

Description for the general public

The current COVID-19 crisis has only revealed that our societies have long been living a more profound crisis – of knowledge and of information. The political and social consequences of impermeability for evidence, fake news, conspiracy theories, etc. are fatal (cf. pandemic negationism, anti-vaccination movement, QAnon movement and Capitol attack). Never before has there been such an easy and widespread access to information. At the same time, a lack of proper understanding in specific areas by general public together with a lack of recognition of experts' authority prevent common agents from gaining warranted knowledge. On the one hand, the justified epistemic authority is ignored; on the other hand, authority is attributed unjustly to some agents (individual and collective) who do not merit it. In particular, the authority of scientists is recklessly dismissed in favour of home-grown charlatans.

The main objective of the research is to propose a positive account of the epistemic authority. The project will focus not so much on the products of knowledge as on the epistemic agent and her virtues. It will propose to recover an ancient concept of theoretical wisdom. In that sense, the research will offer a model of a wise person and will ask what constitutes her.

First, it will be argued that what is expected from a wise person is an understanding of a particular type. The question of understanding is yet another subject long neglected in analytical epistemology, that has just been rediscovered. The first works seem rather promising, but there are still a lot of questions to address. In particular, the present research will study the relation between understanding and theoretical and practical knowledge.

Second, the question of what makes a wise person will be asked. This point follows an intuition that wisdom is not so much a question of a particular body of knowledge as of a way of its acquisition and evaluation. To that point, the project will draw from the recent developments in virtue epistemology, an approach that investigates faculties and traits of character of good cognitive agents. Which virtues foster understanding will also be studied.

Third, the research will explore a question of the role of epistemic authority in society. What are her prerogatives and entitlements? The study will also address some of the deficiencies and abuses of epistemic authority. It will examine cases of the lack of the recognition of an epistemic authority, on the one hand, and its false attribution, on the other hand.

The research has some important implications and interdisciplinary scope. *First*, a study in epistemic authority is of the utmost relevance in an age of disruptive technologies, fake-news, and evidential impermeability that seem to be destroying Western societies. Accordingly, the research will address the question of what epistemic authority consists of, how to recognise her, and to what degree she can be trusted. *Second*, the theoretical conclusions of the research may be of interest for the scholars in pedagogy calling for a new strategy that would focus on formation of good epistemic agents rather than possessors of information.

The results will be presented and discussed with leading scholars during conferences and research visits in Europe and USA. The final product of the work will be published in series of 4 articles in renown international journals.