

Doxastic Deontology without Doxastic Voluntarism

Jill Rusin

Wilfrid Laurier University

Abstract

Statements about what a person ought or ought not to believe are common. “Colin Powell ought not to have believed apocryphal CIA reports about Iraq.” Such claims sound as if they attribute epistemic duties to their subjects. Yet many epistemologists reject doxastic voluntarism. To do so seems to strip persons of the sort of agency necessary to support epistemic deontology. So how to reconcile epistemic deontology with a rejection of doxastic voluntarism? In this paper, I look at two possible courses here, to see how each fares with respect to a set of particular examples. The cases I examine involve what Miranda Fricker terms ‘epistemic injustice’. Such cases are useful for testing the theories since they tend to elicit strong intuitions. Pamela Hieronymi’s distinction between ‘evaluative’ and ‘managerial’ control helps disentangle the complex deontological judgments common to such cases. I ultimately argue that while Hieronymi’s account faces several difficulties, it fares better than either a deflationary deontology or accounts that rely on reflective endorsement as the hallmark of doxastic agency.