



Ernest Sosa and the Theory of Virtue Reliabilism: towards the Understanding of Virtue Epistemology

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Sosa's version of sophisticated or revisionist epistemology. Sosa finds a re-evaluating epistemology which is closer to the traditional moral virtue put in place Aristotle. His contribution in contemporary epistemology is the adoption of the theory of virtue reliabilism, considered as the most distinctive approach of virtue epistemology. Virtue epistemology is understood as a shift from the epistemic evaluation of the properties of beliefs to properties of persons, or an approach to understand the evaluative and metaphysical dimension of cognition. With Sosa's theory of virtue reliabilism, the acquisition of genuine knowledge is grounded in special mental faculty (memory, perception, introspection, logical reasoning) which allows us to arrive at the truth of things reliably. It is from this view that reliabilism virtuous theory saw virtue epistemology and true knowledge at the angle of stable and reliable mental faculties which human possess naturally. Finally, in this paper, we proceed arguing that, virtue responsibilism is a version of virtue epistemology that demands a more conception of intellectual or epistemic virtue than the minimal reliabilists conception of Ernest Sosa. In this light, we are proposing that, true knowledge acquisition base on the perspective of virtue responsibilists with acquired intellectual or epistemic character traits like carefulness, open-mindedness, thoroughness, tenacity consciousness and inquisitiveness, are more convenient and convincing regarding the future of science today. These virtuous qualities could help to push the bound of knowledge to an interesting way up to the discovery of new scientific truth like the great scientific achievements of Galileo in astronomy.

Keywords: Virtue Epistemology, Virtue Reliabilism, Virtue Responsibilism, Vice Epistemology, Epistemology

INTRODUCTION

Investigations in virtue theory is a moral theory of philosophy developed by Aristotle in a greater extent and other philosophers in the ancient world. It is the quest to live a life of moral character. Aristotle explained that, good life is a life of happiness and such happiness can only be attained if one observes and practises virtues. This is because true personal happiness or wellbeing is what Aristotle terms *eudemonia*, the production of a virtuous life, which is neither occasional nor accidental. This line of reflection about virtue put in place by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* and revived in areas of ethics has been expanded in other areas of philosophy like epistemology by virtue epistemologists. Virtue epistemology as a distinctive approach to understood as an evaluative and metaphysical dimensions of cognition by accepting cognition as normative character. More clearly, the concept "virtue epistemology" has come to designate a class of recent theories that focus on epistemic evaluation on properties of persons rather than properties of beliefs or propositions. The focus of this approach to the person's properties designates what Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski assert that, "The direction taken by this approach and the issues it raises are strikingly different from those that dominated American epistemology at the beginning of the last quarter of the twentieth century. At that time, it was almost always taken for granted that knowledge is justified true belief, and epistemic discourse was dominated by competing analyses of the concept of justification."¹ Virtue epistemology as a contemporary movement within epistemology, began with Ernest Sosa in America in the early 1980s in his works: *Knowledge in Perspective* (1991) and *Virtue Epistemology* (2007) with the view that epistemology is a normative disciple and intellectual agents. Epistemology is the way we acquire knowledge and the standard to maintain how we know things It is critically a view to investigate the claim of knowledge as properties of a belief. It is understood as a property to support my belief based on the evidence of what is perceived like, *I am perceiving a white house*. The question of the properties of a belief is shifted by virtue epistemologist to the properties of "ME", the person. This is to know the mental qualities or "virtue" behind the claim of knowledge like the case of a white house I am perceiving.

It can be noted that, this recent theory draws inspiration from philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Nietzsche, Sander Peirce, Hume, Reid and the contemporary analytic thinker Russell. Questions from Islamic philosophy like epistemic value of imagination and the sophisticated social epistemology of reliable and unreliable testimony of Avicenna greatly influenced the advent and practice of virtue epistemology. As said above, the recent movement in epistemology began with Ernest Sosa in his development of "Virtue Perspectivism" that amounts to the place he gave to truth in the process of knowledge acquisition and the existing debate in philosophy between foundationalism and coherentism and between internalism and externalism.

¹ Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski, *Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility*: Oxford New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, P. 3.

Ernest Sosa developed a form of virtue epistemology called virtue reliabilism which sticks to the cognitive and normative goal of virtue epistemology. He maintained that true and genuine knowledge is grounded in special mental faculty which allows us to arrive at the truth of things in a reliable way. Sosa outlines such epistemological virtuous faculties as perception, memory, introspection and logical reasoning. The reliabilism of Sosa helps in the maximisation of truth acquired in a reliably via human mental faculties. Fairweather and Zagzebski in commenting on the view of Sosa assert that, "According to reliabilists theories, what makes a true belief an instance of knowledge is that it arises out of a reliable faculty or process for obtaining the truth."² Reliabilism is externalist in that the conditions for knowledge or justifiedness does not need to be accessible to the consciousness of the believer. As the founder of virtue epistemology, Sosa remains in the mind for the formations of true and reliable knowledge possessed naturally by humans without. But he did not notice that true knowledge within the confines of virtue epistemology envision by virtue responsibility reiterates that, we must work hard to acquire intellectual character traits just as we do with moral character traits. This is the closeness of Aristotle's virtue theory to this revised contemporary form of epistemology. In a clear dimension, the reliabilists virtue epistemology of Sosa is focus on immediate knowledge of our surrounding that is, the perception of things but to push the perspective of knowledge acquisition in a convincing and interesting manner to talk of discovering new scientific truth. We must be in possession of character traits that will influence our way of reflection thus, the necessity and the place of virtue responsibility. But talking of virtue epistemology, we must think of the influence of vice epistemology or epistemic vice as a barricade in the knowledge acquisition; thus we proposed to strive for virtue in avoidance of vice in epistemological stance. Hence, what is virtue epistemology?

1- What is Virtue Epistemology

In the first place, it is necessary to understand what this theory is all about. Virtue as an important concept in moral philosophy designating good and how a virtuous person possesses a good, excellent and admirable character that leads to happiness (eudemonia) and pleasure (hedonism). Epistemology or the theory of knowledge studies philosophically the nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge from *episteme* and *logos*, which signifies respectively *science* and *rational discourse*. Virtue epistemology as a new and recent theory in epistemology originated from American analytic world focusing on epistemic evaluation on properties of persons rather than properties of beliefs. In the words of Sosa, "Virtue epistemology is a distinctive approach to understanding the evaluative and metaphysical dimensions of cognition."³ Virtue epistemology gives epistemic or intellectual virtue concept a pertinent role. The fundamental role of epistemic virtue in this theory shows how man seizes from the simple view defined by virtue as a trait or moral qualities of man as seen in Aristotle's moral philosophy to human belief. This new or recent approach of epistemology admit the fact that, human ideas and beliefs passes via an ethical process. Consequently, they are influence by our beliefs, personal virtue and experiences.

Again, it was in the publication of the article entitled "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" by Edmund Gettier in 1963, that virtue epistemology arises. Contemporary epistemology, in defining knowledge, struggled to find ways of addressing what has come to be known as the Gettier Problem. Knowledge as justified true belief, with its possible roots in Plato's discussion in the *Meno* and *Theaetetus* that knowledge may be "tethered" to true belief had, become common grist for epistemological mills. Edmund Gettier came to the conclusion after his analysis in this work that, "we can have true belief with justification without having knowledge."⁴ it is because of this that virtue epistemologist like Sosa, Greco, Zagzebski, Hookway changes from the properties of a belief to the properties of the person itself. Virtue epistemology defends the priority of the concept of epistemic virtue over the concepts of justification, knowledge, or truth, in ascending order of strength, just as an interesting virtue ethics must defend the priority of moral virtue over the concepts of right act and good outcome.

It was almost taken for granted before the advent of virtue epistemology that knowledge is justified-true-belief, and epistemic discourse was dominated by competing analyses of the concept of justification, but this view was bypassed by virtue epistemologist who adopted the question of apt belief. Sosa in his writing affirms in this line of reflection that,

In order to qualify as knowledge, a belief need only be both true and "apt." What then is such aptness and what role might truth play in determining it? Is a belief (epistemology) apt insofar as it promotes some truth-involving goal? If so, which goal? If knowledge is better than mere true belief, moreover, in what way is it better? How does our conception of epistemic aptness help explain why it is better to have an apt true belief than a mere true belief? A belief does not count as apt simply because it promotes the goal of having true beliefs. A belief that a certain book is a good source of information may be ill grounded and inapt though in fact true and, when acted upon, a source of much further true belief. A belief can promote a massive acquisition of true beliefs without thereby becoming apt. We do well to replace that diachronic goal, therefore, perhaps with a synchronic goal of now acquiring true beliefs (and no false ones). But this threatens a *reductio*: that all and only one's present true beliefs will then be epistemologically rational, by promoting one's goal of now acquiring true beliefs.⁵

From the above reflection, virtue epistemologist illustrates that, the justified-true-belief theory of knowledge was mulled by the conscience normatively to prove an evaluative positive state of justification. It is because of this epistemic view that Sosa's theory of reliabilism entered into philosophical competition with justified-true-belief theory. His analysis was to show how naturalistic reliabilism holds. In this light, normative epistemic properties are reducible to natural, non-epistemic properties. Thus "Reliabilism was therefore both a form of externalism and of naturalized epistemology."⁶ It is clear that certain epistemic qualities uphold be virtue epistemology call justification given immediately from a reliable means not simple a justified-true-belief.

² *Ibid.*, P. 4.

³ John Turri and Ernest Sosa, *Virtue Epistemology*: Forthcoming in the Encyclopedia of Philosophy and the Social Sciences (Sage).

⁴ Ashraf Adeel, *Epistemology of the Quran: Elements of a Virtue Approach to Knowledge and Understanding*, Switzerland, Springer, 2019, p. 7.

⁵ Ernest Sosa, *The Place of Truth in Epistemology*: Forthcoming in Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology, ed. DePaul and L. Zagzebski OUP, 2002, pp. 1-2.

⁶ Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski, p. 4.

Sosa's theory of reliabilism which is the main call for concern in this work, gives us the hint about epistemic justification of belief founded by a means reliable in an environment normal for the formation of such a belief. A belief may join the base of knowledge not via perfectly reliable rational intuition but also via "perception, introspection and memory"⁷ which are the mental faculties main to help maximise man surplus of truth over error.

2- The Closeness of Virtue Epistemology to the Traditional Moral Virtue of Aristotle

The interest of virtue epistemologist on the properties and character trait of a person in the enterprise of knowledge rather than his belief, proposition or justification, led to its association with the virtue theory of Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*. Virtue epistemologists develop, "the idea of intellectual virtues along the lines of Aristotle's moral virtues and characterizes them as personality traits."⁸ This is how virtue theory, most represented in moral philosophy, is extended to other branches of philosophy like epistemology. More interesting, in this view, is to reiterate the points that virtue epistemology must defend the priority of the concept of epistemic virtue over the concepts of justification, knowledge, or truth, in ascending order of strength, just as an interesting virtue ethics must defend the priority of moral virtue over the concepts of right act and good outcome. However, Fairweather and Zagzebski asserted that, "if virtue epistemology is modeled upon virtue ethics, then I think we need more than these relatively straightforward points of contact. In particular, I suppose that, like virtue ethics, if it really is a distinct approach to ethics, virtue epistemology will need to defend a certain kind of priority."⁹ This priority is mullied by the place a person or an agent occupies rather than his belief in the process of knowledge and action perform. Two equations will be adopted to illustrate a virtuous act.

(1) An action produces the greatest balance of benefit over the harm of any alternative if and only if it is the action that would be performed by a virtuous agent.

(2) An action is the right action to perform in the circumstances if and only if a virtuous agent would perform it in the circumstances.

Virtue is a trait of character that is to be admired universally: one rendering its possessor better, either morally, intellectually, in conduct of specific affairs. The emphasis of virtue in this work as prima in the epistemological domain necessitates a review of its foundation in the work of Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* is Aristotle's principal works on ethics in which he explores the view of virtue and good character traits. He regards virtue as a means to an end and an end being what we wish for. He maintains that the good is contained in happiness and the bad in unhappiness. This is why, "The first sentence of Aristotle's Ethics, however, concerns the good, and it soon becomes clear that his focus is initially on the nature of the human good, or human happiness (eudemonia)."¹⁰ All human actions are geared toward an end, goal, or purpose, which is the attainment of happiness. In this light, true personal happiness and wellbeing (eudemonia) is the product of a virtuous life. Eudemonism is an important doctrine in the philosophies of proponents of virtue morality which we notice its usage equally with Plato. Aristotle being one of them, explains that good life is the life of happiness and such happiness can only be attained if one observes and practises virtue: if not, man will be unhappy. It is for this reason why Aristotle affirms that, "human happiness consists in the exercise of the virtues. This has the radical implication that a vicious or immoral person literally has nothing to live for, and indeed that they might be best advised to commit suicide."¹¹ In the same light, virtue epistemologists believe that a vicious person is not dwelled of good character traits that could lead to the acquisition of true and reliable knowledge and consequence the advancement of science. The virtue theory of Aristotle inscribed under what he called eudemonia means human action is aimed at fulfilling its function of attaining virtue and that is happiness through the golden means. "A difference between Aristotle and modern theorists of the virtues is his objective notion of happiness."¹² The good life for man, says Aristotle, is that of happiness and men ought to behave to achieve it.

Again, virtue being a theory of moral philosophy designating its engagement to provide happiness with Aristotle, has a different connotation in the context of virtue epistemology. Virtue is directed in epistemology to show human possession of cognitive faculties as said Ernest Sosa and virtuous character trait more particularly. Sosa thinks that intellectual virtues are human cognitive faculties or abilities relevant for certain areas of cognition. The relevance of virtue to different cognitive faculties are better attributed to epistemic agents as persons rather than the faculties that such agents possess. From this analysis, it can be observed that,

Virtue epistemology is a recent movement, but virtue ethics is as old as western philosophy. Ever since Plato, ethicists and historians of ethics have explored the nature of a virtue and the particular virtue, as well as the relationship between the concept of virtue and others key concepts in ethics such as that of a right act, a good motive, emotion and happiness (eudemonia). Virtue epistemology understandable concentrate on the way the idea of a virtue can help resolve epistemological questions and leave the conceptual work of explaining value of ethics. Clearly, virtue epistemology needs virtue ethics.¹³

It is from this quotation that we understand the clear linked between virtue and virtue epistemology and why virtue epistemology is really in need of virtue ethics of traditional philosophy in the world of science.

⁷ Ernest Sosa, *Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 89.

⁸ Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski, p. 11.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans by Roger Crisp, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. x.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. xix.

¹³ Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski, *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, New York, Clarendon Press Oxford, 2003, p. 2.

3- Virtue Reliabilism or Epistemic Virtue as Sosa's Perspective in Virtue Epistemology

Sosa's contribution to virtue epistemology is his reliabilist virtue epistemology or virtue reliabilism. Sosa believes in his theory that virtuous faculties with more capacity are related to direct sense-perception and memory, while virtuous faculties with less capacity are related to belief gotten from the prima source of sense-experience or memory. This clear perspective in perceptual faculties can be expressed in Sosa's words when he asserts that,

There we fall short of reflective knowledge, however, because the jokester precludes the aptness of our implicit confidence that our perceptual belief is apt. His being in control makes it too easy for us to be confident in that default way, in normal conditions for the exercise of our perceptual competence [...] Is the case of ordinary perception alike in those crucial respects? That is not so clear. Among the things we must take for granted in attaining ordinary perceptual knowledge is that we are awake. What is our basis if any for so presupposing? Is it simply our being conscious? Plausibly it is, at least on the orthodox conception of dreams.¹⁴

Knowledge to him is true belief under the condition that it is produced by intellectual excellence or virtue, understood in terms of reliable truth directed cognitive disposition. "Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher asserted that, "knowledge is virtue" The reliabilist form of virtue epistemology of Sosa and even that of John Greco cleaves closer to Aristotelian intellectual virtue theory while recognizing what is called "the broader set of competences still restricted to basic faculties of perception, introspection, and the like."¹⁵ This is a form of intellectual virtue that is in concomitance with competence virtue epistemology. Sosa admitted that these personal qualities respect certain propositions, reliable means, help in reaching the truth and avoiding error. Called agential virtue in other words, it shares certain features like

- 1- They are virtues exercised in intentional agency
- 2- They are developed through repeated agency
- 3- They bear on the personal worth of the possessor
- 4- They aid agential success
- 5- In epistemology, they concern intentionally conducted inquiry. Because of its focus on traditional faculties such as perception, memory, and inference.

Virtue reliabilism of Sosa overlooks character trait seen in the five features of agential virtue as a satisfactory competence virtue epistemology. It is because he ignored the character trait that reliability and truth is attained in knowledge acquisition, though the bone of contention in virtue epistemology is the place of virtue gotten from the moral philosophy of Aristotle. Sosa's point is clear when he asserts that, "such overlooked character traits are indeed, under certain propositions, a reliable means to reaching the truth and avoiding error: Their exercise can most saliently explain why the subject gets it right in believing as he does."¹⁶ The competent reliabilist intellectual virtue (virtue epistemology) is the true proof that constitutes knowledge. This is why knowledge is correct belief succeeds via the exercise of competence. Accuracy, adroitness and aptness entails beliefs enquire under cognitive manifestation or epistemic virtue or competence. We see with Sosa that; aptness is the manifestation of competence.

Again, to provide a solution to the earlier view of virtue epistemology called the Gettier problem, Sosa handle the concept of knowledge and justification in a different direction. To him knowledge is no more understood as seen above in terms of the properties of belief but the intellectual virtue of an epistemic agent. The justification and knowledge is via these virtues.

It is of no doubt that Sosa is considered as the father of contemporary virtue epistemology. His stand point was visible in a seminal paper entitled, "The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence and the Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge," that was latter inserted in his work *Knowledge in Perspective* (1991). There, he offers constructive critics to foundationalism and coherentism and proposes a measure solution which results in putting in place intellectual virtues as a basis for attaining justified belief and knowledge. These two theories, as Sosa argued, have some difficulties. Coherentism in the first place, he says, takes justification of our beliefs to be rooted in logical relations between them. In this light, a belief is only justified when it coheres with other beliefs. Sosa thinks such a position cannot properly account for beliefs that are at the periphery of our system of beliefs. For example, to say I am standing in front of a tree, Sosa maintains that this belief and its opposite can be made to cohere with belief systems that are not drastically different from each other. The coherentists raft is advanced against foundationalism as said Sosa thus, "the coherentists reject the metaphor of the pyramid in favour of one that they own to the positivist Neurath, according to whom our body of knowledge is a raft that floats free of any anchor or tie."¹⁷ But what is the pyramid of foundationalism all about, "foundationalism claims that there is a pyramid-like structure to human knowledge and that some beliefs make for the foundations of this structure."¹⁸ Knowledge to this theory lies on a pyramid or a foundation, reason why Sosa thinks a mere belief on what is already established does not account for a true justified belief of an epistemic agent. The views of these two theories are not to be neglected in virtue epistemology. Coherence via the raft significantly expresses intellectual virtue or excellence. "Foundationalism and coherentism, in this way, both become part of a unifying account of human output in the area of epistemic good. They need not exclude each other."¹⁹ But the bypassed of the foundationalists and coherentists controversy by Sosa marks the advents of his theory (virtue reliabilism or epistemic virtue) as a major contribution in virtue epistemology.

¹⁴ Ernest Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge*, Vol I, New York, Clarendon Press Oxford, 2007, p. 36

¹⁵ Ernest Sosa, *Epistemology*, Princeton University Press, 2007 p. 190.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

¹⁷ Ernest Sosa, *Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology*, p. 169.

¹⁸ Ashraf Adeel, p. 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

It was really a solution to the conflict between foundationists and coherentists over the structure of epistemic justification in “The Raft and the Pyramid” paper discussion in 1980. This was a competitive analysis of knowledge in partial response to Edmund Gettier problem.

The motive to avoid skepticism was the impetus for another dispute that dominated epistemology during the last decades of the twentieth century the dispute between foundationalism and coherentism on the nature of a rational cognitive structure. This dispute also appeared to be intractable, and by 1980 Ernest Sosa proposed in his important essay, “The Raft and the Pyramid,” that the concept of intellectual virtue could be used to bypass the controversy between foundationalists and coherentists. In that essay Sosa introduced the term “intellectual virtue” into the contemporary epistemological literature. What Sosa meant by an intellectual virtue was a reliable belief-forming faculty, and so virtue epistemology began as a species of reliabilism. According to reliabilist theories, what makes a true belief an instance of knowledge is that it arises out of a reliable faculty or process for obtaining the truth. Reliabilism is externalist in that the conditions for knowledge or justifiedness need not be accessible to the consciousness of the believer.²⁰

From the above quotation, we saw the passage to a reliable form of attaining truth by Sosa via the introduction of epistemic virtue. Virtues from the Aristotelian connotation were excellence of character, then intellectual virtues to Ernest Sosa perspective are excellence of one’s epistemic character that help form beliefs based on sense-perception or other types of input. This is, “Sosa takes virtues to be stable dispositions to act for achieving some good. These include our natural faculties that he takes as abilities or competences.”²¹ In his defence of intellectual or epistemic virtues, he adopted cognitive or dispositions or abilities or competences as the criteria of achieving epistemic goods like truth acquisition. Ernest Sosa adopted, hearing vision, introspection, memory, deduction, and induction to be the basic intellectual virtues because of their determination by our mental faculties. The Justification for perceptual beliefs, is therefore a disposition of intellectual virtues. Thus, a belief is only justified, as it is the case with Sosa if it is grounded in a reliable cognitive disposition or virtue or competence. Hence, “A belief having a reliable source is not enough to render it justified. The source must be a cognitive virtue seated in the subject. This already yields a kind of internalism. Moreover, the source must operate fundamentally through the prompting of experience, through either introspection or perceptual belief formation.”²² Justification and knowledge become the exercise of intellectual virtues. This is why Sosa saw intellectual virtues as the only ground for all our epistemic output.

In all, virtues drawn from the human faculties are reliable due to their production of true belief rather than false belief. This attachment to reliabilism is the true feather of the reliabilist virtue epistemology of Sosa. In her argument about the multiplicity of virtues, Heather Battaly point out that there are five key features to Sosa’s analysis of intellectual virtues which deal on reliability, natural or acquired status. There is the need for an acquired virtuous motivation to act on them, identity with or distinctness from skills, and value.²³ Intellectual virtues to Sosa vision or hearing are natural while others might be acquired via learning for example in the case of virtue responsibilism. The possibility of acquiring virtue like competence of memory as a motivation to attain truth in order to exercise our intellectual virtues is not in the dictionary of Sosa. For example, vision and memory, hearing as virtues does not require intentional acts for the epistemic agent to yield true beliefs. Thus, it is only via stable, natural faculties that qualities of an excellent thinker are stresses out in this recent field of epistemology called virtue epistemology. This necessitates our call for concern in this paper to elaborate a counter view more interesting in the advancement of science and new discovery of truth.

4- Virtue Responsibilism as a Counter View to the theory of Sosa and the Future of Virtue Epistemology

Virtue responsibilism is another form of virtue epistemology but our argument in this paper is to show that, the approach they adopted considering the future of epistemology or virtue epistemology is empirical. This is understood by the practical form of feathers, its dispossession. The responsibilists conceive intellectual or epistemic virtue as good character or personality traits to be acquired by a person like attentiveness, open-mindedness, fair-mindedness, intellectual, tenacity courage and so. They accepted the reliabilist adoption of virtue epistemology as a new vision of epistemology but have argued that responsibility is the fundamental epistemic notion when it comes to intellectual virtues. Lorraine Code, James Montmarquet, and Linda Zagzebsky are among the leading figures in this stand, sometimes referred to as responsibilist virtue epistemology. Their views differ from each other in various ways, but all of them take epistemic responsibility as the key concept in virtue epistemology and the critics of Sosa’s approach for not defending the traditional approach of epistemology. Derived from the virtue theory of Aristotle, Zagzebski argues that, the responsibilist approach of virtue epistemology is more disposed with the traditional Aristotelian virtue than the reliabilism of Sosa. “Reliabilist forms of Virtue Epistemology have little or no connection with virtue ethics.”²⁴

Lorraine Code, appreciated Ernest Sosa’s attempt to shift from the properties of belief to the intellectual virtues of the knower by focusing on the cognitive activities of individuals who are part of a community of enquirers, equally the wish of epistemic responsibility on justification and knowledge acquisition. But the problem of Lorraine Code with reliabilism of Sosa is the failure to adopt the active nature of the epistemic agent into consideration. This is why he writes in his work *Epistemic Responsibility* that, “a knower/believer has an important degree of choice regarding modes of cognitive structuring, and is accountable for these choices: whereas a “reliable” knower could simply be an accurate, and relatively passive, recorder of experience.”²⁵ The epistemic agent is supposed to be active and not passive in the cognitive activities because the agent is to make active choices and is responsible for them to herself and to the community of enquirers. Thus, responsibility is the prima epistemic virtue which is supposed to be a model for other virtues.

²⁰ Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski, p. 4.

²¹ Ernest Sosa, *Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology*, p. 274.

²² Laurence Bonjour and Ernest Sosa, *Epistemic Justification: Internalism vs Externalism, Foundations vs Virtue*, U.S.A, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, p. 2.

²³ Battaly Heather, *Virtue Epistemology: Contemporary Reading*, Edited by John Greco and John Turri, MIT Press Ltd, 2012, pp. 10-12.

²⁴ Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski, P. 4.

²⁵ Lorraine Code, *Epistemic Responsibility*, Hanover: University Press of New England and Brown University Press, 1987, p. 51.

Knowledge as a justified true belief with Sosa's approach of stable reliable faculties is so individualistic and thus, fail to consider epistemic activities as social practices and community efforts. The acquisition of knowledge and the practice of intellectual virtue involves epistemic community because of the social nature of human cognitive agency. "Sosa thinks of intellectual virtues as human cognitive faculties or abilities relevant for certain areas of cognition. For Code, virtues relevant to different cognitive faculties are better attributed to epistemic agents as persons rather than the faculties that such agents possess."²⁶ James Montmarquet supported the idea of Code by maintaining the idea of intellectual virtues similar to Aristotle's moral virtues and characterizes them as personality traits.²⁷ Any epistemic agent desiring truth will need such personality traits and Sosa's intellectual virtue as reliable faculties failed in these tasks. In the same light, "it is the desire for truth that makes an agent responsible for her epistemic choices and if one has the proper intellectual virtues, like *impartiality* and *carefulness* for example, one can make *intellectually conscientiousness* choices."²⁸ Intellectual virtues must be understood as personality traits, and the "fundamental" intellectual virtue is intellectual conscientiousness. To better illustrate our point in this paper concerning the main issue at hand; intellectual or epistemic virtue, Montmarquet notes three categories of epistemic virtue, "the virtues of impartiality," "the virtues of intellectual sobriety," and "virtues of intellectual courage."²⁹ He considered these virtues as "ways of being conscientious" and they are also acquired habits of action and motivation.

Moreover, Zagzebski version of virtue epistemology is explicitly modeled on what Code and Montmarquet had earlier considered. Epistemic or intellectual virtue mulled on virtue ethics dispossess traits like intellectual autonomy and courage, intellectual carefulness and fairness, and open-mindedness, but reliability of Sosa and Greco are component of virtue instead. Zagzebski proceeds by arguing that intellectual virtue, as a moral virtue, has a motivational component as well as a component of reliable success in reaching the end of the motivational component. In his view to unite intellectual and moral virtue, Ashraf Adeel asserts that, "Zagzebski also takes a responsibilist position but unifies intellectual and moral virtues and takes them both to be acquired traits of character. Moral traits or virtues are motivations for the good, while intellectual traits or virtues are motivations for knowledge and other forms of cognitive contact with reality."³⁰ This is why Zagzebski saw knowledge as, "a state of cognitive contact with reality arising out acts of intellectual virtue."³¹ In the same light, she still considers knowledge as, "belief in which the believer gets to the truth because she acts in an epistemically conscientious way."³² Zagzebski took Epistemic conscientiousness, as the main and central idea in her virtue epistemology. Hence, virtue in her perspective is defined as, "a deep and acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end."³³ From this definition of virtue, she illustrated the nature of intellectual or epistemic virtue hence,

These are the virtues that have as a component an emotion disposition that arises out of or depends upon the basic emotion of love of truth, or epistemic conscientiousness. In addition to a specific emotion disposition that arises from love of truth, I propose that each virtue of epistemic conscientiousness is such that its possession reliably succeeds at bringing about true belief through belief-forming acts motivated by the emotion characteristic of the virtue.³⁴

The best evaluative component of knowledge to Zagzebski is not justification, but what she calls an "act of intellectual virtue." This is why she rejected justification to be the most important concept of epistemic evaluation thus, for a belief to be justified, it is supposed to be analyzed in relation to right act in pure virtue ethics. This marks the normative theory proposed by Zagzebski naturalistic as the virtue ethical theory of Aristotle is naturalistic all in respecting the three strands of the development of virtue ethics: eudemonism, agent-based and the ethics of care.

Regarding the future of virtue epistemology by comparing with virtue ethics, it is still at the stage of development. The connection between virtue epistemology with virtue ethics open the way for new question in which some are not yet exploited, like the quest to investigate epistemic psychology as the analogue of moral psychology. Although there is an attempted success in the unification of moral and intellectual virtues, virtue ethics is an elaborated field than virtue epistemology. Epistemology can argue more perfectly upon the nature and the origin of knowledge, if there is a balance in epistemic principles and virtue in our theory of knowledge. In this light, an accurate body of scientific knowledge will be acquired design in ethical space.

But we therefore see today the fast advent of epistemic vice or what Heather Battaly called vice epistemology as a barricade to the excelling of character or personality traits defended by virtue responsibilists epistemology. We can assert that, "Vice epistemologists have also begun to apply their analyses of specific epistemic vices to important domains of our lives."³⁵ Human behaviors involve vices of the mind such as dogmatism, gullibility, arrogance, cynicism, closed-mindedness, conspiratorial thinking, intellectual cowardice or vicious tendency to impede effective inquiry.³⁶ These vices prevent the acquisition of knowledge. In fact, Socrates once said "knowledge is virtue and ignorance is vice"

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²⁷ James Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993, p. 20

²⁸ Ashraf Adeel, p. 11.

²⁹ James Montmarquet, p. 23.

³⁰ Ashraf Adeel, p. 12.

³¹ Linda Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 270.

³² Linda Zagzebski, *On Epistemology*, Independence: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009, p. 127.

³³ Linda Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge*, p. 137.

³⁴ Linda Zagzebski, *On Epistemology*, p. 81.

³⁵ Ian James Kidd, Heather Battaly, and Quassim Cassam, *Vice Epistemology*, London and New York, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2021, p. 7.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1. The most commonly discussed are perhaps arrogance, closedmindedness, and dogmatism, but there are many more. Some epistemic vices are esoteric, currently known only to those with specialist training think of vices like testimonial injustice, epistemic self-indulgence, epistemic insensibility. To this list, one can add more familiar epistemic vices, such as conspiratorial thinking, wishful thinking, gullibility, or cynicism. Such vices of the mind contrast with epistemic virtues, the dispositions, attitudes, and ways of thinking that constitute excellences of epistemic character, like open-

How bad are epistemic vices? Such vices of the mind as arrogance and dogmatism are sometimes irritating but bearable, at least when they are confined to the office boor who knows it all, or the diehard music fan who won't budge from their conviction that their favored band is best of all. Typically, though, epistemic vices will tend to have more severe effects. Arrogance and dogmatism can contribute to patterns of social exclusion and oppression ramifying with wider patterns of racist and sexist bias, supercharged by cultural tendencies to political polarization, amplified by the suboptimal social and epistemic structures of modern life.³⁷

Epistemological vice and system of social oppression relate to another. So, such traits absorb the process of socialization and make us bad thinkers in so far as they prevent us from acquiring and sharing knowledge. Despite the serious advent of epistemic vice and the problems it inflicts in epistemology, we must argue for the place of virtue over vice. This is because the acquisition and exercise of virtue requires a rich social bedding; knowledge so conceived reaches beyond the individual knower into his social environment. Virtue epistemology today conforms bravely with the emerging field of epistemology called social epistemology.

In a nutshell, the importance in the defense of the responsibilists point of view in this paper, is that character disposition of an open-mindedness that a scientist needs to acquire today so as to defend his or her standpoint and subsequently an advancement in science. The simple possession of mental faculties, stable and reliable, does not really solve the problem in this recent field of epistemology called virtue epistemology. An example of Galileo's state-mindedness and the strong defense of the heliocentric view over the traditional theocentric view of the Catholic Church in astronomy was more than just having good memory, vision, auditory as Sosa asserts. Thought his reflection was considered at that time as a taboo but later on, it was adopted as a new way of exploring the world and demarcated as a real corroborated theory which resisted falsification test to talk like Karl Popper. This new vision thanks to his disposition of good intellectual or epistemic character traits as defended by responsibilists virtue epistemologist today, should serve as an eye-opener to epistemologists and scientists for the discovery of new scientific and historical truth

CONCLUSION

Our reflection in this paper was motivated by the quest to know the contribution of Ernest Sosa in the recent field of epistemology called virtue epistemology, with the emphasis it's laid on the properties of a person rather than the properties of his belief. This is done by recalling and implementing the virtue ethical theory developed by Aristotle in the ancient era into epistemology. As such, "virtue epistemology" applies to theories that cut across divisions between externalists and internalists, foundationalists and coherentists, and normative vs naturalistic epistemologies. As the founding father of virtue epistemology, Sosa adopted the theory of virtue reliabilism which stresses on the importance of virtuous stable reliable and natural faculties like perception, memory or remembering, vision, hearing, logical reasoning as the only means to attain epistemic truth and the avoiding of error. We notice with Sosa that, it was in an attempt to provide a solution and to take a stand in the early article written Edmund Gettier in 1963 called "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" in contemporary epistemology concerning the definition of knowledge that Sosa advocates for virtue epistemology in a paper presented in a seminal in 1980 called, "The Raft and the Pyramid". The raft in this paper is coherentism and the pyramid is foundationalism. Sosa in his view, criticizes the ideas of both foundationalism and coherentism and proposes a solution to the dispute between these two positions by enlisting intellectual or epistemic virtues as a basis for attaining justified belief and knowledge. In our illustration in this paper, we notice that, Intellectual virtue according to Sosa are such reliable cognitive abilities or competences that can be of great help in the achievement of epistemic good like truth. But Sosa in doing this promoted a form of individuality in the justification and acquisition of knowledge. We argue in this paper that, Virtue responsibilists like Code, and Montmarquet, Zagzebski developed a more advanced form of virtue epistemology by laying emphasis on the personality or character trait elaborated in this paper as open-mindedness, consciousness, tenacity, inquisitiveness. This is why reliabilist virtue epistemology of Sosa is not really linked to the virtue ethics of Aristotle than responsibility virtue. The primarily focused on character-based or responsibilist virtue epistemology traits like inquisitiveness and open-mindedness acquired by a researcher and an inquirer could lead to new discoveries in history and subsequently in the advancement of science than a mere reliability on mentally stable and natural faculties. Despite our insistence on intellectual virtue or knowledge as virtue said Socrates, we notice that epistemic vice or vice epistemology could be a stepping stone to the realization of this objective as seen in the words of Heather Battaly. Although we are always striving for excellence, virtue, a careful look is supposed to be hinted on vice epistemology so as to serve epistemology, abstain from ignorance, and mediocrity as far as knowledge acquisition is concern.

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mindfulness and intellectual humility. Taken together, epistemic virtues and vices are entrenched parts of our everyday ways of describing and assessing epistemic character.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 2.

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