Intellectual Dependability: A Virtue Theory of the Epistemic and Educational Ideal

All of us depend on others in our inquiries; and, indeed, sometimes it is others who depend on us in theirs. But what does it take to perform excellently in these contexts in which one is depended upon by other inquirers? What does it take, that is, to be intellectually dependable? This question is relevant for both epistemology—how we should conceptualize the ideal inquirer—and education—how we can enable developing learners to grow toward this ideal. This book aims to answer the question by providing a virtue theory of the epistemic and educational ideal of intellectual dependability. The chief aim is to identify and conceptualize several of the key intellectual virtues that contribute distinctively to a person’s excellence as a dependable inquirer. Virtues discussed include intellectual benevolence, intellectual transparency, communicative clarity, audience sensitivity, and epistemic guidance. In each case, an interdisciplinary treatment of the nature, value, measurement, and cultivation of the virtue is offered, drawing especially on relevant research in Philosophy and Psychology. The book concludes with a chapter devoted to distinctive ways these virtues of intellectual dependability are manifested when it is inquiring communities, rather than individuals, that occupy the position of intellectual dependence. As the first research monograph devoted to its topic, the book marks a novel turn of scholarly attention explicitly toward a neglected dimension of the ideal inquirer that will inform both for epistemological theorizing and educational practice.