

Einladung zum GASTVORTRAG

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The vice of intellectual individualism

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Abstract

A number of philosophers working on the intellectual virtues have argued against the ideal of the intellectually autonomous knower who relies only upon themselves in their reasoning, judgment, and decision making. John Hardwig (1985), Elizabeth Fricker (2006), Jonathan Matheson (2022) and others argue that such a person will be cognitively lacking, knowing very little, and will have many crude and mistaken beliefs. I offer an account of the central features that distinguish virtuous forms of intellectual self-reliance from its more vicious cousins and argue that a strong commitment to thinking through for oneself is not only compatible with extensive reliance upon the intellectual efforts of others but also represents the virtuous ideal. I then report the results of a series of empirical studies that investigate the correlates of intellectual individualism. I found that valuing self-reliance in the intellectual domain is associated with increased arrogance, dogmatism, and belief in misinformation, conspiracy theories, and pseudoscience. These results confirm empirical claims virtue theorists have made about the problems and pitfalls of rejecting intellectual dependence or interdependence in favor of strongly individualistic approaches to reasoning and belief.



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James R. Beebe is a Professor of Philosophy, Director of the Experimental Epistemology Research Group, and Member of the Center for Cognitive Science at the University at Buffalo (SUNY). Recent publications include "The Pitfalls of Epistemic Autonomy without Intellectual Humility," "Measuring Virtuous Responses to Peer Disagreement: The Intellectual Humility and Actively Open-Minded Thinking of Conciliationists" (with Jonathan Matheson), "The Empirical Case for Folk Indexical Moral Relativism," and "Scientific Realism in the Wild: An Empirical Study of Seven Sciences and History and Philosophy of Science" (with Finnur Dellsén).

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