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Susan Dieleman

University of Saskatchewan, scdieleman@gmail.com

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Responsibilism and the Analytic-Sociological Debate in Social Epistemology

Susan Dieleman

Women and feminist philosophers (along with other philosophers who inhabit the ‘periphery’ of the discipline) are, unfortunately, quite familiar with the phenomenon of seeing their ideas go unrecognized—or unrecognized until a philosopher whose social identity places them squarely within the center of the discipline voices those same ideas. A careful look at many of the fields of philosophical inquiry is likely to reveal a similar story: the origins of an idea, when they can be traced back to a feminist philosopher or when a woman has contributed in a significant way to that idea, generally go unnoticed, and almost certainly uncited. Social epistemology, in this respect, is much like other fields, and is the focus of this paper.

I begin by providing an overview of the “state-of-the-field” debate between Analytic Social Epistemology (ASE), represented by Alvin Goldman, and what I will call Sociological Social Epistemology (SSE), represented by Steve Fuller.¹ In response to this ongoing debate, this paper has two related and complementary objectives. The first is to show that the debate between analytic and sociological versions of social epistemology is overly simplistic and doesn’t take into account additional positions that are available and, indeed, have been available since social epistemology was (re)introduced in the mid to late 1980s. The second is to uncover and tell a story of how Lorraine Code’s *Epistemic Responsibility* is one such additional position.² In other words, looking to Code’s *Epistemic Responsibility* reveals the artificiality of the debate between analytic and sociological social epistemologists.³

¹ Goldman refers to this, perhaps more accurately, as the science-and-technology-studies model (see the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

² I do not want to insinuate that Code’s position is the only such position. However, I do make the case that it should be read as a significant contribution to the development of social epistemology, and moreover, that there are valuable resources in *Epistemic Responsibility* that both demonstrate that the contemporary ASE-SSE debate is needlessly superficial, and that are worth incorporating into the ongoing development of social epistemology as a field.

³ Though the concept of epistemic responsibility, and the responsibility perspective developed in *Epistemic Responsibility*, continue to be deployed and developed by Code (and others), I will focus almost exclusively on the 1989 text. This restricted

One might object to this project by suggesting that social epistemology's neglect of women philosophers or of feminist philosophical work is hardly surprising, and that it's a waste of time and effort to offer this correction, especially since the likely audience for this project is already assured of the feminist roots of these contributions to social epistemology. But I tend to think it is worthwhile to offer careful and detailed explanations of how exactly the stories of our own philosophical histories are mistaken, even if many of us think these mistakes are fairly obvious. One might also worry about the possibility of this project being framed as being about uncovering the *feminist* roots of social epistemology specifically, since, as Code herself notes in *Rhetorical Spaces* (1995), she “did not, initially, see the book as feminist, but as an investigation of aspects of knowing integral to everyday cognitive experiences that mainstream epistemologies tended to ignore. [She] was not thinking about experience as gender-inflected, or otherwise politically marked” (10). However, *Epistemic Responsibility*, the text, and epistemic responsibility, the concept, have been embraced by the feminist philosophical community as a proto-feminist (if not outright-feminist) contribution to critiques of “justified true belief” orthodoxy. And, even if the text isn't appropriately classified as *feminist*, it remains, clearly, an early and sophisticated contribution to the field of social epistemology that ought not to be overlooked, but has been, whatever the reason.

1. The ASE-SSE Debate: An Overview

The field of social epistemology is often characterized as being divided into two camps, which disagree (to the point of what can only be characterized as “bickering”) about the point or proper object of social epistemology.⁴ The first camp

scope is partly politically motivated; it is to show that a more nuanced position *already existed* before much of the ASE-SSE debate.

⁴ The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy—which, according to a recent article that was making the rounds on Facebook, is a place where “the world can go to learn everything that we know to be true” (Sonnad 2015)—offers a specific story about the history of the social epistemology that is illuminating here, especially as it's written by one of its main proponents and self-proclaimed founders of the field, Alvin Goldman. The first section of that entry provides an historical overview of social epistemology, tracing its roots (aside from some proto-social epistemologists like David Hume and Thomas Reid) to thinkers like Thomas Kuhn, Michel Foucault, Richard Rorty, and proponents of the “Strong Programme” in the sociology of science. Thinkers interested in the positive project of developing a *social* epistemology include, according to Goldman, himself, Steve Fuller, C. A. J. Coady,

is what tends to be referred to as “analytic social epistemology” (ASE), headed up by Alvin Goldman, who wrote *Knowledge in a Social World* in 1999 and founded the journal *Episteme: A Journal of Individual and Social Epistemology* in 2004. Goldman’s version of social epistemology is distinguished from SSE by its being “veritistic.” As Goldman puts it, his epistemology is a “social veritistic epistemology” (1999, 5); it asks, “Which practices have a comparably favorable impact on knowledge as contrasted with error and ignorance?” (5). In other words, which social practices lead to “true belief,” where “true” is cast in terms of correspondence (10)? *Questions* capture both the social and veritistic elements that Goldman is interested in. They are *social* because they constitute one “social path or route to knowledge,” and they are *veritistic* because they are prototypical of “truth-seeking practice” (3).

ASE’s veritistic element means it more closely resembles traditional epistemology than does SSE, but it is differentiated from traditional epistemology by its focus on the social dimensions of epistemic practices. It is social in three specific respects, outlined by Goldman in the initial pages of *Knowledge in a Social World* (1999). First, it looks specifically at “social paths or routes to knowledge” (4); testimony is a prime example here. Second, it “examines the spread of information or misinformation” within a group (4). Third, it sometimes looks at the possibility of there being “collective or corporate entities . . . as . . . knowing agents” (4–5).⁵ The topics he identifies as properly within the scope of social epistemology therefore include testimony, peer disagreement, epistemic relativism, epistemic approaches to democracy, evidence in the law, the epistemology of mass collaboration, and judgment aggregation (Goldman 2012).

The second camp is what I will call “sociological social epistemology” (SSE), headed up by Steve Fuller. As the author of the 1988 monograph *Social Epistemology*, and as the founder of the journal of the same name, Fuller claims to be the originator of the field. In the opening lines of *Social Epistemology*, he characterizes the field by highlighting its “fundamental question”:

How should the pursuit of knowledge be organized, given that under normal circumstances knowledge is pursued by many human beings, each working on a more or less well-defined body of knowledge and each equipped with

Edward Craig, Philip Kitcher, Margaret Gilbert, himself again, himself and some coauthors, and then himself. Somehow, in the entire entry, the words “feminist” and “feminism” never appear, even though the work of Linda Martin Alcoff and Miranda Fricker, among others, are covered. I should note, however, that a substantial section of the SEP entry on *virtue epistemology* is dedicated to Code’s work on the topic.

⁵ It is the first of these respects that is of primary interest to Goldman.

roughly the same imperfect cognitive capacities, albeit with varying degrees of access to one another's activities. (Fuller 1988, 3)

He later defines social epistemology as a "naturalistic approach to the normative questions surrounding the organization of knowledge processes and products" (Fuller 2007, 177). In very general terms, his project is to marry the descriptive work that the sociology of knowledge can do with the normative work that philosophy can do in order to look at how knowledge systems are and should be organized, and how knowledge is and should be distributed.

Thus, the sociological approach isn't merely descriptive, on Fuller's account; it also aims to achieve "a kind of optimal division of cognitive labor" (Fuller 1988, 3) and is therefore prescriptive as well. This is why Fuller identifies a major element of his project as being the concern with "long-term research and education policy, since only these contexts provide systematic opportunities to restructure knowledge production as a whole" (Fuller 2012, 270). The difference between determining "abstract definitions and criteria for knowledge" and "arriving at legislation to promote research innovation and curricular reform" is, for Fuller, simply a matter of degree (270), and ASE fumbles insofar as it ignores the latter to focus only on the former, thinking that the difference between these two tasks is a difference in kind rather than of degree.

Thus, the starting assumption of the sociological approach differs from the analytic approach in that the former assumes that existing varied knowledge production processes "function optimally to realize some purpose" (Fuller 1988, 27). In other words, for the sociological (social) epistemologist, knowledge is everywhere, produced all the time, through various processes, and for various, empirically determinable ends. For the analytic (social) epistemologist, knowledge is rare indeed; and if he "were to learn that most of what passes for 'knowledge' was not produced in what he would consider a methodologically sound manner, he would withdraw use of the term in those cases rather than change the definition of knowledge to capture something else that the cases have in common" (Fuller 1988, 27). In short, ASE begins with a claim about how knowledge is produced (Goldman, as we will see, thinks knowledge is produced via reliable processes), and from that claim asks whether there is knowledge, or whether any given belief counts as knowledge. SSE, by contrast, begins with the claim that there is knowledge—indeed, there is a great deal of it—and from that claim asks how it was produced and whether it can be produced in better (or worse) ways. This seems to be the signal, but not the only, difference between ASE and SSE. Another related difference between these competitor approaches is that ASE largely maintains the traditional focus on individuals as epistemic subjects and interrogates how the fact of their social existence impacts what and how they know. SSE rejects the focus on

individuals *tout court* to focus on systems of and policies for knowledge production and distribution instead.

These two camps have made a point of distancing themselves from each other; often, their disagreements have taken the form of what one might call “caricature assassination.” For example, Fuller has recently written that “the existence of analytic social epistemology shows that even the most irrelevant academic activities can survive as long as they have a critical mass of passably intelligent, self-regulating people who demand relatively few resources to flourish” (Fuller 2014, 31). And in a similar vein, Goldman has recently written that “if protagonists of the latter-day movements [those identified with SSE] marketed their products under the guise of epistemology, they would be imposters. Their products are not real epistemology” (Goldman 2010, n.p.).⁶ Whereas Goldman thinks SSE is “veriphobic” and therefore insufficiently epistemological, Fuller thinks ASE is insufficiently social; the sociological elements that practitioners of ASE attend to “are introduced only on a ‘need-to-know’ basis, namely, when the ideal epistemological conditions have failed to be met in concrete cases” (Fuller 2002, xvii).⁷

2. Responsibility and Social Epistemology

For many, the contemporary state of social epistemology is thought to be exhausted by the ASE-SSE debate. To show that it is not exhausted by these two options requires demonstrating that there are positions available, rightly characterized as social epistemology, that do not commit the sins that each of these two positions accuses the other of committing. I will suggest that we find in *Epistemic Responsibility* just such a position. Before I look specifically at how it does so, it is important to provide additional context to help make sense of the debate by bringing in *virtue* epistemology. This additional context will prove helpful in orienting Code’s work in relation to the ASE-SSE debate.

Insofar as an originary moment can be identified for any field of inquiry, contemporary interest in the intellectual virtues, and in developing a “virtue

⁶ By way of additional context, this is the end of a larger passage that includes the following: “Although these [SSE] enquiries examine the social contexts of belief and thought, they generally seek to debunk or reconfigure conventional epistemic concepts rather than illuminate the nature and conditions of epistemic success or failure.”

⁷ The debate, described thusly, has a ring of the ideal-nonideal theory debate to it. Though I think this might be worth pursuing, I cannot do so here.

epistemology,” can be traced back to the final paragraphs of Ernest Sosa’s 1980 paper “The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge.” In those paragraphs, Sosa suggests that, with a virtue-based approach, “primary justification would apply to intellectual virtues, to stable dispositions for belief acquisition, through their greater contribution toward getting us to the truth. Secondary justification would then attach to particular beliefs in virtue of their source in intellectual virtues or other such justified dispositions” (Sosa 1980, 23). He continues—and concludes—by suggesting that “there is reason to think that the most useful and illuminating notion of intellectual virtue will prove broader than our tradition would suggest and must give due weight not only to the subject and his intrinsic nature but also to his environment and to his epistemic community” (23).⁸ Sosa’s position represents a reliabilist approach to virtue epistemology, according to which, “a belief is epistemically justified if and only if it is produced or sustained by a cognitive process that reliably yields truth and avoids error” (Sosa 1985, 240). On this account, “An intellectual virtue is a subject-grounded ability to tell truth from error infallibly or at least reliably in a correlated field. To be epistemically justified in believing is to believe out of intellectual virtue” (Sosa 1985, 243). The opening paragraphs of “Knowledge and Intellectual Virtue” (1985) make this abundantly clear. He writes, “An intellectual virtue is a quality bound to help maximize one’s surplus of truth over error; or so let us assume for now” (227). Moreover, that virtue is only a virtue insofar as it does so *reliably* (hence, “reliabilism,” coined by and applied to Sosa’s position by Code).

Like Sosa (but unlike Code), Goldman is a reliabilist, and specifically, a process reliabilist, meaning that he thinks “the justificational status of a belief must somehow depend on the way the belief is caused or causally sustained” (2012,

⁸ It is this “call to action” that Code responds to in her “Toward a ‘Reponsibilist’ Epistemology” (1984). The paper opens with the following passage: “The foundationalist pyramid *has* no ultimate foundations, and the coherentist raft must inevitably find itself adrift. Faced with this impasse, epistemologists might well see a potentially fruitful approach in some version of the ‘reliabilism’ proposed in a recent paper as a better route to establishing conditions of justification for knowledge claims. This would be an account of knowledge and justification in terms of, and based upon, intellectual virtues. Such an epistemology would roughly parallel an ethics based upon moral virtues: it would be analogous to such an ethics, but not derivative from it. We have only a preliminary account of the nature of this new approach; one hopes for its amplification in the near future. In the meantime I shall explore some of its implications in the context of my own attempts to develop a theory of epistemic responsibility as a potential new focal point for theory of knowledge” (29).

n.p.).⁹ His hypothesis is that “the selection of virtues and vices rests, ultimately, on assessments of reliability” (Goldman 1993, 279). However, as we’ve already seen, Goldman also emphasizes the social dimensions of epistemology.¹⁰ He suggests that “social epistemology is a branch of traditional epistemology that studies epistemic properties of individuals that arise from their relations to others, as well as epistemic properties of groups or social systems” (248). Thus, for example, a reliabilism that takes the social dimension seriously would make possible the following sort of claim: “In its simplest form, justificational reliabilism says that a belief is justified if and only if it is produced (and/or sustained) by a reliable belief-forming process or sequence of processes. For a testimonial belief to be justified it suffices that the general process of accepting the reports of others mostly yields truths” (1999, 129).

Whereas Sosa prompted interest in and pursued a *reliabilist* version of virtue epistemology—a version that is developed by Goldman, partly in the direction of a social epistemology—Code developed and pursued a *responsibilist* version of virtue epistemology. Guy Axtell, in his introduction to *Knowledge, Belief, and Character: Readings in Virtue Epistemology* (2000), characterizes the difference between these two positions as follows: “Those authors oriented towards responsibilism typically do not agree with the ‘consequential’ approach . . . [reliabilists] take to defining the virtues—that is, by their reliable success in producing true belief” (xiv).¹¹ Instead, central to responsibilism, where epistemic responsibility is “a central virtue from which other virtues radiate” (44), is the notion that responsibility is an “active, creative . . . endeavor” (51) that makes evaluation of that endeavor possible. Thus, the object of praise or blame is different on these two versions of virtue epistemology. According to responsibilism, it is the endeavour itself, the manner in which the task of producing beliefs is carried out, that is evaluated, rather than the consequences of that endeavour.

⁹ Of course, Goldman’s process reliabilism has been refined and expanded over the years, typically in response to critics who provide counterexamples to his views. The account here regarding the specifics of Goldman’s reliabilism is admittedly superficial, ignoring altogether these refinements and expansions, in order to emphasize the main thrust of his position and show how it differs from Code’s responsibilism.

¹⁰ More recent work by Sosa shows growing interest in these social dimensions. However, his views remain firmly entrenched in the individualistic, reliabilist framework.

¹¹ See also Baehr 2006; Greco and Turri 2015 for helpful overviews of reliabilism and/vs. responsibilism.

This shift from a focus on the consequences of a reliable belief-forming process to the activity of belief formation requires two related shifts in emphasis: from the knower as passive recorder to active agent, and from faculties for belief formation to habits of belief formation. Axtell highlights these two differences between responsibilism and its reliabilist predecessor as follows:

Code's book announces a primary interest in the virtues as they relate to *active agency*, and she defines the intellectual virtues more restrictively, as *acquired* habits and dispositions; only these, she points out, are the proper object of attributions of praise and blame, not the genetically-endowed 'faculties' that the reliabilists would include among the intellectual virtues. (2000, xvii)

In short, Code's responsibilism sees knowers as active agents rather than passive subjects, whose epistemic habits and dispositions can be evaluated as virtuous or vicious. As she puts it in "Toward a 'Responsibilist' Epistemology" (1984), "It is because of its active, creative nature that human knowledge-seeking endeavour requires evaluation in terms of responsibility" (40).¹²

Though *Epistemic Responsibility* is not explicitly a work of *social* epistemology, the move from reliabilism to responsibilism that it endorses, and the two distinguishing features noted above in particular, bring with them a social dimension. This will mark a significant difference between Goldman's *reliabilist* social epistemology and Code's *responsibilist* social epistemology; they will be social in different ways. The specific feature of Code's work that stands out in this regard is the role of the community in influencing what it means to act in epistemically responsible ways. In chapter seven of *Epistemic Responsibility*, Code draws our attention to the disparity found in the tradition between the *moral agent*, who is conceived of as a social being, and the *epistemic agent*, who is conceived of as a solitary being. Code, pointing to knowledge (and belief and understanding) as a "commonable commodity"—as the sort of thing we depend on others for—makes the case for seeing human beings as "social creatures as much in knowledge seeking as in moral activity" (1987, 167). Thus, the role of the social is different depending on whether it shows up in a reliabilist or a responsibilist framework. In the former, the social plays a purely epistemic role: it is another source of (justified, true) beliefs. In the latter, the social plays a much more involved role; it is a source of

¹² This claim is reminiscent of debates regarding free will and moral responsibility: it is the fact that choice is possible that makes it possible to attribute (moral) responsibility. If such choice was lacking, if agents weren't actively involved in their knowledge practices, then responsibility would be the wrong evaluative category.

(justified, true) beliefs, but it is *also* the source of the intellectual virtues that make one a more or less responsible knower.

In a philosophical landscape dominated by epistemological debates regarding the meaning and possibility of “justified true belief,” the horizon of which was shaped by propositional, “S knows that p,” knowledge claims, Code’s emphasis on the sociality of knowers was indeed radical. Thus, as Heidi Grasswick notes, *Epistemic Responsibility* “stood out in 1987 in its recognition of our dependence on the knowledge of others and in its claim that because of such dependence on each other, knowledge production needs to be examined in relation to our moral and political frameworks” (Grasswick 2008, 151). Only a responsibilist social epistemology would conceive of the social in this way; this element is not present in Goldman’s account specifically because it is reliabilist.

Of course, Code herself has advised caution in adopting the view of the knowing subject that she introduces in *Epistemic Responsibility* because, as she puts it, she was working from the assumption that subjects had “unmediated access to the ‘stuff’ of which knowledge is made . . . within the social-ecological imaginary of a liberal society where cognitive autonomy is a universal possibility, and the acknowledgment upon which knowledge depends is unfettered by constraints consequent upon asymmetrical distributions of power and privilege” (Code 2006, ix). That is, *Epistemic Responsibility* was not written with an explicit recognition of the ways that assumptions regarding epistemic abilities and the availability of epistemic resources are unequally distributed, the sort of argument that we find in Fricker’s 2007 text *Epistemic Injustice*.

Yet this isn’t entirely true. Though Code didn’t pay explicit attention to issues of epistemic injustice, her willingness to seriously engage with the work of Michel Foucault belies an (unacknowledged) appreciation of the role of power in knowledge practices, as well as the possibility of *resistance* as a form or enactment of epistemic responsibility. She writes,

Collective endeavour is, increasingly, the most effective mode of resistance in contemporary society. Power-knowledge structures constitute people as categories—as homosexuals, women, blacks, mad people—defined and publicly understood according to rigid, stereotyped designations. Such people do have the capacity and can develop the power either to fight back together *as* that category or collectively to work at repudiating the confinement of the categorization and at deconstructing its implications. Collective endeavor of this kind can clearly be an exercise in epistemic responsibility. In fact, often, in mass society, it seems to be its most potentially effective manifestation. (Code 1987, 244–245)

This passage reveals an early awareness of the complex interplay between the epistemic agent and her epistemic community. Moreover, despite the humble remarks noted earlier, the model of epistemic agents Code begins to develop in *Epistemic Responsibility* is one that takes seriously both the limitations and the responsibilities of the knowing subject in a particular knowledge context.

A fairly explicit statement of this position can be found in the third chapter, "Toward a *Responsibilist* Epistemology." Tucked away in footnote 6, we find the following statement:

I, too, advocate a departure from the individualistic tradition, whose subjects are not really selves. In its place though, I advocate an approach to epistemology that recognizes the importance of real human knowing subjects and of the commonality of cognitive endeavour, with the responsibilities that that recognition involves. (Code 1987, 38)

Further on, Code writes, "Epistemological judgment is not just a matter of assessing individual conduct per se, but of assessing it as a manifestation of justifiable social practices and approaches to inquiry. It is crucial that individuals be recognized as social beings, as members of communities with all the obligations membership entails" (44).

This membership is therefore relevant to determinations of epistemic responsibility. Though intellectual virtues are possessed by a subject, that subject exists within an epistemic community that impacts how responsible she can be and what shape that responsibility must take. That is, the epistemic community places both *constraints* on what the putative knower *can* know (it would be ludicrous to expect someone to know something that has not yet been discovered) and *requirements* on what the putative knower *should* know (a responsible knower is virtuous only insofar as her pronouncements take under advisement "state of the art" findings, especially those relevant to her specific role).

In the final chapter of *Epistemic Responsibility*, Code explores the "connections between epistemic responsibility and cognitive interdependence as they are manifested in what Hilary Putnam aptly calls 'the division of intellectual labor'" (227). Educational systems are explored by Code as a site where "the authority of epistemic community manifests itself and the power of received discourse is felt" (247). She argues,

It would be unreasonable to demand that all human knowers, including all teachers, authorities, and experts, exhibit or strive to attain such extraordinary standards. Efforts in this direction—mindfulness on the part of each individual knower of his or her responsibility and fallibility both in

seeking and in claiming knowledge—are to be urged and applauded. More cannot reasonably be asked. (251)

The responsibilist approach developed by Code permits evaluation of systems like education in terms of how well they meet their epistemic tasks (and obligations).

It is worth noting here that Code does not fall into the ASE trap, as Fuller identifies it, of setting the epistemic bar too high. Indeed, this final chapter demonstrates that she takes seriously the sociological facts of our epistemic practices, which is what Fuller worries ASE altogether fails to do. Recall that Fuller worried that ASE would inevitably find itself saying there is no (or very little) knowledge; this is because ASE has necessary and sufficient criteria that most knowledge practices are unlikely to meet. SSE, on the other hand, suggests that knowledge is produced all the time and all around us, and it is the job of social epistemology to describe both how that happens and how it might happen better.

Yet Code's taking seriously the sociological dimensions of our epistemic practices does not mean that she is a "veriphobe," to use Goldman's term, even though, as Axtell notes, "Responsibilists like Lorraine Code . . . concede that reliability 'maintains a closer connection with truth and warrantability than responsibility can establish'" (Axtell 2000, xvii). Indeed, though Code relocates truth within her responsibilist approach, this does not mean that she abandons truth. In fact, it is part and parcel of Code's explicit attention to and endorsement of "normative realism." This is an idea that is "neither startling nor new," but that tends to be "taken for granted as an implicit goal of cognitive activity" (136). As Code puts it, "Implicit in normative realism is the view that to be a good knower is to have a fundamental respect for *truth*" (137, emphasis added). That being said, what interests the virtue epistemologist is the fact that "it is a *task* to come to see the world as it is" (Iris Murdoch, quoted in Code 1987, 137). As such, one's manner in performing this task can be evaluated; it is this manner that "determines the quality of knowledge achieved" (137).

This is not a return to reliabilism, however. While both reliabilism and responsibilism are virtue epistemologies, responsibilism sees knowers as actively engaging in the task of belief formation, whereas reliabilism sees a knower as (possibly) nothing more than "an accurate, and relatively passive recorder of experience" (Code 1987, 51). As Code puts it, "A person can be judged responsible or irresponsible only if she/he is clearly regarded as an agent (in this case a cognitive agent) in the circumstances in question" (51). Thus, knowers are evaluated as responsible or irresponsible according to how well they take up the task of arriving at the truth.

That being said, by suggesting that having respect for and working toward truth is part of what it means to be a good knower, knowledge is not merely

reduced to truth, or, more precisely, to the accumulation of true facts. Code suggests that a “fanatical devotion to truth” (201) can be problematic, especially when it precludes “insight and understanding,” where the latter is a process that manifests the intellectual virtues (148–149). It is possible, Code thinks, to “know everything yet understand nothing” (149); “Knowing well is much more than accumulating facts” (150). This final point suggests that, though Code doesn’t abandon truth, it is nevertheless reconceived as just one element of a broader epistemic practice.

Moreover, Code suggests that responsible knowers, and experts in particular, will remain epistemically open:

The guiding, intellectual purpose of *responsible* experts will be, in the end, to achieve as realistic an ontological stance as possible. This goal does not exclude an openness to the possibility that one’s position might need to be abandoned or modified in light of wholly unexpected and, on the face of it, *unlikely* findings. Openness is centrally involved in the claim that realism is normative. (232)

She continues, “Epistemic integrity is most strongly—indeed, heroically—evident in the ability to be a ‘fallibilist’ in the Peircean sense, cognizant of one’s own potential fallibility even in the most painstakingly won conclusions, even in the conception of the nature of things that underlies them” (233). Thus, while realism has a normative force, this normative force must be understood in the context of Code’s responsibilism, as requiring and openness and fallibilism alongside a respect for the truth.

Conclusion

Taken together, these remarks show that, already in *Epistemic Responsibility*, we see the development of a position rightly called social epistemology that is neither insufficiently epistemological nor overly skeptical of the possibility of knowledge. Code’s responsibilism has a more nuanced view of the truth than ASE typically recommends, and a more epistemic view of the social than SSE typically recommends. Moreover, there are resources here that can continue to inform current and future research in social epistemology, some of which are persuasively developed by fellow contributors to this symposium. This is not to say that Code’s initial presentation of the concept of epistemic responsibility provides us with the last word. However, when we tend to dichotomize positions and obscure the work of others whose positions are not neatly captured within that debate, we not only commit poor scholarship, we also miss out on the resources those additional positions make available to us.

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SUSAN DIELEMAN is Assistant Professor (with term) in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Canada. She specializes in social and political philosophy, pragmatism, and feminist philosophy, and is currently working on a monograph that explores the connections between deliberative democracy and epistemic justice. She has published essays in *Hypatia*, *Pragmatism Today*, *The Pluralist*, *Social Philosophy Today*, and *Social Epistemology*.