Lavrischev, D. E. 2024. "An Ambivalence Embodied : Virtue and Vice in Constructing a Modern Science Ethos" [in English]. *Filosofiya. Zhurnal Vysshey shkoly ekonomiki [Philosophy. Journal of the Higher School of Economics]* 8 (4), 246–256.

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An Ambivalence Embodied**

Virtue and Vice in Constructing a Modern Science Ethos

Kasavin, I. T., and A. O. Kostina. 2024. *Epistemologiya dobrodeteley [Virtue Epistemology]: tsennostno-normativnyy obraz sub''yekta poznaniya [Value-normative Image of Cognitive Agent]* [in Russian]. Moskva [Moscow] and Sankt-Peterburg [Saint Petersburg]: Tsentr gumanitarnykh initsiativ [Centre of Humanities Enterprise Publishing]

DOI: 10.17323/2587-8719-2024-4-246-256.

Contemporary Western epistemology possesses, to a great extent, the normative trend. The major manifestation of such a tendency is a branch called *virtue epistemology* (VE). Born in A. Goldman's works (Goldman, 1979) as one of the possible solutions to Gettier's problem (Gettier, 1963), VE was based on the idea that the reliability of justification lies in one's cognitive processes, namely in perception and apperception. These processes Goldman called *virtues*, because they (a) belong to an individual; (b) provide more knowledge than ignorance (namely, are *reliable*); (c) may have normative aspect (being good or bad for an agent) derived from their desirability to succesfully obtain knowledge. That was the first, very primitive theory, which had more in common with xvii century empiricists than with contemporary epistemology. However, the idea of agent-based normative epistemology has appeared to be rather attractive, and nowadays VE is one of the major trends in both Western and Russian theory of knowledge. Virtue theorists are now creating a mainstream in epistemology, writing guidebooks and overviews in the field of cognition (Dancy, Sosa & Steup, eds., 2010; Greco, 2010; Sosa, 2017). In Russia there are a vast number of papers, yet only a few full-scale monographies on VE. Apparently, there is only the book by A. Karimov (Karimov, 2019), which provides a general overview of authors, topics and problems in VE. The recent

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work *Virtue Epistemology: Value-normative Image of Cognitive Agent*[1] by I. Kasavin and A. Kostina seems to be the second solid reach for the topic in book form; that is why this review exists.

The monograph reviewed is devoted to the subject of science ethics and epistemological questions of vices and virtues of the mind. Namely, it is about virtue epistemology, as the title says, and how this trend may assist in constructing a better modern scientific ethos. It is worth noticing that the book is a result of I. Kasavin and A. Kostina's long-years' of work, previously published in well-known academic journals. However, the monograph is a complex reach for the subject, uniting and somewhat expanding the scale and scope of the work previously done.

The monograph addresses several common and newsworthy issues in the field of social epistemology of science. First of all, the authors describe the aim of their enterprise as "providing new approaches in designing philosophical foundations for modern science ethics" (Kasavin & Kostina, 2024: 7). The idea of a crisis in how science ethics functions and to whose benefit it does serve is a part of the current mainstream in the social and philosophical study of science. The result of the book is declared to be "the new science ethos, which allows to unite the idea of specific status for scientific knowledge and an image of science as common social good" (ibid.). To achieve their goals, the authors use methodology provided by virtue epistemology, which, once again, puts them into the mainstream in contemporary epistemology. Namely, they are incorporating general terms (virtue, vice, character qualities, etc.) and methodological groundings (normativity, prescriptivism, etc.) to their approach in designing science ethics (or ethos).

To understand the authors' ideas, one would need to know that VE is generally described as two separate "branches": reliabilism and responsibilism. The adherents of the former (E. Sosa, J. Greco, etc.) stick to Goldman's general point that our knowledge is based on proper use of proper, reliable methods. They are expanding the reliabilist theory with some additions, both to the understanding of what we call "reliable process" and what the "proper use" of such processes may be (some of these features are described further). Proponents of responsibilism (Code, 1984; Zagzebski, 1996) suggest a more Aristotelian (however, there is really more of A. MacIntyre in their works) approach to what intellectual virtues and vices are. They try to give new

[1]Russian: "Эпистемология добродетелей: ценностно-нормативный образ субъекта познания".

life to the Aristotelian term "intellectual (*dianoetic*) virtue," which describes not the cognitive process itself, but the character quality that makes the reliability of the process possible. However, responsibilists mainly focus on four cardinal virtues from the ethics, adding to them the "intellectual" annex: "intellectual" fortitude, "intellectual" temperance, "intellectual" justice, and prudence (some authors add to them "intellectual" autonomy and dianoetic virtue of *phronesis*).

It is important that the authors of the monograph, being aware of the presented distinction, try to separate from it and do not lean towards either reliabilism, or responsibilism. Through the criticism of both "branches," the authors try to justify their own path to deal with the matters of virtues and vices. What they came to at the end of their journey is one of the major questions of the review.

One more preparatory comment is required. Through the monograph, the authors tend to use the terms "ethics" and "ethos" as synonyms in the field of science. Whilst the distinction is present — "ethics" is about how one does not create another atomic bomb and "ethos" is about how one conducts effective research, — through the monograph it becomes clear that mainly (yet not completely) the authors favour the "ethos" sense for both terms. This decision seems rather consistent, since VE methodology is conjugated with the process of obtaining knowledge and not with questions of humanism or ethical evaluation of animal tests. In the review I will follow the authors and use both words in the sense of "regulations of scientific search" as well.

The book is divided into 4 sections with 12 chapters. The first section examines "key questions, related to the elaboration of both external and internal science ethos" (Kasavin & Kostina, 2024: 11) The second section is a closer look into the essence of intellectual virtues in their relation to the aims and methods of science. The third section describes what intellectual fortitude is in detail, its relation to the freedom of the researcher, and its role in the process of "doing science." The fourth section reveals the authors' view on authorship in science and how the different virtues and vices of an author become evident in the scientific community. I am going to set my course through the "chapters" to conclude with both the section's key points and those of the monograph.

The first three chapters immerse the reader into the problematics of science ethics. Namely, they are describing the criticism addressed to the contemporary view on the structure and logic of knowledge production and to the image of a scientist. In the first and second chapters one may find an overview of the strong and fundamental ambiguity and blurriness of the rules

and "laws" in the social analysis of the scientific community. The authors argue that many attempts to examine science through the Pareto principle or any normative restrictions (such as Mertonian norms) are insufficient to provide an adequate and promising theory of scientific normativity. E. g., if one (let us say, a policymaker) sees the scientific community as 20% effective researchers and 80% useless "drones," she might think of cutting down the financing to stimulate competitiveness. However, the authors say, there is a major, yet non-obvious contribution of these 80% — namely, the popularization, teaching, administrating, etc. is done by these people who remain unknown for their research. Similarly unknown are the people who work for the success of the "scientific heroes," who receive all the glory for the discoveries. And these "heroes" barely follow the strict rules of ethos or normativity — so one may consider common vices (for example, blind commitment to one's own revolutionary ideas) as a virtue in some cases. That is why the simple view of science as a competitive sphere with solid ethical regulations is to be rejected.

Besides these critical statements, the authors make several positive assertions, pointing out the relevance and importance of the scientific community for the normal and healthy function of all of society. Science is said to be a place for common collaboration and communication. Therefore, the whole society can be consolidated and constructed with a glance back on the scientific community. I shall add there, that these theses are strongly and strictly connected to the recent works of I. Kasavin in correspondence with V. Porus (Porus, 2023; Porus, 2024), whose works investigate the problem of political agency of the scientific community and its role in decision making. One may find further elaboration of the chapter's issues in these papers, since it is mainly the mottos and watchwords that are presented in the monograph.

The third chapter describes the possible solution of the problems outlined earlier by the means of VE. The authors briefly examine the two branches — reliabilism and responsibilism — and address their critique based on works by M. Slote. This part is strictly connected to chapter 2, where the authors were describing the insufficiency of VE for providing a strict distinction between virtues and vices. One may ask, why then use such a methodology; and the authors answer: because mainly "clear" reliabilism and responsibilism are insufficient. However, they argue, there are more complex and modern approaches to the problem of intellectual virtuousness, such as that of M. Slote and H. Battaly. Namely, the authors describe Slote's idea of sentimentalism and Battaly's personalism. The former is a variation of reliabilism, where the ability to perceive and the ability of induction are

the core virtues. The latter is a kind of "compromise theory," combining both virtues for low-grade (e. g. perceptive) and high-grade (e. g. scientific) knowledge. I may only suggest further reading (such as the aforementioned monograph by Karimov) to deepen the understanding of these theories, since the chapter is not as long as one may desire. Also, I shall note that the information from this chapter is barely mentioned in the other parts of the monograph, yet still provides consistent authors' opinions on how VE works.

So, from the first section one may understand the fundamental insufficiency and inadequacy of the conventional and common view on scientific normativity both from the social and ethical perspectives. Through this idea the authors justify their niche and work on the subject and the approach to a more detailed view on specific virtues and topics of their interest. Namely, the next chapters are devoted to authors' description of virtuousness.

In section 2 the chapters come in pairs. Chapters 4 and 5 describe the "humility paradigm" as a key component of scientific ethos. There the authors examine how T. Kuhn and C. Popper can assist in the enterprise of science ethics started by R. Merton. I must admit that this part is interesting and, I daresay, gracefully done. Though this part is not as long as most others in the monograph, it explains in a laconic and clear way how the idea of intellectual humility can be derived from Merton through the works of Kuhn and Popper. Namely, in these chapters the peculiar dialectics of Mertonian organized skepticism are presented through historical optics. While Kuhn admires conservative thinking and sticking to the paradigm, Popper insists on being brave, creative and revolutionary in science. According to the authors, the "synthesis" of such dialectics is a virtue of humility, which allows to balance between trust and skepticism, between awe for new and blind admiration of the old. Moreover, humility leads to understanding that science is a place for the gift of shared knowledge. Once again, I want to value the nontrivial character of reasoning in combining science ethics and historiosophic ideas.

Chapters 6 and 7 give an overview of some solutions for VE insufficiency to form the perspective of belief ethics and feminist epistemology. In detail, the authors are describing how the injustice, uncertainty and involuntariness in both epistemic communication and belief acquisition are transformed into the subject of VE and normativity. The authors also argue that the purpose of normativity is to control and prevent epistemic abuse. For example, if one social group is restricted from participation in epistemic communication, then there is an epistemic injustice causing further problems for the social and cognitive agency of the group members. To deal with

such cases, the authors suggest using normative regulations to make the epistemic communication clear of bias and inequity. This idea is strongly connected with the feminist approach, where epistemic violence in the form of coercive ignorance is analyzed through standpoint theory and the optics of social critique. For example, some groups may not be familiar with the achievements of modern science — and people possessing Western rationality claim these groups as "ignorant" — so they conduct their own claims about the world. The aim of normativity is to protect these claims from an abusive and toxic atmosphere in the scientific community. So, the key point of the authors' solution is to go beyond scientific universalism and protect the oppressed beliefs and opinions by means of normativity. I also suggest reading *Cynical theories* to expand the understanding of the paradigm presented.

Overall, from the section it becomes clear that the authors see the topic of epistemic virtues as a shaky and vague ground, where existing approaches are not sufficient. Therefore, the authors provide their own view on how epistemic virtuousness should be manifested in science. Given the "humility paradigm" and the idea of the non-abusive epistemic community, one may see these two aspects as key to performing the task of the monograph. However, to fully understand the authors' own virtue epistemology, we need to consider the next section, devoted strictly to the specific virtue of fortitude — it is separate from the "Epistemic virtues" section 2 for its very importance.

Section 3 opens with a reasoning concerning ambivalence as an essential part of scientific ethics. Despite being in some sense eclectic — it seems intricate to smoothly combine historical cases, Aristotle, VE, Pareto principle and J. Rawls, — the chapter provides a consistent view on how the ambivalence of science ethics manifests itself both in historical and philosophical perspective. Since Aristotle, it has been commonplace in ethics that our actions are not, in most cases, a direct subject to some rigorous scheme and may be in a way described by a "medium principle," which is fundamentally vague. In scientific ethics, though there are Mertonian norms, one can predominantly find counterexamples to the idea of a universal morality. Scientific "heroes" are mostly brave deviants from lesser parts of communities. However, authors argue, such ambivalence provides the like of a "veil of ignorance" for science. In such a state, every scientist becomes morally free to choose any path, including any virtues, role models, risks, solidarity or loneliness. And that freedom is a key difference of science from other social spheres. The role of strict ethics is, therefore, to be the glue

for common justice and solidarity in the community of researchers. These ideas are in deep correspondence with some of the monograph chapters and provide consistent expansion to them. Here the ideas of several previous chapters are somewhat united to conduct a long and informative explanation of the place and role of scientific ethics. Also worth noting is the table of different role models and activities for scientists (Kasavin & Kostina, 2024: 102), which, in my opinion, requires further study on empirical matter. Despite not mentioning the the virtue of fortitude, the reasoning provides the reader with several important concepts and ideas to enrich the understanding of the monograph.

After that, the authors proceed to the examination of J. Turri's ideas on VE. First of all, they conduct a study of his arguments against responsibilism, mostly the one concerning the role of motivation in cognition. "To know" does not mean "to be constantly motivated" in every cognitive action; neither does it mean "to have reliable success." In conjunction with Turri, the authors conclude that responsibilism is too strict and demanding of the cognitive agent to be an adequate normative theory of knowledge. So, after that critique the authors proceed to Turri's own theories of "ecumenic reliabilism" and "abilism." The former is based on the idea that the subject of our interest is not only reliable knowledge, but also the unreliable, which is the most common and widespread form of everyday knowledge. The latter theory of abilism adds to this thesis the idea that the ability to obtain knowledge is much more important than reliability. Altogether these theses may be understood as a famous "anything goes" motto application to epistemology in order to provide necessesary freedom of research.

The last part of the section is the one where fortitude comes to the fore. The text deeply connects and enhances the ideas of fortitude, gift, loneliness and creativity, mentioned in the other parts of the monograph. Intellectual fortitude is here described as a communicative virtue, however strongly bound with loneliness, not being a regular part of the community. Such a bond is manifested in the form of creativity — if one is brave enough to be alone in his ideas, she states her own unique creation. This creation, however, is not to be kept for oneself; another part of the fortitude is to be open and offer one's ideas as a gift. That is, namely, the vocation of a scientist — to create and give, to remain lonely whilst staying in community with other agents. After all, this part, while being visionary and sometimes poetic, gives a proper explanation of how intellectual fortitude is to be understood. It also serves as a uniting element to see how different ideas from previous narrative are combined in a consistent way.

Although the matters of fortitude itself are examined in a lesser part of the section, from it one may understand how the virtue is constructed, of which parts it consists, and how it is connected to freedom. It is also praiseworthy that these reasonings correspond with other parts of the monograph, borrow the ideas and theses and enrich them with new information. Also, like in the beginning of the second section, the narrative of the first part of this section is original and visionary, combining ideas and theories in nontrivial ways.

The last section of the book is devoted to the analysis of statistical data on publishing activity in Russia. Namely, the authors examine the phenomenon of "coercive publishing," which is connected to the famous "Publish or perish!" motto. The aim of such an examination is to understand whether high publishing activity is a vice or a virtue of the scientist, and, in case of it being the former, how to deal with it. The authors conclude that there is an ambivalence in how publishing activity is evaluated by the community. On the one hand, there is a strong dissatisfaction with the result of the scientific policy derived from coercion to publish — mainly because of meaningless paperwork for a report or of the necessity to do teachings and publishing at the same time. On the other hand, there are plenty of compensatory factors, such as stimulation to do at least some research for the teachers and maintaining competitive in the academy. The conclusion is natural for such texts: maybe we should give up high publication activity to rather enrich science with earnest and meaningful works? To add to that, the idea of a complex nature of "coercion to publish," irreducible to the matters of economics and, secondly, the claim that the problem of "coercion" for a researcher may lay not in the field of producing the papers, but in the sphere of technical issues conjugated with sending a manuscript to the publisher, which is usually a frustrating and long process.

After the main contents of the book (namely, the sections), there are two appendixes, containing translations of papers from the beginning of the 20th century. The work put in is admirable — the appendixes comprise nearly half of the book, — however, they are connected to the subject of the monograph in a vague and indirect way. I shall also notice the absence of a conclusion, which makes summarizing the ideas of the book a bit of an exercise for the reader. Despite all this, one can still come to a solid comprehension of the text.

From the monograph one may learn that there is a poor understanding of how science functions and, more importantly, of how scientific ethos functions. Mainly because of economic and social matters, there is a need for rules and restrictions which shall guarantee the freedom and opportunities

for an upsurge of research. However, normativity has its own limits and cannot be manifested in a strict set of rules and prescriptions (like Mertonian norms). That is why one should examine intellectual virtues and vices to understand how to conduct proper behavior in science.

Despite declaring the usage of virtue epistemology, the authors mostly criticize it and build their theses mainly around the rejection of the apparatus, referring to key authors in the field (e. g. Greco, 2010; Sosa, 2007; Zagzebski, 1996). That is why one shall notice the absence of "classical" virtues, such as open-mindedness, *philia* for knowledge, autonomy, *phronesis* and prudence. Instead, the authors give the reader the original description of fortitude and freedom of research, as well as a distinctive understanding of humility. Although the analysis of the given virtues is done in a competent and consistent way, it seems rather obscure to use the label of virtue epistemology and then reject its core parts presented by reliabilism and responsibilism. So, I shall say, if one is interested in VE, she may benefit from reading the "classical" authors first and then proceeding to the monograph reviewed, with proper preparation.

As for the part of the authors' construction of a brand-new scientific ethos, one can find in the monograph a consistent and original view on the issue. The non-trivial examination of the history of science to see the ambiguity and ineffectiveness of strict norms is combined with visionary ideas of how normativity could work properly. As the title of the monograph says, the authors provide a complex value-normative image of a scientist, who is obligated to stick to some values, yet remains free to choose a path and a certain behavior with these values in mind. The brave and humble, reasonably conservative yet open to the new, balancing between vice and virtue — this image of the cognitive subject manifests the truly ambivalent nature of science ethics and the monograph.

However, there is a little more ambivalence in the book. Namely, whilst there are many important and admirable ideas, there are many topics worth mentioning about the issue of science ethos. First of all, as I have said before, there is no examination of several virtues, which are important for a researcher — e. g. autonomy and open-mindedness. More complex reach for the subject of virtue in different cases may enlighten the path to creating a proper way to do science. Moreover, my hope was to find a deeper analysis of Mertonian norms, which are still a base foundation for science ethics — how can a researcher be ethical if he is not disinterested and conscientious? One may notice, in addition, that the norm of scientific communism is a viral and debatable topic in contemporary study of science ethics, especially in

Russia (see, e. g. A. Elbakyan's PhD thesis and manifesto). Also, I shall add that while there is a complex analysis of virtues and virtuous practices in the monograph, there is a lack of examination of vices and vicious deeds. In my opinion, these matters are of no less significance than the topic of virtue. As long as there are vices of bias, profit motivation, dishonesty in the forms of (self-)plagiarism and citation manipulation within the Academy, there can be no real freedom and blossoming of science. So, my hope is to see from the authors new complex and virtuous works on the subjects deeply embodied with ambivalent science ethos.

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Lavrischev D. E. [Лаврищев Д. Е.] An Ambivalence Embodied [Воплощенная амбивалентность] : Virtue and Vice in Constructing a Modern Science Ethos [добродетель и порок в формировании современного научного этоса] // Философия. Журнал Высшей школы экономики. — 2024. — Т. 8, № 4. — P. 246–256.

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Воплощенная амбивалентность

добродетель и порок в формировании современного научного этоса

Касавин И. Т., *Костина А. О.* Эпистемология добродетелей : ценностно-нормативный образ субъекта познания. — М., СПв. : Центр гуманитарных инициатив, 2024.

DOI: 10.17323/2587-8719-2024-4-246-256.