



In Their Best Interest - Expert-Involvement, Ignorance and Division of Epistemic Labor

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CLAIMS

Part 1

Epistemic paternalism (EP) is permissible and a regular feature of our epistemic and political lives because it is...

1. connected to a **division of epistemic labor**.

1a. connected to **attributions of knowledge and ignorance**.

Part 2

In order to ensure that EP is just we need to rethink...

2a. the notion of **expertise**

STRUCTURE

SECTION 1:

- What is epistemic paternalism?
- Epistemic paternalism and social processes:
 - mechanisms of ignorance
 - division of epistemic labor

SECTION 2:

- Ameliorating expert-involvement in EPI

WHAT IS EPISTEMIC PATERNALISM?

- **Sites of EP:**

Parents/Children (e.g., restricting social media use)

Jurys (e.g., withholding information to avoid bias)

- **Expert-involvement in political decision-making processes (my focus):**

science & policy making, lay communities and policy making, science communication. (e.g., Croce 2018, Goldman 1991)

WHAT IS EPISTEMIC PATERNALISM?

Current definition by **Kristoffer Ahlstrom-Vij** (2013a, 39):

S acts in an epistemically paternalistic way toward H just in case...

(i) ***The interference condition***: S affects H's inquiry regarding some matter

(ii) ***The improvement condition***: S interferes, at least in part, so as to make H epistemically better off

DEEPENING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF EP

- Evaluating the epistemic situation
 - How is our epistemic life structured?
 - What are the **social processes** that lead to EP?
- Judging who should best interfere
 - Who are the people who can interfere?
 - How can we render the interference just?

These aspects are neglected in debate on EP

PART 1:

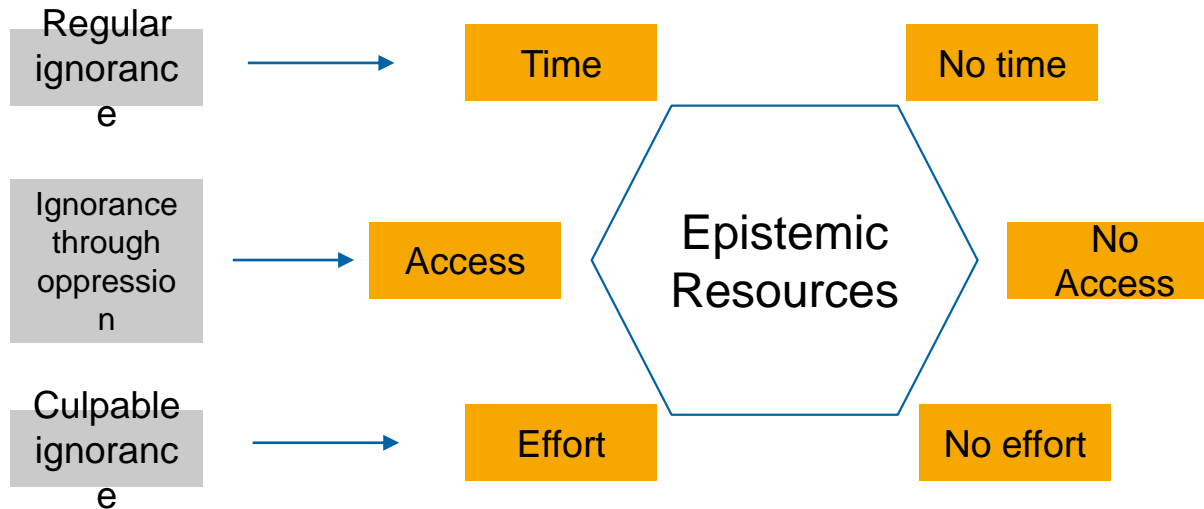
Social Processes and Epistemic Paternalism

Social Processes:

- Situated knowledge/ignorance
- Division of epistemic labor

SITUATED IGNORANCE

- Different kinds of situated ignorance
- Some forms of situated ignorance point to DEL



DIVISION OF EPISTEMIC LABOR (DEL)

- Situated ignorance points to DEL
- Diverging **social situatedness** creates **diverging insights**
- There are people who inform and people who want to/need to be informed
- **Grouping** of information
- **Reliance** on others to function as **informants** to the group

Is epistemic paternalism justified?

- Interference in inquiry
 - Improvement
- Simplified DEL-model contains conditions of EP
- Situated ignorance suggests that EP is justified/ necessary

PART 2

Pitfalls of EPI and expertise

- **Problem of domination through DEL/EP:**

Division of epistemic labour mirrors **unequal power structures & unequal distribution of and access to epistemic resources** (who has access to information and education?)

EP and EXPERTISE

We need to clarify **who** can perform EPI and we need to ensure that DEL and connected EP are just

Different forms of expertise (Evans & Collins 2009):

- **High-level specialist expertise** (systematic training)
- **Experience-based forms of expertise** (uncredentialed person gains expertise, relation between standpoint knowledge and expertise)

Ameliorating expert-involvement in EPI

In order to prevent these pitfalls we need to make sure that DEL is more just in the sense that...

- it is **politically and democratically** just: Everybody should have access to the relevant knowledge resources
- it needs to recognize that **people have expertise due to systematic training** (learning to discern real from fake experts)
- it needs to recognize that **people have expertise through experience** (standpoint knowledge)

Thank you!

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