whereas the latter but not the former involve the proper direction of cognitive activities.' (Zagzebski 1996, p. 146).

It is true that many moral virtues, such as temperance, courage, and the virtues opposed to envy, jealousy, vengeance, and spite, are more directly related to the handling of strong feelings than are intellectual virtues, but this does not divide the class of virtues into two distinct categories. The moral virtue that many theorists consider central, namely, justice, has only a peripheral relationship with feelings, as do such virtues as honesty, sincerity, candor, and trustworthiness. On the other hand, intellectual virtues involve the proper use of the passion for truth, which, at least in some people, can be very strong indeed. There are feelings and desires that need to be restrained by the intellectual virtues.

One of the strongest feelings people must overcome in their quest for knowledge in any field is the desire that some particular belief be true. The feelings that accompany prejudices can be strong; the desire to hold on to old beliefs can be strong; the desire that one's previously published views not be proven wrong can be strong. In each case there are desires or feelings that need to be restrained or redirected. Blaise Pascal saw the passion of self-love as weakening the love of truth and leading to self-deception, the deception of others, and hypocrisy, vices, that are, at least in part, intellectual (Pascal 1961, p. 348). Plato recognized the need for natural feeling and moral rectitude in the apprehension of truth, particularly in moral matters, and gave a dramatic argument for their power in the seventh epistle (Plato, *Letter VII*, 344a-b, 1961).

⁸ See Linda Zagzebski's discussion (1996), part I, sec. 3 and Amir (2005b).

One final problem with dividing the moral from the intellectual virtues, on the grounds that the former handle feeling states and the latter handle thinking states, is that there are states that are actually blends of thought and feeling. Curiosity, doubt, wonder, and awe are states of this kind, each of which can either aid or impede the desire for truth. Curiosity is interesting because both Augustine and Aquinas call curiosity a vice, whereas it would be much more common these days to think of curiosity as valuable.

Feelings are involved in intellectual virtues, and intellectual virtues are involved in handling feelings, but their operation shows how blurry the distinction between intellectual and moral virtue really is. Intellectual prejudice, for example, is an intellectual vice, and the virtue that is its contrary is fair-mindedness, but clearly we think of prejudice as a moral failing and fair-mindedness as a morally good quality. It is possible that the intellectual form of prejudice and the moral form are the same vice, and the same point could apply to other cases in which an intellectual trait has the same name as a moral trait, such as humility, autonomy, integrity, perseverance, courage, and trustworthiness. William James has said in 'The Sentiment of Rationality' that faith is the same virtue in the intellectual realm as courage is in the moral realm (James 1937, p. 90).

I will not take a stand here on whether a moral and an intellectual virtue can be the very same virtue. In any case, if there is a distinction between intellectual and moral virtue/vice, it cannot be on the grounds that the latter handles feelings and the former does not. Not only is the proper handling of feelings involved in intellectual as well as moral virtues, but almost all moral virtues include an aspect of proper perceptual and cognitive activity.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle gives a different reason for distinguishing the intellectual and the moral virtues. He claims there that they are learned or acquired in different ways. Intellectual virtues are qualities that can be taught, whereas moral virtues are habits that are acquired by practice and training (Aristotle 1941, chap. 2). James Wallace accepts this distinction and connects it with the distinction between skills and virtues (Wallace 1978, pp. 44-5).

I do not think, however, that intellectual virtues differ from moral virtues in the way in which they are acquired. Both require training through the imitation of virtuous persons and practice in acting virtuously. Both also involve handling certain feelings and acquiring the ability to like acting virtuously. Both also have stages in between vice and virtue consisting in *akrasia* or weakness of will and self-control. Some of the traditional moral virtues have more of a taming function than most of the traditional intellectual virtues, and that may explain why moral *akrasia* looms larger in our vocabulary of character than intellectual *akrasia*. Still, we have not yet seen any reason for dividing moral and intellectual virtues into distinct kinds.

Moreover, the moral and intellectual virtues are intimately connected in their operation. There are both logical and causal connections between moral and intellectual virtues that are just as extensive and profound as the connections among various moral virtues. For example, honesty is on all accounts a moral virtue. It is a virtue that requires that one tells the truth. But it is not sufficient for honesty that a person tells whatever she happens to believe is the truth. An honest person is careful with the truth. She respects it and does her best to find it out, to preserve it, and to communicate it in a way that permits the hearer to believe the truth justifiably and with understanding. But this in turn requires that she have intellectual virtues that give her as high a degree of justification and understanding as possible. She must be attentive, take the trouble to be thorough and careful in weighing evidence, be intellectually and perceptually acute, especially in important matters, and so on, for all the intellectual virtues. The moral virtue of honesty, then, entails having intellectual virtues.

The causal connections among intellectual and moral virtues are numerous. Envy, pride, and the urge to reinforce prejudices can easily inhibit the acquisition of intellectual virtues. A person without sufficient self-respect and an inordinate need to be liked by others may tend to intellectual conformity. An egoistic person will want to get her way, and this includes wanting to be right. She will therefore resist any demonstration of a mistake in her beliefs. If her belief is about a topic of contemporary debate, her egoism may lead her to read only those articles that support her own position and to discuss politics only with like-

minded individuals. Or if she is a philosopher, she may invite debate but will not fairly evaluate criticisms of her position and will invest most of her intellectual energy in winning the argument. She has, then, intellectual failings resulting from a moral vice.

Furthermore, many moral virtues such as patience, perseverance, and courage are causally necessary for having intellectual virtues. In addition, there are virtues that apply both to the moral and the intellectual realm, and it is possible that that they are in fact the same virtue. The same point holds for such virtues as courage, humility, and discretion, all of which have both moral and intellectual forms. Vices such as laziness, prejudice, and obtuseness have both moral and intellectual forms.

Two of the few important philosophers in the history of philosophy who discuss intellectual vice, Francis Bacon and John Locke associate intellectual failings with the passions and the moral vices. Both Bacon (1994, Book I, aphorisms 41- 44, 49, 52- 62) and Locke (1859, sec. 3, pp. 208-9; also 1975, essay IV.20) emphasize the connections between moral and intellectual character in their enumerations of the ways things can go astray in human thinking. Recently, John Benson defines autonomy in a way that makes it both a moral and an intellectual virtue: 'The virtue of autonomy is a mean state of character with regard to reliance on one's own powers in acting, choosing, and forming opinions' (Benson 1987, p. 205). He argues that autonomous moral thinking is closely parallel to autonomous theoretical thinking, the one being concerned with what should be done, the other with what is the case. He sees autonomy is a proper degree and kind of reliance on others, what is proper being determined by the end of the activity in which one is engaging. This virtue, Benson says, is closely allied to courage, as well as to humility, and it shows the connection between cognitive and volitional processes: 'To be autonomous in one's thinking calls for intellectual skills, including the ability to judge when someone else knows better than yourself. But it calls also for the ability to control the emotions that prevent those skills from being properly exercised' (ibid., p. 213).

Although the idea of intellectual virtue has been introduced into the epistemological literature by Ernest Sosa, he did no more than mention an association with virtue ethics. Subsequently 'virtue epistemology' has been used as another name for reliabilism (the view that the epistemic

goal is to form true beliefs and not to form false beliefs.) The works of Lorraine Code (1987) and James Montmarquet (1986) come closer to linking epistemology with virtue ethics, but neither one derives the concept of epistemic virtue from a background virtue ethics or pushes the similarities between intellectual virtue and moral virtue very far. Recently, Linda Zagzebski (1996) developed a virtue theory that is inclusive enough to handle the intellectual as well as the moral virtues within a single theory. She argued that intellectual virtues are, in fact, forms of moral virtue. It follows that intellectual virtue is properly the object of study of moral philosophy. This claim is intended not to reduce epistemic concepts to moral concepts in the way that has sometimes been attempted, but to extend the range of moral concepts to include the normative dimension of cognitive activity: normative epistemology is a branch of ethics.

Furthering Intellectual Virtues

Linda Zagzebski proposes a detailed method of developing intellectual virtues (Zagzebski 1996, pp. 152-5): it requires training through the imitation of virtuous persons and practice in acting virtuously. It also involves handling certain feelings and acquiring the ability to like acting virtuously. Intellectual virtues also have stages in between vice and virtue consisting in *akrasia* or weakness of will and self-control. While some forms of self-deception may be a vice, other forms may instead be a form of intellectual *akrasia*. In this case, one is aware that one has a vice and acquires the ability to tell how she should behave intellectually on the proper occasion. Moreover, she acquires the desire to be intellectually virtuous, but without doing so. This describes the state of intellectual *akrasia*, which is a state higher than vice. Some of the intellectual vices may have contrary vices, where one is an excess and the other a deficiency and the virtue is a mean between them. For example, there may be such a thing as intellectual rashness, the contrary of intellectual cowardice. In addition it may be possible to be overly thorough, overly sensitive to detail, overly cautious.

The stage after *akrasia* is intellectual self-control. At this stage a person has to stop herself from accepting inadequate evidence or poor testimony or lapsing into ways of speaking and reasoning of which she disapproves. But, unlike the previous stage, she does it successfully. Still, she lacks the virtue because she finds it difficult to weigh evidence properly or judge authority reliably or reason with care. Her behavior may be correct, but it is not grounded in a 'firm and unchangeable character,' as Aristotle characterizes the person who truly possesses virtue. The final stage is the intellectual virtue. Zagzebski's examples include intellectual carefulness, perseverance, humility, vigor, flexibility, courage, and thoroughness, and the virtues opposed to wishful thinking, obtuseness and conformity. One of the most important intellectual virtues would be intellectual integrity.

A modern list of intellectual vices could be the following: intellectual pride, negligence, idleness, cowardice, conformity, carelessness, rigidity, prejudice, wishful thinking, close-mindedness, insensitivity to detail, obtuseness, and lack of thoroughness. There is probably also a vice contrary to intellectual perseverance, which involves giving up too soon and may be a form of intellectual laziness or proneness to discouragement.

Some of the advocates of a virtue epistemology are religious. For those who feel uncomfortable with the Christian content of some virtues and especially some vices, not to mention the use of the term "vice", a non-religious epistemology of virtues may be developed along Karl Popper's and his followers' critical rationalism⁹. Popper states his main view of learning in *The Open Society and its Enemies*:

All the known historical examples of human fallibility... are *examples of the advance of our knowledge*. Every discovery of a mistake constitutes a real advance in our knowledge... *We can learn from our mistakes*.

⁹ See Popper (1959, 1962, 1965, 1996), and his followers Joseph Agassi and Ian C. Jarvie (1987), for a method of improving thinking for scientists as well as laymen. See John Wettersten (1987), for crediting Otto Selz with the psychology, Karl Popper with the methodology and Joseph Agassi with the pedagogy associated with critical rationalism. John Wettersten argues that the unity between the three is both historical and logical.

This fundamental insight is, indeed, the basis of all epistemology and methodology; for it gives us a hint how to learn more systematically, how to advance more quickly... the hint, very simply, is that we *must search for our mistakes*... Criticism, it seems, is the only way we have of detecting our mistakes and of learning from them in a systematic way. (Popper, 1962, vol. II, pp. 375-6)

Popper argues that Western civilization owes its rationalism and its faith in the rational unity of man and in the open society to the ancient Socratic and Christian belief in intellectual honesty and responsibility. He equates intellectual honesty with Socrates' call for care of the self and with self-criticism. Later, he adds humility as an intellectual virtue (Popper 1962, vol. II, pp. 243-4, 190, 244). In his *Conjectures and Refutations*, he insists on the readiness to take chances as a requisite for critical rationalism¹⁰. In the introduction to *The Myth of the Framework*, he writes that 'critical rationalism is a way of thinking and even a way of living. It's a faith in peace, in humanity, in tolerance, in modesty, in trying to learn from one's mistakes, and in the possibilities of critical discussion... [it's] an appeal to reason.' (Popper 1996, p. xiii).

Popper's epistemology of intellectual virtues should be developed as pedagogy. This has been partly done by his follower, Joseph Agassi. Critical of some of Popper's ideas on education, Agassi has been influenced by other views, such as Homer Lane's, Albert Einstein's, Leonard Nelson's and Imre Lakatos' group dynamics. The principal intellectual virtues he enhances are autonomy or self-reliance and nescience or awareness of one's ignorance. I describe his work and practice elsewhere¹¹.

In addition to Linda Zagzebski's program for developing intellectual virtues, Popper's implicit pedagogy, and his follower's practice, another interesting proposal is Christine McKinnon's (2003). She argues for the advantages of applying feminist ethics to epistemology. It allows for an account of a broader range of cases of knowing than those standardly discussed, in particular, knowledge of oneself and others. She argues that

¹⁰ See Popper (1963), pp. 36, 27. On critical rationalism as a method, see *ibid.*, pp. vii, 14, 46, 56.

¹¹ See Amir (2010) for an account of Agassi's and Popper's pedagogies, Amir (2003; 2006a) for my own pedagogical views, Amir (2006b) for the importance of an epistemology of virtues in everyday life, and Amir (2009a) for the critical role of epistemology towards the New Age Movement.

a virtue approach in epistemology is better suited to giving an account of knowledge of persons than traditional approaches.

Conclusion

The arguments in this article construe Philosophical Practice as a moral endeavor even when teaching critical thinking or furthering intellectual virtues. I think that Philosophical Practice is indeed a moral enterprise as all education is. It is mainly adult education, an offspring of the Enlightenment's ideals even in those post-modern times. The best philosophers can get and give are intellectual virtues. Is it possible to agree on important intellectual virtues? Is it possible to further intellectual virtues without unnecessary authority? I hope this article has explicitly put the question of intellectual virtues within Philosophical Practice on the agenda¹².

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¹² I am grateful for the anonymous reader's comments of the former journal *Practical Philosophy*. I hope the journal will survive its crisis.

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