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The Inquiring Mind: On Intellectual Virtues and Virtue Epistemology

Jason Baehr

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The Inquiring Mind is a new contribution to "responsibilist" or character-based virtue-epistemology--an approach to epistemology in which intellectual character traits like open-mindedness, fair-mindedness, inquisitiveness, and intellectual courage, rigor, and generosity are given a central and fundamental role. Jason Baehr provides an accessible introduction to virtue epistemology and intellectual virtues, and establishes two main goals. The first is to shed light on the nature and structure of intellectual virtues and their role in the cognitive economy. To this end, he examines the difference between intellectual virtues and intellectual faculties, talents, temperaments, and skills, develops a "personal worth" account of the nature of an intellectual virtue, contrasts this account with several others, and provides analyses of two individual virtues: namely, open-mindedness and intellectual courage. The second main goal is to account for the role that reflection on intellectual character virtues should play within epistemology at large. Here Baehr defends three main claims. The first is that the concept of intellectual virtue does not merit a central or fundamental role within traditional epistemology. The second is that it does, nonetheless, merit a secondary or background role in this context. The third is that intellectual character virtues and their role in intellectual life can form the basis of an approach to epistemology that is distinct from but complementary to traditional epistemology. Finally, Baehr examines the relation between intellectual and moral virtues.

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