

Epistemic Sensibility: Third Dimension of Virtue Epistemology

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December 18, 2012

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Abstract

The author tries to argue how epistemic sensibility as virtue sensibility can complement virtue epistemology. Many philosophers interrelated virtue reliabilism (e.g., Brogaard, 2006) and virtue responsibilism (e.g., Code, 1987) to virtue epistemology as two dimensions with many diverging and a few converging characters. The possible new dimension of virtue epistemology, epistemic sensibility, has been completely ignored in the literature. The overlapping relationship among virtue reliabilism, virtue responsibilism, and virtue sensibilism can form a common ground for virtue epistemology. I outlined some essences of epistemic sensibility- pervasive attitude in society, gate keeping contextualism, identification of new items, unreflective consciousness, judgment of moral beliefs, epistemic reliability and trustworthiness, and pedagogical and cognitive disequilibrium. Virtue sensibilism may complement other two dimensions in a meaningful way to the study of virtue epistemology in terms of ontology, epistemology, methodology, axiology, and metaphysics. The act of bridging and debridging of these three dimensions helps us to develop a broader understanding of virtue epistemology.

Key Words: Epistemic sensibility, virtue reliability, virtue responsibility, virtue epistemology.

Introduction

The motivation for the paper came through a graduate course on the theory of epistemology. In this paper, I would like to discuss how one's personal experiences can influence and transform his or her epistemic sensibility. My argument is how epistemic sensibility as virtue sensibility can complement virtue epistemology. Many philosophers interrelated virtue reliabilism (e.g., Brogaard, 2006) and virtue responsibilism (e.g., Code, 1987) to virtue epistemology as two dimensions with many diverging and a few converging characters. The possible new dimension of virtue epistemology, epistemic sensibility, has been completely ignored in the literature. The overlapping relationship among virtue reliabilism, virtue responsibilism, and virtue sensibilism can form a common ground for virtue epistemology. I outlined some essences of epistemic sensibility- epistemic attitude, epistemic gate keeping, identification of new items, unreflective consciousness, judgment of moral beliefs, epistemic

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

reliability and trustworthiness, and pedagogical and cognitive disequilibrium. Virtue sensibillism may interact with other two dimensions in a meaningful way to the study of virtue epistemology in terms of ontology, epistemology, methodology, axiology, and metaphysics. The act of bridging and debridging of these three dimensions helps us to develop a broader understanding of virtue epistemology.

In this context, I interrelated some of my personal experiences at childhood to the foundation of epistemic sensibillism within a person. My argument is that it is possible to conceptualize epistemic sensibility as an important aspect for transformative epistemology based on an iterative process of advancing epistemic and pedagogical beliefs enriched and empowered by an epistemic valor. This concept may empower prospective educators and teachers as naïve philosophers within the scope of applied epistemology.

Epistemic sensibility has not been discussed in literature of philosophy explicitly. Only a few scholars of philosophy mention the construct ‘epistemic sensibility’ implicitly in their writing. But, none of them explicated the meaning and significance of epistemic sensibility except indicating certain meaning in context. Some scholars connect epistemic sensibility to pervasive attitude in the society (Shklar, 1990) in relation to habituation toward credibility judgments and gate keeping contextualism (Henderson, 2009). Others connect it to “person’s readiness to identify new items that have their origin in a person’s practice and even beyond that, outside one’s own borders” (Juha Varto, Alto University, Feb 28, 2012). Epistemic sensibility is a natural tendency toward knowledge of something without conscious reflection. Mark Timmons (1993) remarks that epistemic sensibility forms a basis to evaluate epistemic status of a moral belief. Likewise, Fricker (2007) discussed the virtue-epistemological model with reference to trained moral epistemic sensibility and looked at epistemic injustice in the forms of testimonial

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

injustice and hermeneutical injustice. Festenstein (2009) mentioned epistemic sensibility as a tool to assess the reliability and trustworthiness in pragmatic account of deliberation. Todd May (1993) states, “even if not clearly articulated, there was at least a diffuse moral and epistemic sensibility that informed the confinement, evidenced in the attitude expressed toward the mad by Descartes” (p. 16).

Ross (1994) discussed students’ epistemic sensibility in his doctoral dissertation in relation to epistemic dependence and autonomy. He points to a teacher practicing direct instruction in the context of an Australian school. The students are so-used-to in following what the teacher says, and they fail to notice wrong information given by the teacher on the board. There are hardly one or two questions asked by students throughout a period. The students and the teacher seem ignorant of epistemic import of asking good questions and even arguing against certain approaches to solve problems. The students do not realize the epistemic responsibility to take reflective skepticism. Ross further claims that students who scored high in tests did not have a good grasp of Newtonian Physics due to lack of opportunity to think critically, creatively, and reflexively that further led to weak epistemic sensibility.

Sylvest (2011) discusses the nature philosophic and states that:

The philosophic describes our ethical, aesthetical and epistemic sensibilities and includes the concepts that we might symbolically abstract from our primary level encounters with reality via our cognitive-affective juxtapositions. An inward personal response to 1) a deeply felt ethical sensibility might be that of *reverence*; 2) an aesthetical sensibility might be that of *awe*; and 3) an epistemic sensibility might be that of *assent*. (Sylvest, 2011, p. 1)

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

It seems that one's epistemic sensibility draws his or her attention toward things or phenomena which appear to be common events for others and goes unnoticed, but a significant source of knowledge to the person who actually notices the subtleties in them. The brief notes from different sources in different contexts in the literature have been used in drawing some essences of epistemic sensibility in terms of attitude, contextual consciousness, moral beliefs, epistemic in/justice, reliability and trustworthiness, cognitive disequilibrium, and assent to experiences. Let me examine a few experiential anecdotes from the qualities within these essences.

Epistemic Sensibility in the Root

A naïve philosophical question can be related to how one comes to know what he or she knows about the world in general and about a discipline in particular. When I think of one's way of knowing mathematics or any discipline, I can see a rough road along which one might baffle a lot to reach a position and confidently say that he or she knows it. The epistemic journey is always not a straight forward. It can move through complexities of constructing and reconstructing one's notion of what does it mean to know anything in general and a discipline in a specific way. Belief may always stand as an important aspect tied with epistemic transitions at the same time. These epistemic transitions also may impact one's beliefs in the same or opposite or other direction.

Maybe use of life-experiences as contexts provides us a solid candidate issue to discuss epistemic sensibility. The anecdotal narratives of Devendra's (an interiorized epistemic agent) childhood experiences demonstrate how children know about the world and how do they make sense of it. Connecting this general notion of childhood experiences to mathematics and science or other disciplines through the view point of epistemic sensibility, I would like to discuss

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

essences of epistemic sensibility that closely align with how literatures portray it (implicitly). The naïve explication of general characteristics of epistemic sensibility is solely rooted in the following three experiential anecdotes. These anecdotes are not empirical evidences, but they may be representative candidates of epistemic sensibility in one's childhood experiences.

Anecdote One: Working on a Leaf Fan

Once in his early childhood, Devendra's best friend Dhunde took him to a nearby mango orchard. He picked up a mango leaf from the ground that was fallen from a nearby tree. He tore it almost a half from both ends but opposite sides and pierced a hole at the middle of it with a thorn. Holding the thorn in one hand, he turned it toward the opposite direction of the wind. The leaf rotated fast. He ran a little ahead, the leaf rotated faster. Devendra was amazed at it. He had never seen it before and never experienced that something would rotate by the wind. He tried himself to make a new leaf-fan from a mango leaf. He could not tear it correctly at first. He asked Dhunde for help. Dhunde taught him how to tear the leaf correctly so that it can rotate with the wind. Devendra did it correctly in his next attempt. But, still he did not know the game. What makes the leaf rotate? Is it the wind or is it shape of the leaf that caused leaf to rotate? How does the wind be a cause for the rotation? Why does it rotate in a certain direction and not the other direction? Devendra continued thinking about these questions. Dhunde could help him make the leaf fan, but he could not explain how things worked the way they worked in the case of the leaf fan. His curiosity of knowing about the leaf rotation can be a basis for epistemic sensibility at first hand.

Devendra thought that his school teacher would be able to explain the things related to rotation of a leaf fan by the wind. He was still wondering about how the wind caused rotation of the leaf fan. He asked his first grade teacher how the wind causes rotation of the leaf fan. The

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

teacher simply replied that the leaf fan rotated when wind pushed it. Devendra asked the teacher why other things did not rotate when the wind pushed them too, but only the leaf fan rotated. The teacher bypassed this question saying that more he would learn about it when he continued study science in the future. Devendra was curious to know about how and why a leaf fan rotates when wind pushes it. Unfortunately, the teacher did not think it as an important question, and he did not think it seriously at the moment. The teacher should have at least tried to look at other possibilities to answer the question in a scientific way or in a logical way except postponing it for the future science classes.

Anecdote Two: Observing Behavior of Ants

One day in his early childhood, Devendra was playing with Dhunde on a grazingland nearby his village. Dhunde asked him to look at something in his hand. Devendra went to him with curiosity. Dhunde moved a little farther toward a barren part of the land. He asked Devendra to follow him. When he reached a barren part of the land, Dhunde sat down on the ground and asked Devendra to sit beside him. He dropped a dead fly in front of an ant that was moving around on the barren ground. It was a wonder to Devendra why Dhunde dropped the dead fly in front of an ant. He thought that Dhunde might be feeding the ant. With a little curiosity, he continued looking at the ant and the dead fly for a while.

The tiny ant moved around the dead fly for a while. She climbed on it. She tried to pull it away, but she was not able to do it. She quickly moved around the dead fly and moved away a little farther and returned back to the fly. She tried to pull it away again, but her effort was not enough to move it. She left the fly at the same place, and she ran away in a direction. Devendra and Dhunde both continued watching the ant. She continued running in the same direction. After a few minutes, she reached a hole (possibly her home) where other ants were busy in carrying

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

pieces of soil and throwing it out of the hole. The small pieces of soil formed almost a funnel shape with a little obliqueness from one side. She directly entered the whole. Within a few seconds, to their surprise, too many ants came out of the whole and ran toward the dead fly. They all followed almost exactly the same route as followed by the earlier ant. One ant was leading the swarm of ants; probably she should be the one who first found the dead fly.

After a while, too many ants surrounded the dead fly. They pulled it away together toward their home. Devendra could not remain without amazement. It was a tremendous surprise to him. It was the first time he saw ants' social behavior, their collective work, collective strength, and living together. This event was another opportunity for him to know about ants and their behavior to some extent. This raised next set of questions in his mind. How does an ant know a direction? What sign or language does it have to communicate? How does it make sense of size of a prey? How do ants live together?

Next day he asked his teacher how ants know the direction and how do they talk to each other. His teacher replied that ants may know the direction by reference objects or their body scent or the sun light. They can talk to each other by body sign. But, he did not clarify how the ants make sense of reference objects, body scent or the sun light. He also did not elaborate what kind of body sign they use and what they signify. He told Devendra and all the students in the class that thinking about this kind of thing is a good habit although they may not get all the answers at the time. He said, "Scientists are still studying animal behavior and they can tell more about it." Devendra thought for a long time, "How do scientists know what ants do, how do they do, and why do they do the way they do?" These questions lead him to think of scientific observations from his naïve understanding at the childhood.

Anecdote Three: Witnessing a Metamorphosis

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

Devendra's fifth grade science teacher taught life cycle of a butterfly in the class. He taught them different stages in the life cycle. Devendra wondered knowing that a caterpillar with poisonous hair was a stage of a butterfly. The teacher taught the students different stages in the life cycle of a butterfly with sketches on the board. He drew a diagram on the blackboard showing butterfly (adult), eggs, larva (caterpillar), pupa (in a puparium), and then baby butterfly coming out of the puparium. It was almost an unbelievable event for Devendra to know that a caterpillar was actually a form of baby of a butterfly. On the way returning home from the school, he was thinking of capturing a caterpillar in a box and see how it changes into a butterfly.

In the evening, he went to the courtyard of his house to find a caterpillar. After searching for a while in the grass, he found a caterpillar on a plant. It was eating green leaves of the plant. He held the leaf with the caterpillar. He then put it into a cardboard box. He made a numerous smaller holes from the two sides of the cardboard box to let the air pass in and out of the box. He put more leaves in the box for the caterpillar to eat. He closed the box with the caterpillar inside and kept it in his study room. He showed it to his mother and told her that the caterpillar would turn into a butterfly. She did not believe it. She asked him to throw the caterpillar out of the box and away from the room to the courtyard. He insisted keeping it in his room. He said that it was his science experiment. She did not compel him to through it out of the room. Every morning he used put some fresh leaves in the box. In the evening, after returning from school, he observed the caterpillar, and he exchanged the leaves again with fresh ones. For the first four or five days, the caterpillar ate all the leaves he kept in the box. After a week, he saw the leaves half eaten. The caterpillar produced a cover with its hair and sticky substance it released from its abdomen. Devendra cleaned up the remaining leaves in the box. The caterpillar remained stuck at one

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

corner of the box within the cover. It did not eat any leaves. It did not move. Possibly it was just breathing.

Devendra continued watching the box before going to school and after returning from the school. One day after three weeks, when he returned from the school and watched inside of the box, there was a beautiful butterfly in the box. “Wow! A big surprise!” He ran to his mother with the box. She was also surprised to see the butterfly. He saw that the caterpillar was a baby of a butterfly. It was a big surprise to him to see a butterfly coming out of the puparium. It was a strong evidence for him to believe that a caterpillar was actually a baby of a butterfly. Next day, he told the story to the science teacher in the class as if he had witnessed a big mystery about caterpillar. There was no surprise about his story to the class. Nobody wondered on it except himself. Everybody took it as a usual phenomenon. The teacher said, “It may be a big surprise for you, but it is a common phenomenon that happens to the caterpillar.” However, Devendra continued thinking, “Are all caterpillars babies of butterflies? What do caterpillars do inside the cover (in the puparium)? Are there other insects or animals that appear in different forms in their life cycle? Does a butterfly know that a caterpillar can be her baby?”

Looking back to these events (as discussed in the three anecdotes), what epistemological assumption we can make about children’s way of knowing, wondering, and perplexing about the world? Do such events (observing ants and caterpillars) have any epistemological significance? How? Why? Does our education system promote such habit? How can an education system promote students’ epistemic sensibility? How does such epistemic sensibility affect one’s knowledge about self and the world? What epistemic significance can we draw out of such behavior of a child? How do childhood experiences about the world contribute in epistemic sensibility and epistemic transformation? Why childhood questions about the world are

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

important from an epistemological point of view? To what extent such questions contribute in one's knowledge about the world? These are some of the questions we can think of from epistemic point of view in relation to past, present, and future of our education system, especially in schools. These questions further lead us to think about the essences of epistemic sensibility with reference to the three anecdotes discussed above and how different scholars used 'epistemic sensibility' implicitly in their writing.

Essences of Epistemic Sensibility

I outlined three fundamental experiential anecdotes that have a natural tendency, I would like to claim, toward epistemic significance. Now I would like to integrate them within the issues of epistemic sensibility. Epistemic sensibility can be discussed with reference to reflective and reflexive ability. To some extent it can be related to epistemic attitude, but they are not synonymous. Reflectivity has to do with looking back to the experiences and know more about what happened, why it happened, and how it happened. Now I would like to examine epistemic sensibility with reference to the three anecdotes characterized by essences of epistemic sensibility. These essences are neither exhaustive nor exclusive of all kinds of possibilities in relation of epistemic sensibility. These are my naïve syntheses based on my understanding from literature and my own novice experience of the field.

Pervasive Attitude in Society

Every society has a certain attitude to look at human endeavors to know about the world. The society makes a judgment about what counts as knowledge. There is a pervasive attitude in society in relation to behavior, attitude, and functions that influences one's habit of thinking, reasoning, and knowing about the world. Such a common habit of thinking, reasoning, and knowing about the world shapes one's epistemic sensibility. Shklar (1990) refers to such attitude

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

in relation to epistemic sensibility. This can be related to James Christian's (2009) epistemic awareness, but not synonymous to each other. What sense did Devendra make out of working on a leaf fan, observing ants, and observing metamorphosis of caterpillar into a butterfly could have a significant impact in his thinking, reasoning, and knowing about the phenomena. But, the pervasive attitude in the society is leaning toward authoritative figures (elders, teachers, and parents) for knowledge that does not seem to be helpful in promoting and encouraging Devendra's epistemic sensibility. His school teacher did not seem to value his experience from epistemic point of view.

Gate Keeping Contextualism

Some philosophers (e.g., David Henderson, 2009) connect attributions of knowledge and denials of knowledge through the concept of epistemic gate keeping. This gate keeping in a context depends upon one's position in the spectrum of applied community and source community. Henderson uses the term 'epistemic sensibility' with reference to an agent in source community or applied community that comes to face standards and alternatives of knowledge as epistemic gate keeping context with a special purpose. To me this epistemic gate keeping relates to an agent's choices among alternatives in source or applied community in relation to which alternative best describes the knowledge in a pervasive way. This notion closely relates to pervasive attitude. In relation to Devendra's experiences with a leaf fan, observation of ants, and transformation of caterpillar into a butterfly seem to be totally ignored by the school system. The teachers are functioning as applied gate keepers (from pedagogical and epistemic sense) in the context of pedagogical and cognitive development of students including Devendra. They are acting as a filtering gate that makes choices of what to teach, how to teach, and why to teach ignoring what students already knew or experienced.

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

Identification of New Items

Some scholars connect epistemic sensibility to a person's readiness and eagerness to identify new items of knowledge that have their origin in a person's practice or in the environment. Some refer to this source beyond one's own borders (Juha Varto, Alto University, Feb 28, 2012). Here, the identification of new items refers to one's ability to notice a new feature or nature of an object from among the general features that justifies distinctness of identification (Dilworth, 2006). Such ability of an individual relates to his or her epistemic sensibility. To me identification of such attribute or feature of an object or phenomenon helps one in the formation of new representation (of the object or phenomenon) as an item of knowledge. With reference to Devendra's experience with the leaf fan, the shape of the fan and the wind direction can be the items he identified as significant character in the rotation of the fan. He was able to notice how the speed could be altered by changing the shape of the leaf. However, we can question his ability to notice other features such as, texture of the leaf and transition of the properties from leaf to other objects (such as paper or tin foil). His fascination of observing ants pulling the dead fly together to their home shows a naïve understanding of how ants behave together as social beings. It may not be clear how his sense of wonder related to sense of assent to the knowledge-that or knowledge-why or knowledge-of. But, his epistemic sensibility toward the social behavior of ants might have boosted his knowledge of social living of ants. His propositional knowledge of "a caterpillar changing into a butterfly" certainly reached an optimum state when he actually saw it happened, besides hearing his teacher saying it in the class.

Unreflective Consciousness

One's epistemic sensibility can be related to Sartre's pre-reflective or unreflective consciousness because such consciousness is outer-directed (Gennaro, 2002) and can identify

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

specific features of an object or phenomena that justifies one's state of knowing (or being conscious). Whereas reflective consciousness, in Sartre's philosophy, is inner directed in relation to outer objects in the world (Gennaro, 2002). When one is conscious of the world and/or the self, then his or her pre-reflective/reflective consciousness exhibits an epistemic sensibility toward the forms of the objects in the world inkling self. Either way one is in the state of knowing (self or the world) in which the experience permeates through cognitive and affective domain of one's knowledge creating a space for epistemic sensibility within his or her mind. Devendra's work on a leaf fan, his observation of ants, and his observation of transformation of a caterpillar to a butterfly explicate some level of his unreflective and reflective consciousness toward the phenomena. His awareness to the phenomena, despite his age and context in which he was educated, shows some degree of unreflective consciousness to the phenomena. His sense of wonder, reverence, and value toward these phenomena explicate inner unreflective consciousness with deep epistemic sensibility.

Judgment of Moral Beliefs

Some authors (e.g., Mark Timmons, 1993) argue that epistemic sensibility forms a basis to evaluate epistemic status of an individual's moral belief. They discuss epistemic responsibility in relation to gathering evidence, consideration for counter possibilities, and managing internal conflicts with beliefs. To some extent it seems to be true that one cannot be epistemically responsible without being epistemically sensible. One cannot gather authentic evidence without having epistemic sensibility in his or her mind. In the same way he or she cannot decide which alternative is better in a context to represent knowledge without having a good sense of a more viable option among the alternatives. Epistemic sensibility is required to manage one's internal conflict with beliefs if such conflict exists at a time. How does one perform such a challenging

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

task depends on his or her judgment of moral beliefs through epistemic sensibility? This issue further goes to virtue epistemology for judging epistemic in/justices (Fricker, 2007). Can we link Devendra's experiences of the fan, ants, and the caterpillar with his moral beliefs? I am not sure, at this point, whether we can associate his epistemic character with moral beliefs, but one thing is sure in relation to teacher's moral beliefs. When, Devendra tried to explicate his experiences in relation to the three phenomena at different times (related to leaf fan, ants, and caterpillar) in the class, the teachers seem to be ignorant of their moral belief that 'students bring with them different experiences in the class that can be an entry point for teaching and learning'. Their epistemic sensibility was not at parity with what moral beliefs they were expected to have as teachers. Their belief that 'students will learn more about science in their future classes' cannot be endorsed as a justification of moral belief.

Epistemic Reliability and Trustworthiness

Again this connects to Mark Timmon's (1993) epistemic responsibility with respect to the collection of evidence, choice of alternatives, and dealing with internal conflicts with beliefs. How reliably these processes take place and how trustworthy of the information maintained depends on how deeply one's epistemic sensibility functions. If one is very serious about establishing epistemic reliability and trustworthiness of knowledge through empirical or intuitional or whatever method used, epistemic sensibility functions as a tool to establish rigor of knowledge in terms of viable evidences, choices, and strengths of belief through pragmatic account of deliberation (Festenstein, 2009). Devendra can explicate his sense of wonder, reverence, and value to his experiences of the leaf fan, ants, and the caterpillar. The depth of explication of his consciousness toward these phenomena can be used as a reliable and trustworthy tool to judge the epistemic value of those phenomena. At this point, we can relate his

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

true explication with details of what he experienced to is epistemic sensibility. Deeper he can explicate those experiences greater is the degree of epistemic sensibility in his explication.

Pedagogical and Cognitive State of Disequilibrium

When a person is in pedagogical and cognitive state of disequilibrium, he or she uses this state in the form of anxiety, attitude, or habit of seeking an answer of what is going on, how is it going on, and why is it going on the way it is going on about a phenomenon. The state of disequilibrium in terms of knowledge-that, knowledge-why, and knowledge-of puts one into the mental and cognitive disequilibrium or dissonant state within which he or she tries resolve the cognitive and pedagogical tension. While resolving the disequilibrium he or she uses epistemic sensibility to make choices of what makes more sense in terms of knowledge. But, when one's state of disequilibrium is resolved for a while, he or she is ventured into another level of pedagogical and cognitive disequilibrium (of higher epistemic level). This process continuously unfolds in one's epistemic life in which epistemic sensibility plays the central and developmental role.

Ross (1994) discussed epistemic sensibility in relation to a teacher's direct instruction in the context of an Australian school and her students following what she says with a failure to notice wrong information. It seems that there was either no or very low degree of epistemic sensibility in the class. The pedagogy and students' cognitive state did not seem to be in the state of disequilibrium. The class was not able to function through epistemic sensibility; rather it seemed linear positivistic lesson deliberation without any impact in students' cognitive state. While we consider for Devendra's experience, his cognitive state seem to be transitioned through the state of disequilibrium in relation to his experiences with the leaf fan, ants, and the caterpillar. But, his teachers were not able to utilize this opportunity to create further cognitive

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

and pedagogical dissonance or disequilibrium. They did not attempt to value Devendra's experience as a beginning point in further discussion of how students make sense of different phenomena in the world (including the leaf fan, ants, and the caterpillar). It seems that they flatly ignored epistemic sensibility of students.

Now am going to defend epistemic sensibility as a third dimension in the virtue epistemology with essences that signify both virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism with some key paradigms that it can direct virtue epistemology into a new debate.

Dimensions of Virtue Epistemology

Virtue epistemology is the study of epistemic properties of persons, not the properties of beliefs (Zagzebski & Fairweather, 2001). This was a profound shift in the theory of epistemology when Ernest Sosa introduced the idea of intellectual virtue in his famous book "The Raft and the Pyramid" in 1980. But, his idea of virtue reliabilism polarized virtue epistemology toward externalism and naturalism. Later Lorraine Code and James Montmarquet did not agree with Sosa and they introduced the idea of virtue character (intellectual virtue) as an important part of virtue epistemology. John Greco tried to bring virtue reliability and virtue responsibility together as objective and subjective conditions for virtue epistemology. One way or other, these virtue epistemologists tried to expand the normativity of virtue epistemology without considering the broader virtue epistemic frame that can integrate virtues from cognitive capacity, metacognitive capacity, and transcendental metaphysical capacity.

I am going to discuss how epistemic sensibility interacts with these other dimensions and affects in the functioning of virtue epistemology in a subtle and complex way. Addition of the new dimension (epistemic sensibility) in the virtue epistemology, in one way, may increase the sophistication in understanding its essences; or it may provide a blurred picture of epistemic

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

outlook of the construct ‘virtue epistemology’ with a new dimension to think in the future. The interrelation of virtue reliabilism, virtue responsibilism, and virtue sensibillism can be framed as three mutually inclusive dimensions of virtue epistemology. This frame is the basis for the current argument about the third dimension and possible interrelations among these dimensions.

Virtue Reliabilism

Virtue reliabilism focuses on intellectual virtues as reliable cognitive faculties or abilities (Baehr, 2006). Other virtue reliabilists (e.g., Alvin Goldman, John Greco, Ernest Sosa, to name a few) also agree that knowledge as true belief is formed through intellectual virtues based on hearing, sight, smell, touch, taste, and reasoning. These philosophers also claim that only these cognitive capacities provide one a reliable source of knowledge in terms of input-output devices in belief-generating mechanisms. Their account of knowledge based on virtue reliabilism denies traits of intellectual character as a part of virtue epistemology. This denial has been considered problematic by virtue responsibilists in the sense that cognitive faculty only cannot portray a complete picture of intellectual virtues.

Virtue Responsibilism

Other virtue epistemologists (e.g., Lorraine Code, James Montmarquet, Linda Zagzebski) proposed epistemological role of the intellectual virtues in terms of character traits by paying attention to active, personal, and social dimensions of the cognitive life in terms of epistemic responsibility. They claim that epistemic responsibility as a chief intellectual virtue helps in forming and expanding other virtues such as open mindedness, honesty, integrity, and rationality. They emphasized one’s epistemic orientation toward the world, self, and others as an active epistemic organism in penetration of what is true about the object of study in a natural, physical, or social environment. The epistemic organism desires to reach the depth of reality as

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

much it is possible as in a context in a responsible way ethically, technically, and scientifically. Some epistemologists (e.g., James Montmarquet) even extend the idea of epistemic responsibility toward epistemic consciousness.

Virtue Sensibilism

Epistemic sensibility is a newly introduced third dimension in the field of virtue epistemology after virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism. Yet, many essences and implications of epistemic sensibility have to be discussed, contended, refuted, and restructured. Belbase (2012) introduced his naïve understanding of epistemic sensibility in terms of pervasive attitude, gate keeping contextualism, identification of new items, unreflective consciousness, judgment of moral beliefs, epistemic reliability and trustworthiness, and pedagogical and cognitive state of disequilibrium in relation to an object or event at concrete or abstract level. These essences of epistemic sensibilities are sort of free floating ideas and this need to be further grounded. Thorndike-Breeze (2012) uses the term ‘sensibility’ to signify one’s sympathy and sentimentality toward an object or a phenomenon. She clarifies the literary manifestation of ‘sensibility’ as “power or capacity of feeling, capacity of sensation and emotion as distinguished from cognition and will” (p. 15). Then epistemic sensibility can be coined with higher level of feelings and sentimentality toward virtue intellectualism and virtue epistemic personality. For the current purpose, I would like to argue epistemic sensibility as a bridge between virtue reliability and virtue responsibility to broaden the scope of virtue epistemology. For this I would like to base my argument on five claims- ontological, epistemological, methodological, axiological, and metaphysical. Then I would like to restructure the relationship among virtue reliabilism, virtue responsibilism, and virtue sensibilism.

Philosophical Landscape

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

I would like to outline philosophical landscape related to the three dimensions of virtue epistemology. The landscape is a blend of claims about the existence of knowledge, nature of knowledge, methodological issue related to knowledge, value associated with knowledge, and metaphysical interpretation of knowledge.

Ontological Claim

My ontological claim at this point is- there is a trilogical relationship among virtue reliabilism, virtue responsibilism, and virtue sensibilism on which virtue epistemology stands. The first among them provides the body, the second one provides the heart, and the third one provides the brain to virtue epistemology. Therefore, the existence of virtue epistemology can be sensed with the body, heart, and brain trilogical metaphor. Virtue reliabilism provides a concrete basis (body) on which intellectual virtues stand in terms of sensory and reflective (cognitive) awareness toward the world. Without this cognitive awareness, other parts may not have a basis to even stand on, before they make sense in terms of knowledge. Virtue reliabilism overtly relies on perceptual faculties to form true beliefs about an object or a phenomenon. Therefore, this kind of knowledge depends on the reliability of perceptual phenomenon through cognitive faculties. In this context, it is obvious that the virtue reliabilists take epistemological externalism. They emphasize on faculty virtues such as intuition, memory, and perception.

Virtue responsibilism is a dimension that can be understood as the heart through which intellectual virtues are embodied in the form of epistemic affinity (love of knowledge). Here love of knowledge connotes one's epistemic valor, epistemic openness, patience, perserverance, empathy, and reflexiveness. They are within affective domain of intellectual virtues. These characters not only signify one's virtue characters, but also they show one's epistemic responsibility to reach the viable truth. To me virtue responsibilists take epistemological

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

internalism about knowledge. For them, intellectual virtues constitute the refined traits known as trait-virtues like conscientiousness, humility, open mindedness, and perserverance. Also they align their virtue character close to virtue ethics.

The third part, virtue sensibilmism, metaphorically is the brain that actually functions as an idiosyncratic mindful embodiment of intellectual virtues guiding the other two- cognitive and affective powers of virtue epistemology. The division of virtues as faculty-virtues and trait-virtues is not helpful in understanding intellectual virtue. This is to deny the externalist and internalist epistemological dualism about knowledge.

Epistemological Claim

The second claim in relation to trilogical relationships of virtue reliabilism, virtue responsibilism, and virtue sensibilmism is- the meaning of knowledge as true belief in these three different virtues seems to be different, but that is only at the entry point. The meaning of knowledge and knowing is same by the exit point, in a naïve sense. For virtue reliabilism, knowledge is true belief acquired through senses and cognitive reasoning. The virtue reliabilists take externalist epistemological path to justify true beliefs. For virtue responsibilism, knowledge is true belief developed through deep reflection and reflexive actions. The virtue responsibilists take internalist epistemological path to self-justify knowledge. For virtue epistemic sensibilmism, knowledge is true belief originated through idiosyncratic thought, meta-cognitive, and cognitive processes about an object or event. This denies divide of epistemological path as internalism or externalism, rather it portrays transcendental epistemological path that includes both internal, external, and beyond. At the entry point, knowledge through cognitive reasoning, reflexive reasoning, and idiosyncratic reasoning seem to be different, but ultimately they are all results of interiorized processes either through senses, inner senses, or transcendental senses.

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

Methodological Claim

Methodological claim of virtue reliabilism, virtue responsibilism, and virtue sensibillism should be different in the sense that their entry points to knowledge are different. Virtue reliabilists claim that true knowledge can be achieved through cognitive power- through vision, hear, touch, smell, taste, intuition, and reasoning. They also consider empirical method as only reliable tool to reach true knowledge. Virtue responsibilists claim that knowledge can be achieved through inner reflexive power- through perserverance, open mindedness, courage, empathy, and positive thinking. They do not deny the cognitive power and empirical methods. For them cognitive capacity is necessary but not sufficient condition for complete understanding of the nature of knowledge. In order to find out about the nature of knowledge and knowing, virtue responsibilists consider intellectual character (responsibilities) as an important aspect to the success of finding the truth about knowledge. Then, their account of knowledge includes complexities associated with it. For virtue sensibillists, knowledge is acquired and constructed both through cognitive and reflexive capacities together with transcendental mental capacities. The transcendental mental capacities of human intellectual virtues portray infinite ability to know; and only a few has been described as distinct theoretical mechanisms or processes, and rest needs to be continuously studied.

Axiological Claim

Axiological claims about knowledge in the three distinct areas of virtue epistemology can be seen either as value laden or value free or beyond. To me virtue reliabilism claims value free knowledge (through robust empirical tools) whereas, virtue responsibilism claims value laden knowledge (through soulful and meaningful explanatory tools). The virtue sensibillism has no claim yet about the nature of knowledge either as value free or value laden. Actually, epistemic

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

sensibilism does not subscribe to the dualistic nature of axiological underpinnings as value laden or value free, rather it judges knowledge in terms of viability within the constraints of physical and mental, individual and social, and local and global.

Metaphysical Claim

Knowledge in virtue reliabilism is an analytical thing which can be broken down into pieces as components whereas knowledge in virtue responsibilism is synthetic whole that can be understood as an entity and breaking it loses the sense it makes to us. For a virtue sensiblist, knowledge is both a piece and a whole which makes perfect sense in different contexts, one context as a piece and other context as a whole. Metaphysically, knowledge is relative to cognitive capacity from virtue reliabilist view, and it is an absolute whole with direct access from virtue responsibilist view. Knowledge from whole to part and part to whole makes complete sense to a virtue sensiblist. Relative-absolute dualism is nonsense to a virtue sensiblist.

Bridging Debridging Virtue Epistemology

Which of the three constructs- virtue reliabilism, virtue responsibilism, and virtue sensibilism- has more resources to deal with true knowledge? Maybe this question leads us to some issues of bridging or debridging these three constructs in a more productive way. When we look at the resources to explain true knowledge, probably looking at the five claims- ontology, epistemology, methodology, axiology, and metaphysics- should not be a bad idea. Because these claims provide fundamental assumption about their claim toward true knowledge, let's forget about belief here, because dealing with beliefs leads us to discussion of another layer before reaching the level of true knowledge, and possibly it keeps us rumbled within *value problem* (which is not the purpose of this paper).

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

When we think of access to knowledge in the three dimensions of virtue epistemology, we can see that there is no direct access to knowledge in virtue reliabilism. The access to knowledge is mediated through cognitive capacity. When we look at virtue responsibilism, a responsible virtue intellectual has a direct access to knowledge through his or her internal consciences, perserverance, motivation, and meta-cognitive processes. In this sense, we can claim that virtue responsibilists have greater access to true knowledge than virtue reliabilists, because the former ones have direct first degree access to true knowledge that does not need justification, whereas, the second category do have second degree access only through cognitive capacities and therefore they need further justification in order to establish a truth value of knowledge. When we go further to virtue sensibilism, it has both direct (first degree) and indirect (second degree) access to true knowledge, because this category of virtue intellectuals use all possible sources to have access to the knowledge. They do not limit themselves either as internalists or externalists. In this context, virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism can be bridged together through virtue sensibilism. This bridging maybe awkward to the classical virtue epistemologists, but this can fulfill the need to look at virtue epistemology as a powerful epistemic frame to analyze knowledge.

Another perspective can be that virtue sensibilism does not really bridge virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism, but it adds a third dimension in the analysis of virtue epistemology. This means virtue sensibilism does not actually add any new categories or properties within virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism, but it stands as a separate dimension that other virtue epistemologist have not yet paid attention to it or did not really like to explicate it as an important dimension of virtue epistemology. The naïve understanding of virtue sensibilism at this point can open up the possibility that future virtue epistemologists can

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

extend it, contend it, defend it, and reconstruct it either in the current direction or in another direction. Either way, I see some value of studying virtue sensibility. The debridging action can lead to the development of a new category or property in the virtue epistemology. It needs more explicit examples, elaborations, and critical analyses to understand the broader anatomy of virtue epistemology.

Epilogue

When a child knows that ‘a leaf rotates, ants are social insects, and a caterpillar is a baby of a butterfly’, he or she not only wonders with knowing those phenomena, but also these events sow epistemic seeds in his or her mind. His or her keen effort to know about the world seems pure, self-motivated, and extremely creative. He or she may have a very high degree of epistemic sensibility. He or she wants to know more about the world. He or she asks questions to parents or teachers about the world (about plants, animals, and other natural and social phenomena). A child’s curiosity is very high. In this respect we can say that some children may have very high degree of epistemic sensibility. It seems that there is a deep crevice in the educational world (schools and colleges) in relation to epistemic sensibility. Schoolteachers and college professors design course, lessons, and activity for teaching and learning from their own perspective. There is a little or no attention to students’ ways of knowing. One way preaching of education (of any discipline) has ruled out students’ creativity, thinking, and sensibility about knowing and knowledge. Emphasis on either teaching or learning has created an epistemic dilemma. In both cases, teachers or professors design and implement the course from their perspective of knowledge and knowing. Very few teachers and professors emphasize students’ epistemic sensibility implicitly. Majority of them do not even think of focusing epistemic sensibility of students in an explicit way. They try to influence students’ knowledge through either

EPISTEMIC SENSIBILITY

indoctrination or training toward particular domain mostly motivated by political, social, economic, technical, and even scientific interest.

Now it is time to think of ‘epistemic sensibility’ as a positive ‘epistemic catalyst’. A teacher or professor should create opportunity for students to promote their sense of wonder, anxiety, and pleasure of knowing something through deep epistemic sensibility. In the other hand, he or she should help students become socially responsible, ethical, and normative through appropriate choice of what they need to know, how they need to know, and why they need to know what they know or intend to know. This choice should not be a forceful and structured, but a self-disciplined through a trilogical interrelationship among virtue reliabilism, virtue responsibilism, and virtue sensibilism as reconciling parts of virtue epistemology. The first two parts are already established as important aspects of virtue intellectual characters and virtue intellectual reliability. I think the third dimension (virtue sensibilism) has a greater scope to complement other two dimensions in a meaningful way to the study of virtue epistemology.

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