CHAPTER ONE

The Intellectually Dependable Person

Dependence, including dependence on other people, is a pervasive feature of the life of inquiry. When we are trying to find something out or improve our understanding or hone our investigative techniques, we are frequently at the mercy of a variety of factors not under our direct control, including the cooperation of our fellow human beings. In light of this pervasive dependence on others, it is of paramount importance for the life of inquiry that there are intellectually dependable people—roughly, people on whom others can depend in their inquiries. Without such people, the quality of our inquiries would often be put in jeopardy. It is the ideal of the intellectually dependable person that is the object of study in this book. The book’s basic question is: What is it to be an intellectually dependable person?

This first chapter is concerned with clarifying the concept of this ideal and with examining the relationship between intellectual virtues and this ideal. In Section 1, I explain that this ideal is that of a person on whom others can depend as a fellow member of the community of inquiry. The intellectually dependable person is the sort of person on whom we can depend in those myriad ways in which we distinctively depend upon fellow inquirers when conducting our inquiries. In Section 2, I contrast this ideal with the related but different ideal of the expert, and argue that unlike the ideal of the expert this ideal is centrally constituted by the possession of intellectual virtues. I contend, moreover, that if there is a subset of distinctively other-regarding intellectual virtues that I call the “virtues of intellectual dependability,” they in particular make an especially important contribution to this ideal. I conclude the chapter by briefly noting why these virtues of intellectual dependability, upon which the remainder of the book largely focuses, should be of interest to both social epistemologists and virtue epistemologists.

1. The Ideal of the Intellectually Dependable Person

Because the intellectually dependable person is one on whom others can depend in their *inquiries*, the subject of inquiry is a fitting place to begin the present discussion. Inquiry is typically conceived by philosophers as activity aimed at achieving epistemic goods. Most paradigmatically, perhaps, it is concerned with “finding something out” or with answering a question (Hookway 2003: 194). The inquirer engages in activity oriented toward determining whether or not something is the case. As part of this activity, she may gather evidence, deliberate upon it, and ultimately form a judgment. Such activity is by nature dynamic rather than static; thus inquiry is stretched out in time. Yet individual instances of inquiry may be relatively swift or more protracted. Ray’s inquiry into whether he left the bathroom light on may come to a quick terminus; Susan’s inquiry into effective treatments for Alzheimer’s may occupy her entire professional career.

Understood in this way, it is tempting to think of legitimate inquiry as aiming at true belief. The inquirer, in seeking to find out whether something is the case, seeks to believe the truth on the matter in question. Ray seeks to believe the truth about whether the light is on; Susan seeks to believe the truth about which treatments for Alzheimer’s are effective. Yet no sooner have we stated this proposal than it becomes clear that true belief alone cannot be the only legitimate aim of inquiry. Or, more exactly, it cannot be that the exclusive aim of legitimate inquiry is to believe every (relevant) true proposition. For, it is often the case that inquirers also wish to avoid error—they wish to avoid believing false propositions. Susan, for example, may well aim not only to believe of effective Alzheimer’s treatments that they are effective, but also to avoid believing of ineffective Alzheimer’s treatments that they are effective. Legitimate inquiries, then, can aim both at obtaining true beliefs and at avoiding false beliefs (cf. e.g., Alston 2005, James 1896, Riggs 2003).

Nor is this all. Our legitimate aims as inquirers are plausibly quite diverse—conceivably as diverse as is the scope of epistemic goods itself. In addition to obtaining true beliefs and avoiding false beliefs, an inquirer may legitimately aim at attaining attitudes on the matter in question that are justified or rational from her own perspective. Such an aim may apply not only to the attitude of belief, but to the attitudes of disbelief and suspension of judgment. It may also apply to more fine-grained cognitive attitudes, such as degrees of belief, if these exist. The inquirer here aims for those attitudes she adopts—whatever they may be—to be justified or rational from her own perspective.[[1]](#endnote-1)

The aims of inquiry we have thus far identified all pertain to goods exhibited via the inquirer’s relationship to isolated propositions. The inquirer believes a true proposition or does not believe a false proposition, or takes an attitude toward a proposition that is rational. Yet, inquirers may also legitimately aim to be related in epistemically valuable ways to objects other than isolated propositions. A chief candidate for such an aim is that of understanding (Grimm 2012). For example, Susan may aim to believe the truth and avoid believing falsehoods about effective Alzheimer’s treatments as part of a broader project best described as aiming to understand Alzheimer’s disease. Her aim in this broader project is not focused on attaining a certain kind of attitude toward an isolated proposition about Alzheimer’s disease, but is plausibly instead concerned with attaining a complex relationship toward a system of propositions, or even toward a non-propositional object—the disease itself.

Inquirers may also aim for their inquiries to exhibit valuable dynamic features. They may aim to conduct their inquiries in a manner reflective of open-mindedness, or intellectual perseverance, or intellectual empathy, for example. Their aim here pertains less to the outcome of the inquiry—if indeed it has an outcome—than to the way in which it is conducted. In aiming for their inquiries to be conducted in these ways, inquirers aim for their inquiries to be conducted in accordance with what philosophers have come to call “intellectual virtues,” or “responsibilist intellectual virtues” more specifically. According to a common consensus I will follow in this book (cf. e.g., Baehr 2011, Battaly 2015, King 2014 Montmarquet 1993, Zagzebski 1996), these virtues are traits of character whereby their possessors are disposed to engage in a broad range of characteristic behaviors out of a motivation to attain epistemic goods for themselves or others, where these goods are conceived of as such and are pursued at least in part for their own sake. For example, the open-minded person is disposed to seek out and consider diverse perspectives on topics of inquiry out of a motivation to attain a better epistemic position on these topics for its own sake. Characteristic behaviors of the open-minded person involve the seeking out and considering alternative perspectives; yet, to be fully intellectually virtuous, the open-minded person must engage in these behaviors ultimately out of a motivation to attain epistemic goods as such for their own sake. The intellectual virtues in this way have a “two-tiered psychological structure” (cf. Baehr 2011: 103-4): their possessor has a foundational motivation to attain epistemic goods, has reason to believe that engaging in certain patterns of action, feeling and thought characteristic of an intellectual virtue are conducive to fulfilling this motivation, and is thereby motivated and disposed to engage in these distinctive patterns of action.

My claim here is that it is legitimate for inquirers to aim for their inquiries to be conducted in intellectually virtuous ways, so understood, and indeed for themselves to become intellectually virtuous people. Much recent attention has been paid to the question of whether there is an empirical case for thinking that few if any people possess intellectual virtues or even intellectual characters at all, their intellectual behavior instead being better explained by features of their situations rather than by intellectual character traits (see, e.g., Alfano and Fairweather 2017). For my purposes, it is an important assumption that people do have malleable intellectual characters and they can become more or less intellectually virtuous. Otherwise it would be illegitimate for anyone to aim to become intellectually virtuous. I will not however attempt to develop a novel defense of the existence of intellectual character or the appropriateness of pursuing intellectual virtue as an aim against this situationist challenge here, instead directing readers to the work of others (e.g., Baehr 2017, Hill and Sandage 2016, King 2014). It is worth noting that for my purposes, it is not a devastating problem if one of the central theses of “epistemic situationism” is true—namely, that possession of full-blown intellectual virtue is rare—as long as this rarity does not make it inappropriate to aim at growth toward these virtues. What is important for my purposes is only that it is appropriate to aim to conduct one’s inquiries in accordance with intellectual virtue, and indeed to aim for oneself to become (even if only every asymptotically) intellectually virtuous.

Finally, and relatedly, and as suggested by the original gloss on inquiry as aiming at “achieving epistemic goods,” inquirers may legitimately aim at epistemic achievements. Achievements are commonly understood to be valuable outcomes of activity attributable to individuals or groups of agents on account of their competencies (Sosa 2007). So understood, the relevant epistemic achievements will be valuable outcomes of inquiry attributable to the inquirer or to groups of which she is a part on account of competencies possessed by her or by the group more broadly. The competencies in view may include the responsibilist intellectual virtues, but they may include other features as well. For example, they may include the so-called “reliabilist intellectual virtues,” which tend to be conceived of as a broader category of reliable belief-forming faculties which include such features as good eyesight or keen memory (Battaly 2015).

According to one influential contemporary view, where the valuable outcome of an epistemic achievement so understood is that of true belief, this achievement will constitute the epistemic good of knowledge. On this view, what it is for an individual to know a claim is for her to hold a true belief in that claim where her arriving upon the truth in this matter is attributable to her competencies (e.g., Greco 2010, Sosa 2007). Or, on an extension of this view, it is for her to arrive upon the truth in a manner attributable to her own and others’ competencies (Green 2016). Yet, we needn’t affirm this view about the nature of knowledge to recognize the legitimacy of aiming at epistemic achievements so understood. Even if epistemic achievements do not constitute knowledge, it may still be legitimate to aim at them in our inquiries, given their value. Like the good of an intellectually virtuous inquiry, the good of epistemic achievement is a dynamic feature of inquiry.

I have been going on now for several paragraphs identifying a variety of legitimate aims of inquiry. It is natural to wonder about the relationships between these aims. Are some more fundamental than others? For example, are some best understood as subsidiary or instrumental to others? Is there a single aim that is the only legitimate non-instrumental aim of inquiry, such that any other legitimate aims are only legitimate insofar as they are legitimate as instrumental to achieving this non-instrumental aim? I will not here undertake a lengthy and detailed defense of an answer to these questions.[[2]](#endnote-2) The reason for this is that doing so is not necessary for my purposes in this chapter of explaining the ideal of intellectual dependability and defending the relevance of intellectual virtues for this ideal. What is essential for my purposes is only that the aims listed are indeed legitimate aims of inquiry, regardless of their relative levels of fundamentality. For example, it is immaterial for my purposes whether the good of holding justified attitudes is only legitimate as an aim of inquiry that is instrumental to the aims of holding true beliefs and avoiding erroneous ones, or whether it is legitimate as a non-instrumental aim of inquiry. What matters is just that the aims identified are widespread and legitimate aims of inquiry, which is rarely disputed. I will, however, return to the question of the relationships between these aims in Chapter Four, as in my view part of the virtue of intellectual benevolence is a sensitivity toward these relationships.

In the same way that I am pragmatically suspending judgment here about the relationships between the legitimate aims of inquiry listed previously, I am also pragmatically suspending judgment about the exhaustiveness of this list. I make no claim that the legitimate aims of inquiry I have listed are the only legitimate aims. What is essential for my purposes, again, is only that the aims are among the legitimate aims of inquiry.

My claims thus far can be summarized as follows. Inquiry requires dynamic activity aimed at achieving epistemic goods. These goods may include obtaining true belief, avoiding false belief, obtaining justified attitudes, acquiring understanding, conducting inquiries in accordance with responsibilist intellectual virtues, and obtaining epistemic achievements, and these goods may be sought legitimately either as instrumental or non-instrumental aims of inquiry. What is important for us to see next is a point about our widespread dependence in pursuing these aims. In pursuing inquiries with these varied aims, we are often if not always highly dependent upon factors which are in large measure beyond our control.

For example, epistemologists have recently given much attention to the way in which any inquiry whatsoever is impossible without the inquirer’s pervasive reliance upon or trust in their own basic cognitive faculties (see, e.g., Zagzebski 2012, ch.2). The faculties in view may include faculties of perception, memory, intuition, and inference. According to some authors, we cannot acquire non-circular justification for the epistemic value of relying upon these faculties, as any attempt to acquire such justification would of necessity employ the faculties. If we are to get anywhere in our inquiries, we have to use the faculties we’ve got; but in doing so we are dependent upon what we’ve got, and the quality of what we’ve got is in significant measure beyond our control (cf. Zagzebski 2012, ch.2). It’s not that we can’t do anything to improve the quality of our basic cognitive faculties, or to improve our use of them. We might even enlarge our faculties in a way by acquiring belief-forming mechanisms which pair together our native equipment with external enhancements, such as calculators or eyeglasses. But what is important for our purposes here is to notice that even in attempting to improve our cognitive faculties or our use of them in such ways, we must rely on these faculties. Dependence on our basic cognitive faculties for purposes of inquiry is inescapable.

We are also heavily reliant upon the cooperation of the environments in which we conduct our inquiries. The literature on the Gettier problem (e.g., Hazlett 2015) is littered with examples of cases in which the cooperation or lack thereof of an inquirer’s environment makes a significant difference for the outcome of her inquiry. For example, a factor as mundane as the lighting conditions in which we employ our basic faculties of vision to view objects establishes limits in which we can employ these faculties to achieve epistemic goods. Often it is not up to us whether the environments in which we conduct our inquiries are hospitable to their success.

Yet not all of our dependence is upon ourselves or upon impersonal others. A great deal of our dependence in inquiry is upon other people. And it is this dependence, or a certain dimension of this dependence, that is my primary focus in this chapter.

There are different ways in which we can depend on other people in our inquiries. Not all of these ways are distinctively interpersonal. For example, in some domains such as Epidemiology it is other people who are among the chief objects of inquiry. We often depend upon others in our inquiries in these domains in a way analogous to our dependence on our environmental features more generally. We need their cooperation if our inquiries are to be successful. Yet in these cases we are not depending upon other people in a way we only depend on other persons. Our mode of relating to them in this case is as objects of inquiry, and objects of inquiry can include impersonal objects.

On the other hand we do often depend on other people in our inquiries in ways we only depend on other persons. When we do so, we depend on others *as fellow inquirers*. We depend on them as others who, like us, engage in activity with the aim of achieving epistemic goods. The availability of other such inquirers is potentially an extensive resource for enhancing the quality of our own inquiries. If only we are able to access the epistemic resources potentially afforded by our fellow inquirers, we may be able to enhance exponentially the scope and quality of our total cognitive perspective. While the world is a daunting place for an isolated inquirer, the availability of a community of fellow inquirers promises something analogous to the power of multiplying one’s epistemic self many times over. Through others, one can potentially conduct many more inquiries by proxy than one could by oneself, and even the inquiries one could conduct by oneself may be enhanced.

Epistemologists are increasingly drawing attention to the ways in which we pervasively depend in our inquiries upon other people as fellow inquirers. The paradigmatic case of such dependence, and the case which has received the overwhelming majority of attention from contemporary philosophers, is the case in which we depend in our belief-formation on the testimony of a fellow inquirer (see, e.g., Goldman and Blanchard 2015, Sect. 3). In the standard case of testimonial belief, a testifying other asserts a proposition, p, and the recipient of this testimony comes to believe p on the basis of having received this testimony. Philosophical debate abounds regarding norms governing when giving testimony is appropriate, when believing on its basis is appropriate, and which epistemic goods can be achieved via testimonially-based belief. But what is important for our purposes is not settling any of these debates. What is important for us is merely the observation that the testimony of fellow inquirers indeed does exert a very significant influence over the course of our inquiries. In depending on others for their testimony in this way, we depend upon them in a way we distinctively depend on fellow inquirers. It is fellow inquirers, and only fellow inquirers, upon whom we depend as sources of testimony in our inquiries.

Even as we depend upon others offering us explicit testimony, we may also depend on others refraining from testifying to us. This is a kind of dependence on others that Sanford Goldberg (2010) has called “coverage.” Here an inquirer forms the belief that p on the basis of not having received testimony from fellow inquirers against p in a case in which such testimony would have been expected were p false. While there are no testifiers in this case, there are fellow inquirers who refrain from testifying, and their refraining exerts significant influence on the dependent inquirer. These cases may not be as common as cases of testimonially-formed belief, but they are not unusual. Here again the quality of our inquiries is dependent upon the behavior of our fellow inquirers. When we depend on fellow inquirers to cover a proposition, we depend upon them in a way we distinctively depend upon fellow inquirers.

Philosophers have given less attention to other ways in which we depend on others as fellow inquirers; yet there are many such ways. We can make a beginning toward uncovering further such cases of dependence by noting that the giving of testimony is itself plausibly understood as but one way of representing one’s epistemic state on a focal topic. Such a view is plausible if there is any kind of epistemic norm on the giving of testimony. For example, if knowledge is the norm of testimony (e.g., Turri 2016), such that it is appropriate to testify to a proposition only if one knows it, then by testifying one represents one’s epistemic state as one of knowledge. Yet, surely, there are ways of representing one’s epistemic state regarding a topic of inquiry that do not fit the mold of paradigmatic testimony. For example, a person may represent themself as unsure about a target proposition, as having a good argument for the target proposition or against it or both, as having a mild intuition that it is correct, as seeming to remember it being false, and so on. Of course, representing one’s epistemic state in these ways typically will involve giving testimony. Only the testimony will not be testimony to the target proposition but rather—and in a way that is not exhibited in paradigmatic cases of testimony—directly to the speaker’s own epistemic state.

What is important for us to note here is that just as we sometimes depend on others by believing their testimony to target propositions of inquiry, we also more generally depend on others to share their quite varied epistemic perspectives with us. The point of doing so is typically to better inform ourselves about topics of inquiry. We think it will benefit us to “have” others’ perspectives, even if these perspectives are not of the sort to license them to testify one way or another on a topic of inquiry. We depend on others to share their intuitions with us, to confront us with arguments, to present us with evidence. In doing so, we again depend on them in ways we distinctively depend on fellow inquirers.

Thus far we have been considering cases of dependence in which those upon whom the inquirer depends have a (perhaps partial) perspective on the topic of inquiry and share that perspective in one way or another (even by not sharing it, as in the case of coverage) with the dependent inquirer. Yet, the ways in which we depend on others in our inquiries include cases of dependence in which those who are depended upon needn’t have any prior perspective on the topic of inquiry. They exercise influence over the dependent inquirer’s conduct of inquiry without needing to represent their perspective on the topic of inquiry.

There are various ways in which such influence can be exercised, ranging from more to less direct. More direct influence may be exercised, for example, when a fellow inquirer who shares some general background and skills with us but has not studied our focal topic carefully examines an argument we are considering that bears on the topic, raising questions for us about its premises or inferences. Similarly, such direct input may be given regarding one’s use of a particular investigative method, or whether one’s investigation was conducted open-mindedly or fair-mindedly in accordance with responsibilist intellectual virtue. It is not uncommon for researchers to seek out precisely such influence for their work, even sometimes aiming to get a more or less outside perspective. Here again is a way in which we depend on other people for our inquiries in a way we distinctively depend on fellow inquirers.

Influence on the conduct of one’s inquiry needn’t come directly via comment on that particular inquiry, however. A less direct but no less important source of influence occurs when the way in which a person conducts inquiries (of a relevant type) more generally has been shaped historically by another inquirer. One way in which such shaping may occur, for example, is by modeling. Learning theorists have emphasized the enormous influence that models have on the behaviors we learn (Bandura 2002), and intellectual behaviors are no exception. As inquirers, we learn techniques, habits, skills, and even dispositions from other inquirers. This may come through direct, overt instruction or through more informal observation of another more mature inquirer. Here again, the dependence is of a kind only exhibited toward fellow inquirers.

Finally, we must acknowledge an even less direct way in which the quality of our inquiries is dramatically influenced by fellow members of the community of inquiry. In gaining opportunities to learn from well-positioned fellow inquirers in all of the ways previously listed, we are often at the mercy of the generosity of others who view this learning as valuable. Fellow members of the community of inquiry who appreciate the value of an education sometimes use their resources to make educational opportunities available to other inquirers. They may do this even while exercising little direct control over the content of the education that is offered using these resources, and without any knowledge of whom the beneficiaries will be. Yet, even here, despite the distance between the dependent inquirer and the fellow inquirer on whom they depend, the latter exercises significant influence over the intellectual formation of the former, thereby influencing their inquiries. And here again the kind of dependence at issue is one only exhibited in cases in which we depend on fellow inquirers. Non-inquirers do not appreciate the value of education, and do not give generously of their resources to support educational opportunities for fellow inquirers.

There is a broad spectrum of ways, then, in which in our inquiries we depend on fellow members of the community of inquiry as fellow members of the community of inquiry. We depend on fellow inquirers by forming beliefs on the basis of their testimony or its absence, by seeking to inform our own perspective with theirs, and by allowing them to influence the dynamic conduct of our inquiries more or less directly. Nor is it my intention to have identified an exhaustive list of those ways in which we depend on fellow inquirers. Yet, what is important for us to notice is that in all of these ways, we depend on others in ways that we do not depend on non-inquirers. We may of course depend on other inquirers for these purposes in ways that are indirect, as when we depend on them via artifacts they create such as written works or even software packages. Yet even here it is ultimately our fellow inquirers upon whom we are dependent.

This idea that there are ways in which we depend in our inquiries on other people as fellow members of the community of inquiry is key to the way I will conceptualize the ideal of the intellectually dependable person in this book. The ideal of the intellectually dependable person is that of the person on whom others can depend in their inquiries in those ways that inquirers distinctively depend on fellow inquirers. The dependable person is that person on whom others can depend as a fellow inquirer. Being intellectually dependable is about being the sort of person on whom others can depend, for example, in forming testimonially-based or coverage-based beliefs, in informing their perspective with that of others, and in shaping the dynamic conduct of their inquiries through the influence of fellow inquirers.

I have defined the intellectually dependable person as that kind of person on whom others *can* depend in their inquiries as a fellow inquirer. Some readers may desire greater clarification of this notion of when we can, or cannot, depend on others. I think it is worth pointing out that, pre-theoretically, it is plausible that we all have a decent grasp of the relevant sense of “can”. After all, it is not uncommon even in everyday speech to distinguish between those who “can” or “cannot” be trusted for all manner of things, including providing testimony. We are likewise happy to speak of whether or not we “can” trust our vision or our research instruments. Thus, the relevant sense of “can” would appear to be one about which we have a decent working grasp, even if a precise definition were to prove elusive.

In fact, however, this overlap with other similar uses of “can” may form an attractive starting point for identifying a more precise definition for the relevant sense of “can”. For, in the same way that we might define the sense in which we “can” depend on our vision or research instruments in terms of how well they tend to perform with respect to what it is we are depending on them *for*, we can also define the sense of in which we “can” depend on the dependable person in terms of how well this person tends to perform with respect to what it is we depend on them *for*. Whereas vision is depended upon for action-guiding visual representations and research instruments are depended upon for all manner of research purposes, the dependable inquirer is depended upon distinctively to fulfill all of those functions that we have been discussing now for several pages. They are depended upon as a fellow inquirer. Accordingly, a plausible proposal about in what sense the intellectually dependable person “can” be depended upon is that they tend to function well when depended upon as a fellow inquirer. They tend to perform excellently when depended upon, for example, to share their perspective and influence the conduct of dependent inquirers’ inquiries. They tend to fulfill well the role of being depended upon as an inquirer by fellow inquirers. In this sense they “can” be depended upon; and in this sense they are depend*able*.

It is important to point out that there is a close relationship between a person’s being dependable in this sense and how dependence upon them tends to impact the quality of dependent inquirers’ inquiries. Namely, it tends to be better for the quality of dependent inquirers’ inquiries to depend on dependable rather than not-dependable people. The simple reason for this is that what it is we depend on fellow inquirers for are all things that aim at enhancing the qualities of our inquiries; yet, dependable people will tend to do all of these things better than not-dependable people. Thus, the qualities of our inquiries will be better off via dependence on the dependable than via dependence on the not-dependable.

For example, the quality of the inquiry achieved by an inquirer who depends on a dependable person as a would-be source of testimonially-based belief tends to be better than the quality of inquiry this inquirer would achieve by depending in this way on an otherwise similar but not-dependable person. Specifically, the quality of the inquiry may be influenced insofar as there is a greater tendency for the inquirer to form true and avoid false beliefs, or to attain epistemic achievements, via reliance on the dependable inquirer as a would-be source of testimonially-based belief. Similarly, the quality of the inquiry achieved by an inquirer who depends on a dependable person for influencing the dynamic conduct of their inquiry will tend to be better than the quality of the inquiry they would achieve by depending on an otherwise similar but not-dependable person. Here the specific qualities of the inquiry most likely to be comparatively enhanced via dependence on a dependable person include better use of investigative methods and better display of responsibilist intellectual virtues. In both cases, dependence on the intellectually dependable person to fulfill functions for which we distinctively depend on fellow inquirers yields a comparatively better result for the dependent inquirer because the dependable person excels precisely in fulfilling these functions.

At this point, a question that is likely to arise is: what does it take to tend to excel in fulfilling these functions? What does it take, that is, to be the sort of person who tends to fulfill with excellence the functions for which inquirers distinctively depend on fellow inquirers in their inquiries? If you, as a reader, are asking this question, then you are doing just what I would have hoped for as an author. In large measure, the rest of this book is devoted to answering this question. Beginning with the next section, I will argue that what this takes centrally involves possessing the responsibilist intellectual virtues, and a unique subset of these virtues that I call the “virtues of intellectual dependability” in particular. The remainder of this book is then concerned with examining these virtues as a group, and with examining several examples of them in chapter-length detail. It is my hope that by attending to these traits I will illuminate central features of what it is to be an intellectually dependable person.

1. The Intellectually Dependable Person and the Virtues of Intellectual Dependability

In the previous section, I explained the basic nature of the ideal of intellectual dependability. According to the account offered there, the intellectually dependable person is the person on whom other inquirers can depend to fulfill those functions for which inquirers distinctively depend on fellow inquirers. The intellectually dependable person tends to fulfill these functions with excellence, which has the implication that the inquiries of those who depend on them as a fellow inquirer tend to be of higher quality than they would otherwise have been. The question of the present section is: what does it take to be intellectually dependable in this sense? What are the central features in virtue of which a person is intellectually dependable?

I will approach answering this question by comparing the ideal of the intellectually dependable person with a related ideal which has received far more attention from epistemologists—the ideal of the expert. These ideals are similar insofar as it is indeed common for inquirers to depend upon experts in their inquiries. In fact, it is plausible that dependence upon experts is among the most salient and important instances in which one inquirer depends upon another as a fellow inquirer. Moreover, some authors in the literature on expertise have examined questions that overlap with my focal question here regarding what it takes to be intellectually dependable. Their focus tends to be on questions about how to determine the trustworthiness of experts (cf. Goldman 2011, Watson 2018). Going still further, it is not uncommon for authors in the literature on expertise to discuss the way in which depending upon an expert can enhance the quality of one’s inquiries. Some have even argued that it is better for non-expert inquirers to take an expert’s view on topics regarding which they are experts while normatively screening off any other evidence of their own they have on these topics (Zagzebski 2012, ch.5). As the literature on expertise in this way engages with themes of interest to the present discussion, it should prove illuminating to compare the ideal of the intellectually dependable person with that of the expert. I will contend that while expertise can enhance one’s intellectual dependability within the domain of expertise, the intellectual virtues are more central to being intellectually dependable.

Let us begin by considering what an expert is. An expert is typically understood to be a person who knows a lot. Yet, since nobody can know everything about every domain, expertise is understood to be relative to domains of inquiry. A person may be an expert in a certain field of chemistry or astrophysics or law, for example. In each case their expertise is in part a matter of their knowing a lot about the subject matter in question.

One might take a stronger or weaker view about what the knowledge in question requires (cf. Goldman 2011). According to a weaker view, it requires only true belief and the absence of false belief. Thus, the expert chemist has a lot of true beliefs, and very few false beliefs, about chemistry. On a stronger view, the true beliefs must have a particular epistemic quality in addition to being true. For example, they must be justified true beliefs, or beliefs that constitute knowledge in the strict (as opposed to weak) sense. Similarly, one might maintain that being an expert requires not merely a sufficient number of individual true beliefs, but understanding of how these claims fit together (cf. Croce forthcoming, Scholz 2018). And it might be insisted that in addition to having a non-comparatively high number of such beliefs, one also has a comparatively larger number of them than non-experts do (cf. Coady 2012, who claims that it comparatively greater true beliefs is sufficient for expertise).

Beyond their knowledge, experts are typically understood to possess distinctive skills or abilities. The relevant skills or abilities will be domain-relative just as the knowledge is. The astrophysicist expert will have certain skills or abilities particularly relevant to doing or learning about astrophysics, for example. The skills or abilities that matter for purposes of expertise will be skills or abilities that enable their possessor to gain further epistemic goods within the domain in which they are an expert. So the skills or abilities of the astrophysics expert will be skills or abilities that enable them to gain further epistemic goods within the domain of astrophysics beyond those true beliefs they already have as an astrophysics expert.

According to one highly influential view of expertise, these two features are exhaustively definitive of expertise. To be an expert in a given domain just is to have sufficient knowledge within that domain and to have sufficient possession of relevant skills or abilities for gaining further epistemic goods within that domain. Thus, Alvin Goldman writes that an expert “in domain D is someone who possesses an extensive fund of knowledge (true belief) and a set of skills or methods for apt and successful deployment of this knowledge to new questions in the domain” (2011: 115). Goldman (2018) proposes that it is in virtue of such features that experts have the capacity to fulfill certain services they are distinctively relied upon to fulfill, such as providing authoritative testimony. We might reasonably interpret him as claiming that it is the distinctive knowledge and skills of experts that put them in an epistemic position to fulfill the relevant functions.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Of course, Goldman’s view is not the only view of expertise. But his work has been seminal within the still emerging philosophical area of expertise analysis, and many approaches to expertise that differ in their details from Goldman’s nonetheless share a common core in focusing upon individual epistemic achievements within the domain of expertise.[[4]](#endnote-4) For example, as noted above, Coady (2012) proposes to account for expertise entirely in terms of the greater stock of true beliefs the expert has in comparison to non-experts. Fricker (2006) proposes that the expert needn’t yet have a greater stock of true beliefs in the domain than is possessed by non-experts, but must have the epistemic capacities for attaining a greater stock of true beliefs; the expert must have knowledge and skills that put them in a position to attain such knowledge. Watson (2018) also rejects the requirement that the expert has more true beliefs than the non-expert, replacing it with the requirement that the expert has sufficient understanding of the terms, propositions, arguments, and procedures of the domain—understanding that the person can apply when discharging epistemic activities in the domain. In all of these cases, the focus is on the individual’s epistemic achievements within the domain. The achievements specified by Goldman are probably best seen as logically stronger than those specified by others: meeting Goldman’s conditions requires meeting the others, but not vice versa. Given the influence of his approach and its similarity to other approaches, I suggest that it will be illuminating to compare Goldman’s conception of expertise with the conception of the intellectually dependable person.

Our question here then concerns the relationship between being an expert so understood and being intellectually dependable. Given what we have seen about the nature of expertise and of intellectual dependability, this is a question about the relationship between domain-specific knowledge and skills, on the one hand, and the tendency toward excellent fulfillment of the functions for which we distinctively depend upon fellow inquirers in our inquiries, on the other. The question is about whether and to what extent possessing the knowledge and skills of an expert tends to make one better at fulfilling such functions as providing or not providing testimony on focal topics of others’ inquiries, sharing relevant arguments and intuitions with fellow inquirers, directly commenting on the dynamic conduct of others’ inquiries, modelling excellent inquiry, and offering material support for others’ educations.

On the positive side, we might note that there is a case to be made that possessing the knowledge and skills of an expert can contribute to the extent to which one can be depended upon to fulfill at least some of the functions for which we distinctively depend on fellow inquirers. Chief among these functions is the function that receives the greatest amount of attention in the literature on expertise: the function of providing (or refraining from providing) testimony. In summary, there is a plausible case to be made that possessing the knowledge and skills of an expert can enhance one’s ability to fulfill with excellence the function of providing or not providing testimony on focal topics of others’ inquiries within the domain of one’s expertise. After all, it is not without reason that in criminal trials, it is often the testimony of experts in particular that is highly valued. We tend to think we are better off depending on experts for testimony on matters about which they are experts than we are depending on non-experts on these matters. This is presumably because having the knowledge and skills of the expert is relevant for how well one will tend to fulfill the function of providing or not providing testimony to fellow inquirers on topics within one’s domain of expertise (cf. Mizrahi 2013: 60). Being an expert can make one better at fulfilling this function than one would otherwise be. One can be more dependable as a source of testimony if one is an expert on the subject matter of that testimony.

Yet, we must also acknowledge on the other hand that possessing the knowledge and skills of an expert is not sufficient to make one intellectually dependable. Indeed, it is not even sufficient to make one dependable as a source of testimony regarding topics within one’s domain of expertise. For, being knowledgeable and skilled within a domain does not by itself make one disposed to communicate the knowledge one possesses in that domain to others who depend on one as a source of testimony. Nor does such knowledge by itself dispose one to communicate this knowledge in a way that is accessible to others and susceptible to their forming beliefs on its basis. As Goldman himself notes, “expertise alone does not guarantee the ability to teach others. The latter is, arguably, a separate skill” (2018: 4, fn.1). While being knowledgeable on a topic about which one is depended upon as a source of testimony can enhance the quality of the testimony one can give, the quality and indeed the existence of such testimony will also depend on whether one is disposed to communicate what one knows about the topic at all, and whether one is disposed to do so in a way that is clear and sensitive to one’s audience. We might put it this way. Having expert knowledge in a domain holds potential to enhance one’s dependability as a source of testimony on topics within that domain, but the potential it holds is only unlocked if one is disposed to communicate what one knows in the domain, and to do so in a way that is clear and sensitive to the audience to whom one is communicating.

Now, there is a compelling case to be made that the extent to which one has the dispositions cited in the previous paragraph is in significant part a matter of possessing several of the responsibilist intellectual virtues. After all, being disposed to communicate what one knows with others who depend on one as a source of testimony, and being disposed to communicate clearly and with sensitivity to one’s audience, are themselves plausible candidates for responsibilist intellectual virtues. For they are trait-like features that dispose their possessors to display a broad range of characteristic intellectual behaviors aimed at the promotion of epistemic goods. This case is only strengthened when we recognize that what we are after is *ideal* intellectual dependability, and therefore *ideal* dispositions to communicate what one knows clearly and with sensitivity and so on. To refer back to an earlier example, it may be that certain circumstances, such as being called upon to testify in a court of law, would make even the intellectually vicious temporarily disposed to communicate what they know in the ways necessary. But what is needed for the ideal of intellectual dependability is a broader, cross-situational disposition to perform such acts. What is needed is responsibilist intellectual virtues. Accordingly, there is compelling reason to think that responsibilist intellectual virtues have at least some role to play within the ideal of intellectual dependability, since they are necessary at least for fully unlocking the potential that expertise has to enhance one’s dependability as a source of testimony to claims within one’s domain of expertise.[[5]](#endnote-5)

A similar pattern is also detectable when we turn to other ways in which expertise may be relevant for enhancing one’s intellectual dependability. Just as an expert’s superior knowledge in their domain of expertise enables them to offer better testimony on topics within that domain, an expert’s superior knowledge enables them to share more valuable arguments and evidence within that domain. Likewise, an expert’s superior skills enable them to better serve as a model for conducting inquiries in that domain. In these additional ways, expertise holds potential to enhance a person’s intellectual dependability within the domain of expertise. Yet, as before, this potential is plausibly only unlocked through possession of relevant dispositions, and it is plausibly only fully unlocked through possession of various intellectual virtues. The relevant dispositions will be ones whereby the expert is disposed to faithfully and accurately share their perspective, to identify relevant arguments and evidence in an accessible and sensitive manner, and to exhibit their skills in a way that enhances others’ ability to learn from them. Just as it is one thing to have knowledge and another to share it effectively with those who depend on one to do so, it is one thing to possess relevant evidence or arguments and another to share these effectively with those who depend on one to do so, and it is one thing to possess specialized skills of inquiry and another to exercise these in such a way that others can learn to do likewise by observing one’s use of them. In each case, the road from expertise to dependability will be paved via dispositions that are good candidates for intellectual virtues. In each case, being ideally dependable to fulfill the relevant functions, despite their domain-specificity, is not achieved by expertise alone, but only via a complement of relevant intellectual virtues. While the various dimensions of expertise have potential to enhance one’s ability to fulfill certain functions for which inquirers depend on fellow inquirers within the domain of expertise, this potential is only fully unlocked by the intellectual virtues.

Moreover, we must observe that while the knowledge and skills constitutive of expertise are relevant for the extent to which one can be depended upon to fulfill the functions of a fellow inquirer within one’s domain of expertise, the same are not relevant outside of that domain. They are not relevant, for example, for the extent to which one can be depended upon as a source of testimony for topics outside of one’s area of expertise. Nor are they relevant for the extent to which one can be depended upon to faithfully and accurately share one’s perspective, to identify relevant arguments and evidence, and to guide others’ inquiries in domains outside the domain of expertise. Yet, the fact of the matter is that inquirers very much do depend on fellow inquirers to fulfill such functions in domains in which these fellow inquirers are not experts. Inquirers depend on non-experts to share their perspectives on focal topics of inquiry, to identify relevant evidence and arguments, and to provide guidance for their own dynamic conduct of inquiry. Part of the reason for this is simply practical: access to experts is not always available to us. Other times access to experts is possible, but it is far more demanding than access to non-experts whose potential influence on our inquiries we nevertheless tend to think will be positive. In fact, it would not be a surprise if for the vast majority of inquirers, their first consultation with a fellow inquirer when investigating a new topic was almost always a consultation with a non-expert.

What the foregoing paragraph shows, then, is that there are functions which inquirers depend upon fellow inquirers to fulfill for which expertise is irrelevant. Inquirers depend on fellow inquirers to share their perspectives on topics on which they are not experts and to guide their conduct of inquiry in domains in which they are not experts. Fulfilling these functions well is not even partly a matter of being an expert in the relevant domains. Thus, again, there is reason to think that being an expert is not sufficient for being intellectually dependable. Even in the best cases one usually only ever fulfills the demands of being an expert within a single domain of inquiry. But achieving the ideal of intellectual dependability is a matter of being a certain kind of person who tends to fulfill with excellence a variety of functions across a spectrum of domains, including domains in which one is not an expert.

While being an expert is not relevant for being intellectually dependable in those domains in which one is not an expert, possessing the intellectual virtues is. Intellectual virtues by their very nature are cross-situationally consistent and applicable across domains. A disposition to faithfully and accurately share one’s perspective with dependent inquirers may issue in testimony, for example, in domains or situations in which one has a strong epistemic standing or even expertise. Yet in domains in which one is ignorant or lacks expertise, the same disposition may issue in owning of one’s limitations, and in tentative and qualified presentations of relevant evidence or arguments rather than direct testimony. Likewise, clear communication and sensitivity to one’s audience are no less relevant for one’s dependability in cases of dependence in which one is not an expert than in cases of dependence in which one is. Thus, while expertise is not relevant for fulfilling with excellence those functions for which the ideally intellectually dependable person is depended upon in domains in which they are not an expert, intellectual virtues are relevant. They enhance these dimensions of intellectual dependability.

Thus far I have only shown that someof the intellectual virtues are relevant for the extent to which a person is intellectually dependable, either within a domain in which they are an expert or in domains in which they are not. But in fact it is not only some but all intellectual virtues that are relevant. Each and every intellectual virtue can enhance the extent to which one is intellectually dependable, whether within a domain in which one is an expert or in domains in which one is not. The simplest and most straightforward argument for this conclusion focuses on the function of providing a model for inquiry for which inquirers distinctively depend on fellow inquirers. An inquirer will only provide an ideal model of inquiry for fellow inquirers if they are themselves fully virtuous. For, part of what we depend on our fellow inquirers to model for us is virtuous inquiry itself. Possession of each intellectual virtue, and not only some of them, is therefore required for fulfilling the ideal of intellectual dependability. The fully intellectually dependable person is also fully intellectually virtuous.

The foregoing observations about the ways in which expertise and intellectual virtue can each contribute to a person’s intellectual dependability reveal a sense in which the intellectual virtues are more fundamental to this ideal than is expertise. The intellectual virtues, and not expertise, can contribute all by themselves to the extent to which a person is intellectually dependable. The contribution of the intellectual virtues to a person’s intellectual dependability does not need to be unlocked by this person’s possession of expertise. For, a person’s possessing the intellectual virtues all by itself enables them to fulfill with excellence a variety of functions for which inquirers distinctively depend on fellow inquirers in their inquiries—specifically, those functions for which we depend on non-experts. Yet, on the other hand, while expertise does have a contribution to make toward the ideal of intellectual dependability, it is a contribution that must be unlocked by the intellectual virtues or at least dispositions that resemble them in significant respects. Those functions for which we depend on fellow inquirers which expertise enables them to better fulfill are ones that expertise only better enables them to fulfill to the extent that it is accompanied by intellectual virtues. This way in which intellectual virtues and expertise are asymmetrically related to intellectual dependability is a way in which intellectual virtues have conceptual priority over expertise in an account of the ideal of intellectual dependability. Intellectual virtues are in this way more conceptually fundamental to the ideal.

This conceptual fundamentality plausibly also has a consequence for the relative priority that intellectual virtues and expertise should receive from anyone who would seek to become intellectually dependable. Given the conceptual fundamentality previously noted, becoming intellectually virtuous will enhance one’s intellectual dependability whether or not one becomes an expert in anything. Moreover, there are independent reasons for thinking that becoming intellectually virtuous will aid one’s becoming an expert if one pursues the opportunity to become one.[[6]](#endnote-6) But becoming an expert will not enhance one’s intellectual dependability whether or not one becomes intellectually virtuous. And becoming an expert will not generally tend to aid one’s becoming intellectually virtuous if one pursues the opportunity to become such.[[7]](#endnote-7) Thus, one who sets out to become intellectually dependable is better served by pursuing intellectual virtue than expertise. In this second way, the intellectual virtues are more central to the ideal of intellectual dependability than is expertise.

While all intellectual virtues can enhance a person’s intellectual dependability, and while the intellectual virtues on a whole are more central to the ideal of intellectual dependability than is expertise, there is a case to be made that if a particular subset of intellectual virtues exists then it is of special relevance to the ideal of intellectual dependability. The particular subset I have in mind, if it exists, would be a subset of intellectual virtues that are distinctively concerned with promoting epistemic goods in others’ inquiries opposed to promoting epistemic goods in their possessor’s own inquiries. It might be, for example, that the domain of intellectual virtues divides into those that are exclusively concerned with promoting epistemic goods in the inquirer’s own inquiries and those that are exclusively concerned with promoting epistemic goods in other inquirers’ inquiries. Or, it might be that the domain divides into those that are in some way centrally concerned with promoting the inquirer’s own epistemic goods and those that are in this same way centrally concerned with promoting other inquirers’ epistemic goods. The subset of intellectual virtues with which I am concerned, if it exists, would be constituted by the latter category in either case. I’ll call this hypothetical subset the virtues of intellectual dependability.

It is tempting to think that the several traits identified earlier in this section as candidates for intellectual virtues would be virtues of intellectual dependability if this subset of virtues indeed exists. These traits were all dispositions to share various aspects of one’s perspective with others or dispositions to influence others’ inquiries in various ways. What unites them, it would seem, is a distinctive concern to promote others’ epistemic goods. The disposition to communicate what one knows with dependent others, the disposition to do so with clarity, and the disposition to do so with sensitivity to the recipient’s intellectual needs, interests, and abilities, for example, are plausibly all intellectual virtues only insofar as they involve a motivation to promote others’ epistemic goods. Thus they would seem to be united by a concern to promote others’ epistemic goods, making them good candidates for belonging to a supposed subset of virtues of intellectual dependability that are distinctively concerned with promoting epistemic goods in others’ inquiries.

My contention here is that if there is a subset of virtues of intellectual dependability, then this subset of intellectual virtues makes an especially important contribution to the ideal of intellectual dependability, and as such deserves sustained attention within an academic investigation of this ideal. The basic reason for thinking that the virtues of intellectual dependability would make an especially important contribution to the ideal of intellectual dependability is as follows. What the ideal of intellectual dependability is all about is being the sort of person on whom others can depend for help in their inquiries. But if there is a subset of virtues of intellectual dependability, then this subset of intellectual virtues is distinctively concerned with helping others in their inquiries. The virtues within this subset are, by virtue of their membership in the set, more concerned with helping others in their inquiries than are virtues that are not members of the set. So, the set of virtues of intellectual dependability, if it exists, is comprised of those intellectual virtues that are most concerned with what it is that the ideal of intellectual dependability is all about. For this reason, the virtues of intellectual dependability make an especially important contribution to the ideal of intellectual dependability, and are especially worthy of focus within an academic treatment of this ideal.

This is not to deny the contribution to intellectual dependability that may be made by intellectual virtues that are not virtues of intellectual dependability. Indeed, we have already identified reason for thinking that there are virtues which are not excellent candidates for being virtues of intellectual dependability but which nevertheless can make a contribution to a person’s intellectual dependability. For example, traits such as open-mindedness or intellectual perseverance are often thought of as being exercised in an individual inquirer’s own private pursuit of epistemic goods in their own inquiries (see, e.g., Baehr 2011, ch. 8; Battaly 2017). A person can consider with fairness alternative views on a matter in thier own inquiries for the purpose of enhancing the quality of their own inquiries, or can persist in the face of obstacles to their own inquiries. Yet, these traits, even if candidates for not being virtues of intellectual dependability, can still contribute to a person’s intellectual dependability. For, as noted above, part of what we depend on fellow inquirers for is to model intellectual virtue for us. Thus, in at least this way, possessing these intellectual virtues remains relevant for securing the ideal of intellectual dependability. Moreover, as we will see in Chapter Two, there is reason to think that such traits, when possessed in their fullness, have other-regarding dimensions and as such can contribute more directly to a person’s intellectual dependability. And, furthermore, as I will discuss in Part II, some of these traits bear a special relationship to virtues of intellectual dependability distinctively enhancing the latter. Thus, my present contention should not be understood as denying my previous claim that each and every intellectual virtue can contribute toward the ideal of intellectual dependability. Rather, it only proposes that if some intellectual virtues are more concerned than others with that with which intellectual dependability itself is concerned, then these virtues make an especially important contribution toward the ideal of intellectual dependability and deserve special focus in an academic treatment of this ideal. I have called the hypothetical subset of intellectual virtues that are distinctively concerned with that with which intellectual dependability is distinctively concerned—namely, promoting epistemic goods in others’ inquiries—the virtues of intellectual dependability.

1. Conclusion

The argument of this chapter has led us to direct our attention to the virtues of intellectual dependability—a supposed subset of intellectual virtues distinctively concerned with promoting epistemic goods in others’ inquiries. I began by explaining what is meant by the ideal of intellectual dependability with which this book is concerned. This is the ideal of a person on whom other inquirers can depend in their inquiries in those ways inquirers distinctively depend on fellow inquirers. I next argued that the responsibilist intellectual virtues are especially central to this ideal, moreso even than is expertise. This is because possession of the intellectual virtues all by itself enhances a person’s intellectual dependability, but expertise can enhance a person’s intellectual dependability only in conjunction with their possession of intellectual virtues. I argued finally that if there is a subset of intellectual virtues distinctively concerned with promoting epistemic goods in others’ inquiries, these would be especially important for the ideal of intellectual dependability, since such virtues would be distinctively concerned with that with which intellectual dependability itself is distinctively concerned.

By directing attention to the virtues of intellectual dependability, this chapter and indeed the book more broadly directs attention to a topic that should be of substantial interest to both social epistemologists and virtue epistemologists, but that has not been extensively explored by either. Social epistemologists have done much to direct the attention of epistemologists to the ubiquitous fact of dependence on fellow inquirers in the life of inquiry. Yet, thus far they have not devoted sustained attention to the ideal of intellectual dependability or to the virtues of intellectual dependability. Rather than focusing broadly on those myriad ways in which inquirers distinctively depend on fellow inquirers in their inquiries, social epistemologists have tended to focus more narrowly on certain paradigmatic cases of dependence such as cases of testimonially-based belief. Rather than attending at length to practical questions about how one can perform better when one is depended upon by others, social epistemologists have tended to focus more on practical questions about how one can perform better when one is dependent upon others. And rather than focus at length on the epistemic relevance of the virtuousness of those who are depended upon, social epistemologists have tended to focus on the epistemic relevance of the knowledge or justified beliefs of those who are depended upon. Insofar as social epistemology is fundamentally concerned with social features of epistemic life, however, it is clear that social epistemologists should take a substantial interest in the focal topics of this text. The work should therefore be of significant interest to them.

Just as clearly, the work should be of interest to virtue epistemologists. Much of the most stimulating recent work in virtue epistemology has been focused on developing accounts of specific intellectual virtues, often unfettered by the concerns of traditional epistemology (see, e.g., Roberts and Wood 2007, Battaly 2018 Part II). Yet, as I will discuss in further detail in the next chapter, it is a striking fact that within this work very little attention has been given to the ways in which intellectual virtues might promote epistemic goods in others’ inquiries. The focus has instead predominantly been on how intellectual virtues advance epistemic goods in the possessor’s own inquiries. Nonetheless, at the same time, it is not uncommon for virtue epistemologists to acknowledge that intellectual virtues can promote epistemic goods for other inquirers, and some authors (e.g., Kawall 2002) have even expressed sympathy for the idea that there are intellectual virtues distinctively concerned with promoting others’ epistemic goods—virtues of intellectual dependability, to use my terminology. It is just that little attention has been given to examining good candidates for such traits at length. Thus, again, the attraction of the present project, as well as its need, is clear from the perspective of contemporary virtue epistemology. My next tasks are to argue that there indeed are virtues of intellectual dependability, and then to argue that inculcating them in pupils is a justifiable aim within formal education. Thereafter I turn to examine several candidates for virtues of intellectual dependability in chapter-length detail.

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1. The kind of rationality or justification I have in mind here is thus “perspectival” (Kvanvig 2014) or “egocentric” (Foley 1992) in character. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. For surveys of research on the topic, see (Bondy 2015, Pritchard 2007). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. If we interpret him this way, it may enable us to halt an objection that Croce (forthcoming) raises to his view. Croce objects that a person can have the kind of knowledge and skills identified by Goldman, and could even have understanding, but fail to have the “capacity” to help novices in relevant respects, because they fail to have a suite of “virtues that allow an epistemic subject to properly address a layperson's epistemic dependency on them” (Sect. 4). For example, such a person may be “unable to tailor their answer to the novice's questions” (ibid). However, if we interpret Goldman’s view about the “capacity” to help novices in the way identified in the text, then it is plausible that such a person would have the capacity to help novices in the relevant way. They have the capacity to do so in the sense that their knowledge and skills put them in the epistemic position to do so, even if their broader character doesn’t dispose them to do so with excellence. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Quast (2018) provides a notable alternative. He offers a functional account of expertise in terms of the expert’s being sufficiently competent to complete a variety of demanding services for novices. On such a view of expertise, it may be that the expert must be intellectually dependable—at least within their domain—and so the ideal of the expert and the ideal of the intellectually dependable person will not come apart in quite the way proposed in the text. It is not my purpose here to argue against Quast’s account of expertise. I am willing, in particular, to be a pluralist about concepts of expertise (and I think Quast is as well), granting that Quast’s account may identify one such concept, and Goldman’s another. My aim in the text is to illuminate the nature of intellectual dependability by contrasting it with expertise as understood by one common approach exemplified by Goldman. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. The argument of the text motivates not only the claim that the dispositions necessary for ideal intellectual dependability must exhibit the cross-situational robustness of intellectual virtues, but the claim that these traits must also exhibit the motivational features characteristic of the intellectual virtues. For, in order to achieve ideal intellectual dependability, it will not do for a person to have a suite of intellectual character traits that dispose them toward behaviors reflective of intellectual virtue but without the motivations characteristic of intellectual virtue. Such a suite of intellectual character traits would be less psychologically integrated, and therefore less stable, than would be the suite of intellectual virtues integrated by their shared motivational core. Thus, ideal intellectual dependability requires not only cross-situationally robust dispositions of the kind identified in the text, but dispositions with the motivations characteristic of the intellectual virtues. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Recall here the view discussed in Section 1 according to which knowledge requires the exercise of intellectual virtue. Even if this view is incorrect, the widespread appeal of the view evidences the attraction of the idea that intellectual virtues are instrumentally valuable as a route toward acquiring knowledge—which is, as we saw, a requirement for expertise. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. This is simply because the knowledge and skills constitutive of the relevant expertise typically will not enhance one’s ability to acquire intellectual virtues. There may of course be isolated counterexamples, such as cases in which one becomes an expert in virtue theory or learning theory, and employs this expertise to grow in intellectual virtue. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)