

Epistemic Paternalism: Conceptions, Justifications and Implications, Amiel Bernal and Guy Axtell, editors. Forthcoming Summer/Fall 2020, Rowman & Littlefield, *Collective Studies in Knowledge and Society* Series. [Libre copy](#); quote only published version. Contact authors: abernal@vt.edu; gsaxtell@radford.edu

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INTRODUCTION

Amiel Bernal and Guy Axtell

Epistemic practices which have a paternalistic profile affect our private and public lives, often in ways of which we are not aware. Quite often, due to our own inattention or unconcern, we just *may not know* how selectively information is being presented to us, and how much more is being left out. But in other cases, due to a designed interference of some kind, there is information we *may not know*.

The *may not* could still mean that people voluntarily adhere to norms of disciplinary objectivity, as when someone plays the social role of scientists adopting protocols for a *blinded* design for their scientific experiment, or the role of citizens assenting to be jurists in a court case presided over by a judge. Accepting such a social role, people willingly consent to having certain information withheld, information which they admit might bias either their judgment, or that of similarly-situated role players. What they accept is that these norms are in place for the epistemic aims of the practice, so that abiding by them is for their own epistemic good, individually or at least collectively.

But the *may not* could also mean that people's inquiry is interfered with not only by design, but also without their consent; indeed, part of what they remain ignorant of includes the interference itself, who designed it, and for what aims or purposes. This introduces a matter of much debate. In such cases what does it mean to say the design of the practice is for their own good, individually or collectively? Arguments for and against epistemic paternalism recur throughout the history of philosophy. Plato's *noble lie* justified by "need" and "good effect," and

John Stuart Mill's insistence on maintaining a *market place of ideas* are just two of the most significant examples, insofar as their arguments highlight tension between deference to purported expertise and democratizing knowledge.

It is important first to distinguish description from advocacy. *Epistemic Paternalism* (hereafter EP) is in its primary sense a normative thesis, a thesis of advocacy for, or justifiable participation in, some range of specific epistemic practices which have a descriptively paternalistic profile. Alvin Goldman introduced and defended EP early in social epistemology's emergence (1991; 1999). Restricted access to information sometimes improves people's reasoning and supports veritistic outcomes, as for instance in "blinded" scientific experiments and in judicial rules prohibiting the disclosure of a defendant's past criminal profile to a jury. Goldman argued that while these norms produce a kind of ignorance, they arose in recognition that it is good for scientists and jurors and sometimes others to be protected from their own biases – "their own 'folly'" (126). On the issue of the legitimate extent to which others may interpose their own judgment upon us for our own epistemic good, Goldman placed himself in conversation with Thomas Scanlon (1972) who "expressed doubts about epistemic protectionism by appeal to the value of autonomy." While taking issue with Scanlon, Goldman acknowledges legitimate instances of EP must be qualified by such serious concerns as the status and power of the controlling agent, the scope of control, and the rights of citizens.¹ Recent defenders (Kristoffer Ahlstrom-Vij 2013) as well as critics of EP (Emma Bullock 2016) define a paternalistic epistemic practice as any practice which (i) interferes with someone's inquiry, (ii) without their consent, (iii) for their own epistemic good.² While varied definitions might be possible, and some of our contributors consider alternatives, this shared manner of profiling

paternalistic epistemic practices supplies substantial common-ground for debating the normative issues of advocacy and reproach.

Ahlstrom-Vij (2013) modifies Goldman's characterization of EP but carries its defense forward especially against Scanlon's reliance on notions of epistemic autonomy, and of acts of interference with expression or inquiry. These concepts he finds do not allow us to locate or analyze the genuinely problematic cases of EP. Epistemically paternalistic practices which deserve support or censure seem "relevantly and in some cases radically different from paradigmatic cases of unjustified or otherwise problematic suppressions of expression" (87). EP is often not just compatible with, but enabling of informed inquiry: "[I]t is exactly the purpose of epistemically paternalistic practices to provide an environment that makes it easier to form beliefs and desires in an informed manner" (86). Scanlon's answer to these normative questions may be incompatible with EP, but his approach seems limited to constraints on actions by the government to constrain the self-expression of citizens. Ahlstrom-Vij locates his defense of EP in *ameliorative* epistemology, and tries to show how effective amelioration "needs to be informed by the psychology of cognition" (7). Other extant accounts of autonomy, including those of Joel Feinberg and Joseph Raz, are not in conflict with the two normative conditions, *Alignment Condition* and the *Burden-of-Proof Condition*, which for Ahlstrom-Vij places on justified EP.

Interest in the concept of EP highlights how *caring for* and *controlling* others are descriptions of actions that are sometimes harmonizing and sometimes become incongruent.³ Aspirations for the intelligent design or modification of practices to improve voter competence must find its way through this debate. For while there is an apparent tension between epistemic paternalism and epistemic justice, EP's defenders think that the tension is only apparent, and that intelligent

interventions can in fact be a form of epistemic justice insofar as applications of epistemic paternalism respect persons as actual knowers, facilitate their epistemic capacities, and ameliorate epistemic injustice. Traditionally, paternalistic actions are divided between positive interferences (laws or policies forcing/re-enforcing people to benefit themselves) and negative interferences (laws or policies forcing/re-enforcing people not to harm themselves). If we must use the language of interferences, EP conceivably has instances of both types. Controversial instances of EP debated in law, medicine, education, news, journalism, social media, scientific method and science communication. Just with respect to news and social media, concerns about EP might include the aims and consequences of policies, whether governmental or corporate, for censoring or abstaining from censoring hate speech, real-time posting of acts of terror, jihadist recruitment videos, deep fakes, political propaganda, etc.

This list of examples shows why paternalistic policies are of immediate social and political concern in the present era. The promises/perils of Big Data allow unprecedented ways of predicting, monitoring, and manipulating behaviors. New technologies may aid or hinder open access to information and perspectives; they may assist or impede the mass manipulation of behavior and belief. If *ought implies can*, and the range of what we *can* do is expanded by new technologies, then concern with how we *ought* to design information technologies to respect democratic values while also encouraging veritistic results from inquiry, is expanded also. So, this collection engages interest in emerging technologies and what they portend, interest shared by policy makers and gatekeepers of all kinds, philosophers, and STS researchers (science studies; science, technology and society).

Our project began with asking for contributions which highlight contemporary social epistemology and help clarify several shared questions. First, the collection asks whether and

why it is helpful to treat EP as a distinctive form of paternalistic practice, and if it is, then what new questions and concerns are identified in the small but growing literature on EP. Second, what entities are entitled to undertake a paternalistic practice, and in virtue of which features does such entitlement accrue to them? State neutrality to citizens' comprehensive conceptions of the good, and the 'Who is watching the watchmen?' problem are far from trivial concerns. These are considered alongside arguments from justice, amelioration, and care in support of EP. Third, while acknowledging a large existing literature and debate over paternalistic among not just philosophers but also cognitive and social psychologists, behavioral economists, and legal theorists (see for example Grill and Hanna (eds.) 2018), the collection creates a forum which invites more social epistemologists to the discussion. Social epistemology brings unique resources for advancing both the liberal hope for an enlightened or de-biased democratic citizenry through the intelligent re-design of choice architectures, and critical concern for real and potential illiberal and unjust abuses of EP.

Questions of the content, scope, justification, and application of EP direct the organizing themes of this anthology. Rather than engaging just in conceptual analysis, the collection utilizes sometimes quite detailed case studies of epistemic justice or injustice through paternalistic practice; it contains discussions of intellectual virtues and vices, civic rights, inductive risk, moral risk, human bias, collective interest, social modes of knowing, and power. Which EP practices are likely to increase democratic participation and representation, and which are likely to curtail it? Citizens may be error-prone and biased, as situationist psychologists and vice epistemology-centered proponents of EP often allege, such that we cannot rely upon ourselves for epistemic improvement. At the same time, liberal principles clearly cannot support any such prescription as that 'France must be free of all vice' (Robespierre). If interpretation of bias

studies is not to become a new ‘reign of error,’ the justification of paternalistic practices must remain a question beholden to democratic values and principles. Ambiguity in the defense of EP can relatedly arise from failing to acknowledge the distinction between “epistemic value,” and “the value of the epistemic” (Pritchard 2013). Not all of the chapters take a definite stance on the normative question of permissible EP and its limits, but many of those which do take a stance draw upon not only the existing literature on ‘nudging’ (associated with general paternalism), but also the expansive literature on epistemic justice and injustice (see Sherman and Goguen (eds.) 2019; Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus (eds.) 2017).

The collection consists in four Parts. Part I addresses fundamental questions of how to negotiate information conveyance in open societies, and especially in the context of an ever-changing digital landscape. Concerns include Big Data and how information is collected, stored and presented. Questions of how to appropriately modify search algorithms, are questions regarding the appropriate scope of digital epistemic paternalism. For example, does Google or Facebook have normative grounds for censoring false news outlets without their consultation, for perceived greater goods?-Part II regards problem of scientific and medical paternalism. Reference to social roles and location play prominently in this section. Part III engages in a conceptual and applied analyzes of EP in relation to autonomy, morality, and the cognitive constraints of people. Part IV connects epistemic paternalism to epistemic in/justice, as contributors consider charity, intellectual vice, and standpoint theory, among other topics.

In Part I’s first chapter, Stephen John examines the emerging field of Personalized Medicine and the prospect that developments in Machine Learning technologies will allow better predictions about individuals’ propensities to develop disease. But should patients always receive uncurated information and predictions? If not, how should we decide when such controls on the

flow of information are permissible? John develops an answer to this question in terms of “epistemic obligations”; he contrasts this approach with one framed in terms of individuals’ epistemic freedoms, which he finds implicit in current debates around EP. The chapter suggests quite a different way of looking at the issues since he argues that the received approach obscures the complex web of social-epistemic norms which bind and structure communicative practice. Good informing, he argues, “requires careful curation of a communicative encounter, tied to an understanding of a subject’s epistemic and practical needs and limitations.”

Clinton Castro, Adam Pham, and Alan Rubel are concerned with *new media* (highly interactive digital technology for creating, sharing, and consuming information). After providing multiple examples, they focus in on Facebook’s efforts to counter “epistemic bubbles” and fake news. The chapter argues that while paternalistic, this effort is morally permissible, and indeed that “many epistemically paternalistic policies can (and should) be a perennial part of the internet information environment.”

Marion Vorms examines what she sees as the moving boundary between informing and instructing, and how it affects the legitimacy of paternalistic epistemic practices. The cases she considers focus on the function and use of evidence in the criminal justice context. These uses are not all of one type, and the ensuing holistic appraisal of evidence in the courts draws attention to “the strikingly complex inference networks fact finders must construct so as to marshal a mass of evidence, which may or may not cohere.” The distinction between credibility and relevance, Vorms argues, highlights “a difficulty of experts’ task in advising decision-makers”, namely “to provide the best and most relevant information, without encroaching upon their recipient’s decisional autonomy.” Imprinting their own values upon their audience is one way that experts are likely to exceed their duty. But other and more specifically epistemic threats

of paternalism also abound, some related to “the very structure of inference networks in complex evidential reasoning.”

Lee Basham’s historical exposé and critique of what he terms *political epistemic paternalism* broadens the collection further. Epistemic paternalism is a political tool, but one which democracy does not effectively constrain. “In the context of real politics, on a global level, there is little political epistemic paternalism cannot justify in the constraining of public knowledge and the hierarchical decisions it enables. Outrages against domestic democracy must almost become the norm if we pursue the inexorable logic of political epistemic paternalism.” Basham offers historical evidence for this thesis in repeated incidents of “rule by crisis.” Especially when public trust lapses, governing by crisis rationalizes the censoring and manipulation of information, and is often sought by corrupt political authorities as the most effective way to achieve their desired projects.

Part II of the collection focuses on scientific and medical communication. Here again we find that those who take sides in the debate over epistemic paternalism are often concerned with the relationship between vertical and horizontal, or again, epistocratic and democratized modes of knowledge distribution.

In the first chapter of Part II, Fabien Medvecky points out how recognition of the ubiquity of peoples’ cognitive biases motivates arguments for interfering in their inquiry for their own epistemic good, while the need for agents to develop skills and virtues of good inquiry on their own motivates criticism of EP as creating some of the same conditions of citizen incompetence which it ostensibly aims to correct. But while epistemic paternalism is often viewed with suspicion, and defenders have typically supported EP only ‘in certain circumstances’, while agreeing that, all things being equal, EP is less than desirable. Medvecky argues for turning this

received view on its head: “it is not EP that we ought to be suspicious about, but rather, we should be suspicious of testimonial practice that fails to give due consideration to EP.”

Medvecky develops this view by explaining how mundane, and how needful it is for us to interfere with one another’s epistemic states, and by drawing attention to “the interplay between interference and intentionality in communicative practice.” This leaves him substantially at odds with the language of interference which defenders of EP such as Goldman, Ahlstrom-Vij, and Croce employ, and which EP’s critics are happy to share. For at the core of suspicion of EP lies an assumption Medvecky thinks we should challenge, the assumption of epistemic autonomy: that individuals can and want to know things independently, without interference from others. “Many of us hold false beliefs about matters that are relevant to public policy such as climate change and the safety of vaccines.... What can be done to rectify this situation?”

Robin McKenna’s chapter focuses on two quite different readings of this question. The *descriptive* reading concerns which methods will be *effective* in persuading people that their beliefs are false, while the *normative* reading involves assessing methods we are *permitted* to use in the service of persuading people. After articulating the distinction and its relevance, McKenna’s chapter focuses in on this second question. A “de-idealised” approach to normativity is required to appropriately assess this question. This approach recognizes that human beings are not ideal epistemic agents. De-idealized social epistemology enables more concrete suggestions for improving our epistemic situation, while insisting that reasonable proposals be *evidence-based* (that is, based on an answer to the first, descriptive, question). On the basis of both reason and evidence, McKenna argues that “marketing methods” are an acceptable response to the normative question. Marketing methods are both more effective and less ethically and politically

problematic than are the “rational persuasion methods” of EP as approached through notions of agent irrationality flowing from assumptions of idealized epistemology.

Shaun Respass examines expert care in mental health paternalism. Medical professionals and practitioners acting as experts in the mental health field make many decisions regarding the epistemic needs of their clients/patients. Some of these decisions appropriately qualify as *epistemic paternalism*, including “concealing particularly unpleasant test results from patients, promoting certain studies and methods over others, and sanctioning official diagnoses over a client’s experiential testimony.” But what constitutes valid expertise, and how it may be leveraged paternalistically in better or worse ways? In a manner highly informed by feminist epistemology, the author argues that an ethics of care should supplant utilitarian, libertarian, and virtue-based accounts of paternalism. On this account, the ethics of care helps articulate “a more accurate representation of how one may or may not appropriately intervene.” Care ethics, Respass finds, depreciates agential epistemology, which is argued to root in methodological individualism; it instead makes central a theoretical approach more attuned to inter-dependent agents and dominant *networks* or *ecosystems* of knowledge.

Aude Bandini’s chapter focuses on doctor-patient relationships and the devaluation of the expertise of patients –especially “non-compliant” patients. Such patients are usually suspected of ‘not getting’ how serious their disease is, or what treatment options should be foremost. “Otherwise, the argument goes, they would whole-heartedly collaborate and take better care of themselves (take their medication, exercise more, quit smoking, etc.). The non-compliant patient’s refusal or inability to behave is then primarily explained as the outcome of various epistemic flaws: ignorance or some other sort of cognitive frailty (irrationality, short-sightedness, overwhelming emotions or stress due to the disease, etc.), worsened by some vicious character

features (recklessness, laziness, weakness of the will, etc.).” Bandini questions these assumptions, while defending patients’ lay expertise and elaborating the relationship between standard paternalism and more recent arguments cast in terms of EP.

Pat Bondy defends the view that there is a justifiable form of epistemic paternalism (EP) that falls under general paternalism. These cases of EP are epistemic because they are directed at generating epistemic goods, but the reason for generating those epistemic goods is because they bring about other goods, either for the subject, or for people whom the subject will affect, or for society at large. After clarifying this conception of epistemic paternalism, Bondy develops an instrumental approach to epistemic normativity at the individual level. Epistemic reasons are evidential in character, and epistemically rational beliefs are those that are held on the basis of good evidence. Epistemic rationality is not instrumental in character; it’s just determined by the quality of the evidence. But epistemic normativity is instrumental: it is a matter of taking the appropriate means to achieve a goal that one has a normative reason to try to achieve. Often, though not always, one has normative reason to try to get true beliefs and avoid false ones. Believing what the evidence supports is the appropriate means to take for achieving that goal. To illustrate how that approach applies in the interpersonal context of EP, consider this example. S1 might be a legislator sitting on an environmental sub-committee; S2 might be another legislator who would prefer to remain uninformed on the issue; p might be the proposition that climate change poses a serious threat to our survival and way of life; the body of evidence might be that possessed by relevant scientists; and a paternalist action might be to corner S2 during a coffee break and present a bullet-point summary of the recent report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which S2 had been avoiding. Bondy takes this to be a justified case of epistemic paternalism insofar as S2 is better off epistemically, and their epistemic improvement

improves policy making for the public. Of course, normative reasons can be defeated, yet this analysis shows that some forms of epistemic interference can be justified.

Michel Croce's (2018) article added significantly to attempts to offer an account of legitimate or justified epistemic paternalism (Ahlstrom-Vij 2013; Goldman 1991 and 1999; Pritchard 2013, and others). In his chapter in this collection Croce continues to develop his unique account of features in virtue of which this entitlement comes or goes. Croce addresses Emma Bullock's dilemma for EP, and in particular how she a) singles out cases to which the dilemma applies, and b) interprets the notion of 'personal autonomy.' He then presents a solution to the dilemma on behalf of those who find scope for justification of epistemic paternalism "in the distinctive value of some interferences." More specifically, he shows that there are cases of (hard) epistemic paternalism that do not fall prey to Bullock's dilemma if one is willing to go beyond the *personal sovereignty* model of autonomy. Articulating it, Croce responds to Bullock's challenge "in a way that safeguards the legitimacy of epistemic paternalism, albeit restricting its scope to a limited range of cognitive projects."

Fernando Broncano-Berrocal, like Robin McKenna and Charlie Crerar, approaches normative questions about EP through an ethics of care. Caring practices, as those involved in parenting, health care or teaching, have epistemic dimensions. But to what extent is epistemic care compatible with epistemic paternalism, and can some epistemically paternalistic acts be considered instances of epistemic care? The author discussed several different conditions on the justification of paternalistic practices, including an *Expert condition* (Goldman 1991), an *Alignment condition*, a *Burden-of-proof condition* (both Ahlstrom-Vij 2013), a *Balancing-goods condition* (Ahlstrom-Vij 2013; Bullock 2016), and a *Virtue condition* (Croce 2018). Ultimately, he develops and defends an *Epistemic care condition*, a condition roughly, on which A acts

permissibly towards B if A's epistemically paternalistic act is an instance of proper epistemic care.

David Godden focuses debate over permissible EP on different conceptions of the epistemic autonomy of agents. Prevailing arguments about the permissibility of paternalistic epistemic interventions tend to adopt a conception of epistemic autonomy as epistemic self-reliance. For example, Ahlstrom-Vij explains epistemic autonomy as “the freedom of inquirers to conduct inquiry *in whatever way they see fit*” (2013: 61 emphasis added). Godden argues however that autonomy is better understood as epistemic self-governance, and that, so understood, certain kinds of paternalistic epistemic interventions are permissible. Each of us has epistemic blind spots—contingently true claims inaccessible to us because of our constitution or situation. Yet an awareness of our epistemic blind spots, such that they are “known unknowns” to us, can be part of self-governance and provide people with reason to consent to paternalistic epistemic interventions. Godden takes his analysis to suggest stricter standards than Ahlstrom-Vij for the permissibility of epistemic paternalism. Yet he argues that people's commitment to the norm of belief can still license even paternalistic epistemic interventions inquirers themselves would not consent to, “specifically, when their epistemic circumstance blinds them to the reasons licensing the intervention.”

Liz Jackson explores the relationship between epistemic paternalism and two other epistemological theses – epistemic permissivism and standpoint epistemology. These two recent theses interact with normative questions about epistemic paternalism, and Jackson argues they provide a sufficient condition for *unjustified* epistemic paternalism. Epistemic permissivism is the view that there can be more than one rational attitude for a body of evidence. Standpoint epistemology is the view that one's social situation gives one unique access to certain epistemic

goods. Part of what interpersonal permissivism and standpoint epistemology have in common is their denial that there is one privileged way of interpreting a body of evidence. The burden of Jackson's argument is to show how permissivism and standpoint epistemology overlap, and how each "provides us with a class of cases of unjustified epistemic paternalism." Jackson's paper highlights the epistemic latitude or slack we owe one another with respect to many of our beliefs, and thus the need for caution and for considering "whether we might be in an epistemically permissive case before engaging in epistemic paternalism."

Valerie Joly Chock and Jonathan Matheson are also concerned with the epistemic justice or injustice of EP. They utilize Kristie Dotson's concept of "testimonial smothering," which obtains when a speaker feels obliged to limit her testimony due to the reasonable risk of it being misunderstood or misapplied by the audience. Testimonial smothering is seen by the authors as a form of epistemic paternalism since the speaker is interfering with the audience's inquiry for their benefit without first consulting them. Your silencing of your own testimony may well be the result of an epistemic injustice. For example, it is because their testimony is often unsafe and risky that pressure to remain silent about domestic violence exists for women of color. Yet cases of one's withholding testimony from an audience due to testimonial smothering fit the standard conditions for epistemic paternalism. Ironically perhaps, a kind of epistemic injustice, self-silencing due to testimonial smothering, offers a vivid case of permissible epistemic paternalism. For when someone is the victim of epistemic injustice, it clearly be permissible for them to withhold further testimony to those who have demonstrated pernicious ignorance and testimonial incompetence regarding the subject. "To think otherwise would be to think that individuals are required to provide testimony that will contribute to even more epistemic injustice."

Amiel Bernal's "Epistemic Paternalism as Epistemic Justice" first develops the case that epistemic paternalism is *in principle* an impermissible form of epistemic injustice, before arguing against this view. Appealing to the distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory, Amiel argues that the normative standards which generate this ostensive tension are inappropriate for social epistemology. Recognizing that social epistemology and epistemic injustice are only possible in non-ideal theory leads to the conclusion that, in some instances, epistemic paternalism can constitute restorative epistemic justice. This thesis is demonstrated by two cases of epistemic paternalism which promote epistemic justice, while respecting the parties involved.

Daniella Meehan's chapter begins with attitudes and thinking styles identified by vice epistemologists as epistemic or intellectual vices. 'Bad' epistemic behavior, is, unfortunately commonplace, and the 'predictably irrational' behavior of humans, is often the backdrop for calls for paternalistic interventions. Meehan examines whether "epistemic nudging" (EN) can be employed as a successful practice to combat our epistemic vices. Nudgers like Cass Sunstein argue that when well-designed nudges are in place, human agency is retained while freedom of choice is not compromised. But despite its *prima facie* appeal, Meehan argues that epistemic nudging "at the very best amounts to a superficial and short-lived way of addressing epistemic vices." Situation management masks vices without eliminating them. Worse, recurring nudges are likely to lead to the atrophy of desirable epistemic capacities of agents. Indeed, the practice of EN "can often lead to the creation of further vices, specifically the vice of epistemic laziness." If so, EN, rather than being a cure-all, actually contributes in no small way to what the authors describe as *reflective incapacitational injustice*.

Adam Green's chapter is akin to Meehan's in that both articulate how paternalistic interventions into epistemic practices are often "at significant risk of committing wrongs of the

sort they seek to redress.” Incorporating the literature on epistemic violence, Green turns the discussion to a contrast of epistemically violent and non-violent interventions. We are tempted to meet epistemic violence with violent interventions or interferences. Yet, the cost of an epistemic intervention goes up the more violence the intervention involves. “Epistemic injustice is rooted in epistemic violence, but paternalism can take the form of violence.” By contrast, non-violent action, which involves more deeply listening to the perspective of the other person, also resists epistemic injustice. Non-violent approaches hold great promise as a way of overcoming the “tension between ineffective and violent intervention” Green finds so pervasive in the debate over EP.

Shaun O’Dwyer’s chapter aims to provide an ideal schema for evaluating efforts proceeding from epistemically paternalist motivations: efforts at persuading members of disadvantaged groups to inquire into, modify or abandon demonstrably erroneous beliefs. Asking whether these efforts are themselves just or unjust, O’Dwyer makes an interesting distinction between epistemic and *thumetic* values (after the Greek *thumos*, “feeling”, “spirit” or “passion”), a distinction (but not a dichotomy) that any ideal schema should make. The ideal schema provides for co-operative dialogue to rectify erroneous belief, but is also valuable for identifying where epistemic injustice is most likely to occur in interventions that fall short of that schema’s standards. This approach aims to avoid the pitfalls of epistemic versions of what Jonathon Quong’s terms “judgmental paternalism.” This is when some person or collective is motivated to take action to improve the “welfare, good, happiness, needs, interests or values” of another agent, but on the basis of a “negative judgement” about the latter’s ability to decide competently. O’Dwyer concludes that paternalism is a philosophy which appears at loggerheads with itself: “The profound tension the epistemic variety of this paternalism gives rise to is that similarly

motivated efforts to ameliorate the cognitive disadvantage that results in violation of an agent's right to know x can also impinge on her right to be taken seriously."

"Entrenched polarisation and partisanship, 'take-down culture' on social media, break-downs in inter-cultural dialogue: we are all familiar with the array of problems presently afflicting public discourse in societies across the world." But how best to assuage them? Charlie Crerar's chapter, which closes out the anthology, suggests that "A greater willingness to be charitable across viewpoints would not provide a panacea for these problems, but it would help." An intuitive understanding of intellectual charity is as a form of EP, where a listener assigns excess credence as a way of encouraging epistemic improvements. This, though, generates a whiff of arrogance around charity, of assuming a position of intellectual superiority, along with the deeper worry that "unless the charitable agent does occupy some relevant position of superiority, the paternalistic defence of charity cannot perform the task for which it was called upon." Instead, Crerar proposes an account of intellectual charity as a *corrective virtue*, that helps compensate for shortcomings elsewhere in our intellectual character. Charitably allotting more credence to others than you think they deserve actually serves us all well. Amongst other things, Crerar's "corrective account" differentiates justified EP from EP motivated by uncharitable judgment about others.

To summarize, the points of view expressed in this collection are highly diverse. The collection includes scholars quite conversant with analytic epistemology, and who partly for reasons of clarity focus their chapters on examination of specific conditions for the justification of paternalistic practice, however rare or widespread they see this as being. The collection also includes scholars whose work largely eschews analytic methods in favor of broader historical or political critique of epistocratic manipulations as threats to individual liberty of conscience, and

to democracy. Some of these differences may be ones of style, but a more interesting concern for readers could be the *different conceptions of social epistemology itself* found advocated or implicitly assumed by contributors to the collection. Thus, our contributors draw readily upon both virtue and vice epistemology, and together with this, research on epistemic injustice. We also suggest that the issues raised in debate over epistemic paternalism overlap with (and perhaps sheds new light upon) what differentiates epistemic and deliberative accounts of democratic legitimacy.

Such divergence in approaches to social epistemology have been an ongoing concern in this book series (Sherman and Goguen eds. 2019; Reider ed. 2018).⁴ With contributors from such different camps raising issues and concerns which should be of genuine concern to all readers, this collection hopes to reconcile these ‘in house’ divisions among self-described social epistemologists. At the least it may aid the articulation of these differences, through shared attention to a common set of issues, and through leading all readers to rethink some very basic disagreements about the value, or the tyranny, of ideal theory.⁵

NOTES

¹ Goldman (1991, 127) writes, “Epistemic paternalism on the part of isolated individuals is quite a different matter from paternalism exercised by the state, or any other powerful organ of society. There are historical reasons for being very cautious about state control of information.”

² As Liz Jackson notes, this definition is found in Ahlstrom-Vij (2013, 51) and Bullock (2018, 434). Goldman’s descriptive sense of EP is: “I shall think of communication controllers as exercising epistemic paternalism whenever they interpose their own judgment rather than allow the audience to exercise theirs (all with an eye to the audience's epistemic prospects)” (1991,

119). His advocacy is framed in terms of arguments for rejecting the thesis that communication controllers never interpose but (assuming low personal cost of effort) should always disseminate to inquirers all the evidence relevant to their inquiries.

³ Competence theories often aim to justify strong paternalism, while consent-based theories may aim either support or censure it. But the suggested mediation of these normative claims might be anticipated by John Dewey, for whom "freedom of mind is the fundamental and central freedom in the maintenance of a free society" (*LW* 15: 175). Tan Sor Hoon (1999) points out that for Dewey, it is not freedom from interference, but free and full participation, that is important: "No man and no mind was ever emancipated by merely being left alone" (*LW* 2: 340). Dewey held great hope for experimentalism, and for extending a progressive and pro-social "method of operative intelligence" to the direction of life. But Dewey clearly held strong paternalists to err in assuming that the good for a person is achievable without their cooperation.

⁴ On vying conceptions of social epistemology, and prospects for their reconciliation, see also Susan Dieleman (2016) and David Coady (2010).

⁵ For some social epistemologists 'the tyranny of the ideal' is brought about by a Platonist rationalism that forgets Arendt and Foucault. Different conceptions of social epistemology as we find them among our contributors have also been variously exhibited in other volumes in this book series. We hope that this collection helps not just to articulate these differences, but also to commensurate them.

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