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S.I. : SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGY

What we owe each other, epistemologically speaking: ethico-political values in social epistemology

Sanford C. Goldberg[1]

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Abstract
The aim of this paper is to articulate and defend a particular role for ethico-political values in social epistemology research. I begin by describing a research programme in social epistemology—one which I have introduced and defended elsewhere. I go on to argue that by the lights of this research programme, there is an important role to be played by ethico-political values in knowledge communities, and (correspondingly) an important role in social epistemological research in describing the values inhering in particular knowledge communities. I conclude by noting how, even as it expands its focus beyond the traditional one to include descriptions of our "knowledge practices," this sort of project relates to some of the core questions that have been pursued by traditional epistemology.

Keywords Social epistemology · Epistemic norms · Epistemic injustice · Values in epistemology · Normative defeat

1 .

Social epistemology is the study of the social dimensions of knowledge acquisition, retention, transmission, and assessment. In the two or three decades since social epistemology first became an articulated subfield in its own right, two main approaches have prevailed. These are associated with the work of Steve Fuller and Alvin Goldman, respectively. To a first approximation, Fuller-style social epistemology (which in some circles is known as "critical social epistemology") derives from Kuhn's work in the philosophy of science; it tends to bring a seriously interdisciplinary and empirically-grounded approach to the study of our knowledge practices, in ways that share strong

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✉ Sanford C. Goldberg
s-goldberg@northwestern.edu

[1] Department of Philosophy, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60208, USA

affinities with the sociology of science and the Science and Technology Studies movement.[1] For its part, Goldman-style social epistemology (which in some circles is known as "analytic social epistemology")[2] has developed out of the tradition of so-called "analytic" epistemology; it tends to focus on topics that emerge out of the questions of traditional epistemology, in ways that employ the normative epistemic vocabulary of that tradition.[3]

My own approach to social epistemology borrows heavily from both of these, but does not comfortably fit within either one. In several recent papers I have argued that we do best to think of social epistemology as the systematic investigation into the *epistemic significance of other minds*.[4] An investigation of this sort, I have argued, will have to investigate at least three fundamental aspects of the epistemic environment: (i) the various forms taken by our epistemic dependence on others; (ii) the variety of norms that underwrite our expectations of one another as we make our way in the common epistemic environment; and (iii) the distinctive epistemic assessment(s) implicated whenever a doxastic state is the result of a "social route" to knowledge.

My advocacy of this approach is grounded on several key assumptions. First, any adequate account of the subject-matter of social epistemology will construe it as focused, at least in large part, on (epistemically-relevant features of) knowledge communities, where a knowledge community involves (but may not be reducible to) (1) collections of knowledge-seeking individuals, (2) the set of practices and institutions implicated in the acquisition, storage, transmission, or assessment of knowledge in the community, and (3) the complicated relations that hold between the individual knowers, as well as between them and the institutions and practices in which they participate. Second, each of the knowledge-seeking individuals themselves is an epistemic subject in her own right who, as such, exhibits various forms of agency relevant to the acquisition, storage, transmission, and assessment of knowledge and information.[5] Third, it is because agents don't act in a vacuum that we need an account of the practices and institutions that structure agents' interactions with one another. This brings me to my fourth key assumption: these practices can be well-understood, at least in large part, in terms of the norms and expectations that inform them—for these norms and expectations guide our interactions with one another as participants in information-exchanging practices in a common epistemic environment. The result is the sort of study described above: social epistemology is the systematic investigation into the epistemic significance of other minds, understood to involve (i)–(iii).

I have defended this approach, in some detail, elsewhere. Here my goal is more modest. I aim to use this approach to address the role of social, political and ethical values in our knowledge communities. My thesis is that if social epistemology research is thought to investigate the "epistemic significance of other minds" in the way that I propose, then it must make sense of various forms of injustice that harm individuals

[1] See Fuller (1988, 2012).

[2] For reasons that I hope will become clear as my argument proceeds, I regard both labels ('critical social epistemology' and 'analytic social epistemology') as unfortunate.

[3] See Goldman (1999, 2001, 2002, 2004).

[4] See e.g. Goldberg (2013, 2015a, 2017a).

[5] The emphasis on agency is also a characteristic of various forms of feminist epistemology; see especially Code (1991), Jaggar (1983), Nelson (1990) and Scheman (1995).

as epistemic subjects. In this connection it is helpful to highlight how (2) and (3) above—the set of practices and institutions implicated in the acquisition, storage, transmission, or assessment of knowledge in the community, as well as the complicated relations that hold between the individual knowers and the institutions and practices in which they participate—can give rise to what Fricker (2007) called 'epistemic injustice'. In bringing this out I aim both to make clear how political, social, and ethical values are relevant to epistemology (whether social or otherwise) in the first place, and to illustrate how such values can be studied by research in social epistemology.

2 .

The analysis I will favor here will be to construe ethical, social, and political values in terms of the sort of "normative expectations" to which these values give rise. Accordingly, I will begin with a brief overview and justification of the account itself.

I begin with a basic assumption about the relation between (ethical, social, and political) values, on the one hand, and expectations, on the other. The assumption is this: at least when it comes to our basic interpersonal values, when there is a relevant interpersonal value in play this entitles people to have certain (normative) expectations of one another in connection with that value. This is perhaps best appreciated by illustration. Suppose for example that truthfulness is a value in our community: as a matter of fact, we regard truthfulness (in ordinary speech exchanges) as something that is to be valued, and we regard non-truthfulness as something that is to be disvalued. Then it would seem that, all else equal, we will expect one another to be truthful (and to avoid non-truthfulness) in our ordinary speech exchanges with one another. To be sure, all else may not be equal: there may be other values giving rise to other expectations whose demands are in conflict with the demands of truthfulness, and if those other expectations capture values that are strong enough, we may surrender our expectation of truthfulness. But when all else is equal, we will have these expectations. Obviously, the expectations themselves are normative rather than predictive: it is not that we *predict* that others will be truthful (though we may do that), but rather that we *hold them to a standard* of truthfulness, we *evaluate their performances* by reference to such a standard. Hence the connection between the existence of a value in a community and the normative expectations which that value gives rise.

Not all of our normative expectations are legitimate, however. Suppose that an imperious and demanding boss values unrealistically high productivity among his workers. Accordingly, he forms normative expectations as to how productive they will be in the course of their workweek. Suppose further that, in the attempt to make this value of extreme productivity a value of the whole team, he communicates his expectations to them. Even so, his normative expectations are too high: no ordinary human could meet them, the imposition of them would violate various labor laws, and so forth. In cases like this I will say that the normative expectations emerging out of his placing great value on extreme productivity are *illegitimate*. It is a hard question to say precisely what legitimacy in one's expectations comes to; but I will assume at a minimum that there are legal, moral, and possibly additional social constraints on legitimacy.

For my purposes, the legitimacy of one's normative expectations is important, as I assume that only legitimate normative expectations need to be taken into account from a social epistemology point of view. While I will not be in a position to justify this restriction fully until further aspects of my account are in place (for which see below), here I can say a little about what lies behind this restriction. I will be arguing that our moral, social, and political values play a role in social epistemology through the normative expectations that they sanction. When these expectations concern the state of another subject's (or other subjects') *epistemic condition*, they impose conditions on a subject's counting as having knowledge (or doxastically justified belief). These imposed conditions are a core part of the system wherein we exhibit our reliance on one other for information about our shared world; they reflect the core mechanism through which we hold one another accountable as fellow epistemic subjects. However, this sort of reliance on one another succeeds in imposing these conditions only when they are part of a broadly mutual affair: just as placing a *practical* demand on another subject requires justification or authorization, so too placing an *epistemic* demand on another subject—for example, expecting them to have certain knowledge, employ/restrict themselves to certain methods of belief-formation, consult certain experts, or stay abreast of certain sources of evidence—requires justification or authorization. Precisely what this involves is a matter to be explored below.

One final point is worth emphasizing at the outset, concerning my exclusive focus on normative rather than predictive expectations. Insofar as our interest is in the relevance to social epistemology of our ethical, social, and political values themselves, a focus on predictive expectations would fail to capture this distinctive contribution. It is helpful to bear in mind here that our predictive expectations regarding the effects of our community's values on its practices (including its practices of belief-formation) are essentially a species of ordinary empirical beliefs. An account that takes these into account can model our beliefs as to the likely effects of our community's values on our practices; and such a model can be used to assess such beliefs from an epistemological point of view. But this is not yet to capture *the epistemic significance of the values themselves*. If our interest is in the significance for social epistemology of the values themselves, then, in addition to having room in our account for subjects' predictive expectations of the effects of such values on our knowledge communities, we need also to have room in our account for the sort of expectation that captures subjects' values themselves. That is, we need to be able to capture the idea that as epistemic subjects we hold one another responsible for conforming to the values we profess. My proposal is that we can do so in terms of the normative expectations we have, as these derive from our political, social, and ethical values.

3 .

I want to begin by identifying some of the variety of ethical, legal, and social norms that are—or, at any rate, might be thought to be—relevant to our interactions with other members of our knowledge communities. (Corresponding to each of these norms is the relevant normative expectation.)

Consider the norms governing the ethical obligations we have to one another as social creatures who seek information.[6] There are cases in which one has *an obligation to tell* another person what one knows: if you know whether such-and-such is the case, and a friend asks (and you have no good reason not to share), it seems patent that the duties of friendship require you to tell her what you know. Similar obligations might hold more generally, in cases in which the information solicited is the sort that each of us uses everyday as we go about our lives: the location of familiar landmarks in the city, the present time of day, the nearest open gas station, and so forth. But this is not the only obligation that we accrue as speakers. The very act of asserting something places obligations on S as a speaker: given that S has asserted that such-and-such is the case, S ought to have the relevant epistemic authority on the matter. We might phrase this negatively: S ought not assert something unless she has the sort of epistemic authority that can reasonably be expected of her (given what she asserted and the conversational context). I am *not* assuming that this requirement captures what in the literature is known as "the norm of assertion." Rather, it captures an *ethical* norm on assertion, and it may well be that this ethical norm diverges from the speech act norm that governs assertion as a speech act. [Indeed, this is precisely what I have argued in Goldberg (2015b).]

Nor are our obligations as speakers the only obligations we have to one another in our information exchanges. This was made clear in the seminal work of Fricker (2007). Fricker developed the point that a hearer H harms a speaker S in her capacity as a knower when H downgrades the credibility he ascribes to S's claim, where this downgrading is done out of prejudice regarding S's membership in some denigrated group (gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, etc.). Reflecting on Fricker's important insight, various people[7] have pointed out that hearers owe speakers a kind of respect as an epistemic subject, where this takes the form of an acknowledgement of the claimed authority implicit in any assertion, and a recognition of the obligation to treat this claimed authority in the epistemically appropriate manner. (Precisely what this manner *is* is itself a question for epistemology—it forms a core part of the epistemology of testimony. But that need not detain us further here.)

More generally, consider the norms governing our epistemic obligations as members of a given profession. To get at these, we can focus on the variety of expectations we have of the professionals with whom we interact, as we make our way through the world acquiring information from them. We have a variety of expectations regarding what we might call their *epistemic condition*: their knowledgeableness, the inquiries they have performed, the evidence they possess, the inquiry-related responsibilities they have, and so forth. These expectations are present as we rely on our doctor's medical advice, entrust our children to daycare providers, make business decisions with other professionals, enroll in a course to learn about a subject, get expert advice on a matter presently before us, interact with our colleagues at work, and so forth. Some of the norms that shape these expectations are drawn from the law: various professions are regulated in such a way that members are legally responsible for knowing certain

[6] This is a main theme of Goldberg (2015b, 2018).

[7] See e.g. Anderson (2012), Dotson (2011a, b, 2014), Maitra (2010), Marsh (2011), Hinchman (2005), McMyler (2011), Moran (2006), Wanderer (2011) and Goldberg (2017a).

things, or for possessing certain kinds of evidence, or for knowing how to address certain questions. A doctor who fails to know how to treat a certain familiar health condition, and so prescribes a nonstandard treatment that ends up harming the patient, will be held negligent; a lawyer who fails to know the relevant parts of the law, and so fails to provide adequate legal counsel to her clients, can be sued for compensatory damages, or even disbarred; a teacher who is incompetent in the area in which he teaches can be fired; and so forth. Other norms, however, are social. Of these, some are imposed on the group by the group itself, and are made explicit, as a part of the professionalization process itself: think of the standards that are explicitly formulated by professional organizations (the American Medical Association; the Institute of Management Consultants). Other social norms emerge in the course of robust social practices in which we rely on one another for information. Consider the scope of what we expect our business partners to know (something that emerges in the course of our long relationship with them), or what we expect an arbitrary primary care physician to know about matters of health (something that has emerged in the course of the very complicated developments of the health care industry).

A special case of reliance on professionals is the case of reliance on experts. One finds norms and expectations prevalent here too. (This is of particular interest since expertise, and reliance on experts, is often a highly-regulated affair.) There are a variety of (educational) ways for people to acquire expertise in a given area, and, having done so, to signal their expertise to others (credentialing). There are various ways by which the experts "police" themselves (i.e., via the aforementioned professional organizations). And there are various ways for those who rely on experts to signal that they *are* so relying (i.e., by hiring them in their role as expert in the domain in question), as well as various ways for the experts to communicate what can be expected of them in their role as experts (the publication of professional standards).

Next, consider the norms governing our epistemic obligations to friends, partners, or fellow members of a group or team. Few of these are legal; most of them are social and/or ethical. The members of the research team have complicated mutual expectations regarding the sorts of evidence each of them has, or has a responsibility for acquiring; and there are mutual expectations as well regarding the team's reporting practices, to ensure that appropriate members can become informed of any relevant updates on a timely basis. Members of a family come to expect things of one another, in part owing to family practices that become mutually acknowledged—how and when information is exchanged, where notes and to-do lists are left, and so forth.[8] Members of a unit within a professional organization will have various expectations about what sort of information comes from which sources, and how often, and through what channels—expectations that reflect familiar practice and also lore passed down from one member to another. Neighbours come to rely on each other in various kinds of ways for information about local goings-on, and they develop various expectations of one another in this regard (who knows what, how information is acquired, when and how it is shared, etc.). Business partners have informal practices (not enshrined in any contracts) regarding how they will divvy up information-seeking responsibilities, and the practices that evolve will be heavily informed by expectations they have of one

[8] See Gibbons (2006), who discusses the epistemic significance of a case of this sort.

another (who is responsible for what, how it will be investigated, how results will be disseminated, etc.).

To be sure, this review of norms and expectations is only the tip of the iceberg; there is much more to be said, and a great diversity of practices both within a community and across communities (as well as over time). But the points I wish to make do not depend on an exhaustive enumeration of knowledge practices or the norms and expectation that inform them. In these and so many other humdrum cases, we expect certain things of one another, and among these expectations are ones whose content is *epistemic*: they concern what others know, what evidence they have, what evidence-collecting responsibilities they bear, what reporting procedures they follow when they acquire relevant new information, and so forth. What is more, the expectations in question are *normative* (as opposed to merely predictive) in nature. It is certainly true that in most or all of these cases, you would predict that the various people do in fact have the knowledge (evidence, etc.) you expect of them; and it is also true that you have a good deal of evidence to back up your predictions. But the expectations themselves are not merely predictive in nature. To appreciate this, we need only consider what you would do were you to find out that, for example, your doctor was not knowledgeable about best treatment practices regarding a common medical condition. If your expectation were merely predictive, then, given what you found out, rationality would require that you surrender your expectation of your doctor's knowledgeableness. But of course this is not how you would react. On the contrary, you would appeal to this expectation in order to *criticize* your doctor for not having been relevantly knowledgeable. It is in this sense that we can speak of *normative* expectations.

Of course, not all normative expectations are legitimate. To build on our example above, an imperious boss might normatively expect every one of the workers to know absolutely everything that there is to know about the efficient running of the business, but if this expectation is unreasonable (or otherwise unwarranted or arbitrary) then the expectation itself is illegitimate. In that case it would not be proper for the boss to appeal to this expectation to chastise those who failed to meet the standard. This raises an interesting and difficult question in social philosophy: precisely when are normative expectations *legitimate* (where a legitimate standard is one to which it would be proper to hold others accountable)? While I have no precise answer to this question,[9] it is worth noting that the expectations described above (in connection with our knowledge communities) are far from unwarranted or arbitrary. On the contrary, they would appear to be underwritten by (the norms of) our social practices.

Of course, it is precisely here, in connection with our (legitimate) normative expectations of another subject's epistemic condition, that we begin to appreciate the importance of ethical and political values in epistemology. Two points can be made in this connection. First, consider the question whether a given social practice, and the normative expectations to which it gives rise, are legitimate. The answer in any given case will need to appeal to ethical and political values: the values themselves embody constraints on what can count as a legitimate practice. In particular, if a given practice is unjust, or unethical, then the norms that inform it, and the normative expectations that its practitioners have, are themselves illegitimate: they cannot serve to

9 What I have had to say is presented in Goldberg (2016, 2017b).

justify criticisms of one another's epistemic condition. In this way, our ethical and political values can themselves help to demarcate which of the normative epistemic expectations we have of one another are the *legitimate* ones. But second, and perhaps more interestingly, our ethical and political values themselves are often expressed in the very practices through which we hold one another responsible. Insofar as there are practices by which we hold one another *epistemically* responsible, we have yet a second role for ethical and political values: these not only constrain but positively *shape* our epistemic environment, and in particular shape the ways we relate to one another as epistemic subjects.

So far I have been arguing that our knowledge communities are full of normative expectations we have regarding one another's epistemic condition, and that ethical and political values are relevant both to shaping those expectations, and to determining when they are legitimate. My aim in what follows is to argue that, in virtue of their roles in shaping normative expectations and establishing their legitimacy, ethical and political values are relevant to social epistemology itself. After bringing this out, I will briefly describe how such values might be studied in social epistemological inquiry.

4 .

My goal in this section is to argue that our legitimate normative epistemic expectations (and the political and ethical values that inform them) are relevant to traditional epistemological concerns. Since I want to establish this in the eyes of those who might be tempted by a kind of epistemological conservatism which sharply distinguishes epistemic from political or ethical normativity (and keeps these entirely separate), it will be important to argue in ways that beg no important questions against such theorists.

I want to begin, then, with an appeal to authority. In his introductory textbook on epistemology, John Pollock discusses cases involving nearby (and easily-accessible) evidence one should have had. About these cases he has the following to say:

> *We are 'socially expected' to be aware of various things*…. If we fail to know … these things and that makes a difference to whether we are justified in believing some proposition, P, then our … justified belief in P does not constitute knowledge. (Pollock 1986: p. 192; italics added)

Pollock's interest was in spelling out the conditions on defeat in connection with knowledge. The principle to which he is gesturing is something like this: if you fail to be aware of something regarding which it was socially expected that you would be aware of it, then, if it's true that had you been aware of it you would not have been justified in believing that p, then your justified belief that p does not constitute knowledge. While Pollock spoke of 'defeat' *simpliciter*, I find it helpful to speak of 'normative' defeat,[10] since it is defeat arising from information that the subject *ought* to have. Now the doctrine of normative defeat (as we might call it) is not entirely uncontroversial. There are many who would deny it. But it is a very popular view in

[10] I borrow this term from Lackey (1999).

other circles.[11] And it is clear that if it is grounded in anything like the way Pollock describes, then 'social expectations' are relevant to very traditional epistemological concerns.

The doctrine of normative defeat might be disregarded as a rather *recherché* way to defend the epistemic relevance of legitimate normative epistemic expectations (and the ethical and political values that inform them). This would be a big mistake, one that would weaken the interest that (traditional) epistemology can have for us.[12] Consider an example based on Meeker (2004: p. 162). We want to know whether a given drug is safe to take—whether its side-effects are dangerous. Consequently, the relevant federal agency engages scientists to do some tests to determine this. Unfortunately, through no fault of their own, the scientists failed to read some of the relevant literature, and so failed to address a key concern that a group of other well-known scientists had about the drug. (Assume that they were unaware of the findings of the other group, and that their ignorance on this score was not culpable.) As a result, they failed to rule out a relevant alternative. However, their tests (which revealed no concerns about the safety of the drug) were otherwise scientifically unobjectionable. On the basis of their tests, they then announce that the drug is safe to use. Now if we focus only on the evidence they had, and ignore the considerations of which they should have been aware, we will reach the conclusion that their verdict that the drug is safe is justified. But surely this is not so; for if that were so, then the relevant government agency would be justified in accepting this verdict, which intuitively it isn't. (The government might be blameless in accepting this conclusion as their policy, but that would not render their endorsement of it *justified*.) It is precisely in cases of these sorts that the 'social expectations' we have of government scientists informs the proper epistemological assessment of their verdict. Of course, what goes for government scientists goes more general for each of us, as we engage one another in our individual and joint information-seeking behaviors.

I conclude, then, that the sort of expectation Pollock has in mind when he speaks of what is 'socially expected' of us (to know, to be aware of, etc.) is directly relevant to traditional epistemology. In particular, it is directly relevant to a very traditional dimension of epistemic assessment: failing to have relevant evidence one was properly expected to have can defeat or undermine one's knowledge.[13] I now want to argue that our political or ethical values are expressible in terms of the expectations they warrant, that at least some of these warranted expectations concern other people's epistemic condition, and that there can be cases in which the failure to meet these expectations gives rise to defeated justification and knowledge. If this is correct, then insofar as there are political and ethical values of ours which are expressible in terms of our normative expectations concerning other people's epistemic conditions, such values are relevant to traditional epistemology.

[11] Several come to mind. For early versions [in addition to Pollock (1986)] see Harman (1973: pp. 143–144) and Kornblith (1983: p. 36). For more recent writers who employ the notion, see Lackey (1999, 2005, 2006, 2011, 2014), Meeker (2004: pp. 162–163), Reed (2006), Bernecker (2008), Lyons (2011) and Record (2013: p. 3).

[12] With thanks to Kathryn Pogin for a helpful conversation on this topic.

[13] Indeed, I would argue for a stronger conclusion: failing to have evidence one ought to have had can defeat one's justification. This is a point that was endorsed as early as Kornblith (1983), but also most of the others cited in footnote 12 above. For my own defense of this view, see Goldberg (2017b, 2018).

5 .

The present point, regarding political and ethical values in social epistemology, can be illustrated in terms both of rather abstract political values and also more day-to-day political and ethical values.

I begin with the more abstract political values. To this end, consider a *technocratic* political system in which expert opinion is accorded a central role in policy decision-making. The political "values" that inhere in such a technocratic system might be captured in terms of the normative expectation each member of the community has, regarding the people designated as the relevant experts, as well as the messages that come from such sources. With some idealization, we can capture this by saying that, for any recognized expert E in the community, community members normatively expect that E is appropriately well-situated, epistemically speaking, regarding any matter on which she is an expert. In addition, for any recognized expert E in the community, community members who are not experts in the relevant domain will normatively expect of each other that insofar as they have access to E's opinions on matters of E's expertise, then they will in fact rely on those opinions. For this reason, E's statements on such matters will (typically) be accorded a high degree of credence.[14] Of course, not every community member will in fact ascribe a high degree of authority to recognized experts' opinions. Even so, members of this community *will regard each other as entitled to do so*, and entitled as well to have the normative expectation of the experts' relevant authoritativeness. What is more, they will regard themselves as entitled to expect *others* to acknowledge the recognized experts' opinions as expert opinions. (Whether in point of fact the members *are* entitled in these several ways will then depend on whether the practices and norms in question were legitimate.)

I note that these expectations deriving from the political values inherent in a technocratic political system will have far-reaching effects on the epistemic practices of the community. For one thing (and as noted), they will affect community members' dispositions to accept the expressed opinions of recognized experts, as well as their expectations as to what the recognized experts "owe" them. But in addition these expectations deriving from the political values inherent in a technocratic political system will also affect community members' expectations of *others'* reliance on the opinions of recognized experts: others, too, will be expected to conform to expressed expert opinion when such opinion was accessible to them, unless they had strong reason to go against said opinion.

We might put all of this in terms of what the various parties are seen as "owing" each other in a political regime oriented around technocratic values. Recognized experts "owe it" to non-experts to weigh in on matters that fall within their expertise when and only when the experts themselves have competently arrived at reliably formed belief. Non-experts "owe it" to recognized experts to accord greater weight to their say-so when it is on a matter that falls within their expertise. And finally, non-experts "owe it" to each other, as well as to the recognized experts, to form beliefs on matters on which they have access to a recognized expert's (expert) opinions by assigning great

[14] This assumes that members of the community can reliably discern when E is making statements within her expertise. This assumption is not always warranted, of course.

weight to such opinion (and accepting it except when they have compelling reasons not to do so). Clearly, insofar as the recognized experts really are more reliable in their opinions, this has a very salutary effect on the spread of true belief on matters that fall within the expertise of the recognized experts.

Consider next a political system that embodies *libertarian* values. In such a community, values of self-reliance and personal autonomy will prevail, and it is easy to have some sense for how this will affect the sorts of expectations that prevail among members of this community. Members of this community will typically expect themselves, as individuals, to earn for themselves whatever epistemic entitlements they enjoy: they will not rely on others in belief-formation except under conditions in which they have vindicated that reliance, i.e., by confirming the reliability of the person(s) being relied upon. Correlatively, these community members will not have, and in any case will not regard themselves as *entitled* to have, substantial expectations of others' epistemic conditions—at least not without first having confirmed their entitlement to do so for (and by) themselves. In this respect the libertarian political system clearly contrasts with the technocratic political system. As we saw above, in the latter there is a tradition of relying on public officials and others in their public capacities, and as a result of this members will have—or at any rate will regard themselves as entitled to have—expectations of the epistemic condition of the relevant individuals. In the community in which libertarian political values predominate, by contrast, there will be much less in the way of these sorts of expectations, and much less, too, in the way of people regarding themselves as entitled to these sorts of expectations. Correlatively, in such communities there will be greater demands on the individual who hopes to acquire knowledge through reliance on others (in comparison with the demands on such subjects in communities with traditions of greater epistemic cooperation). Since the epistemic subject in the libertarian community is not entitled[15] to hold others accountable in the various ways described in the technocratic community, she must certify for herself the authoritativeness of those on whom she relies in each and every case.[16] But it is also true that in the libertarian communities there will be correspondingly fewer ways in which a given epistemic subject might fail to know through normative defeat, since there are fewer normative epistemic expectations that will be in place in such communities. If this is correct, then it seems that *the enhanced risk of normative defeat is the price we pay for the ease and efficiency of knowledge spread in a community*.

These schematic examples of the relevance of abstract political values to epistemology are admittedly a bit cartoonish. (Where can one find communities such as the technocratic one described above, in which there is no corrosive doubts among laypeople regarding the opinions of the so-called experts? Where can one find such a robust form of libertarianism, where, absent confirming another's credibility for oneself, subjects never regard themselves as entitled to presume another's competence on a matter?) Still, these cartoonish examples provide a model for how political and ethical values more generally might bear on social epistemology. To see this, we need

15 Here I should add the qualification: absent some reason to do so.

16 Here I should add the qualification: in which she lacks such reason.

to move from the practices on which abstract political values bear, to those on which our more day-to-day political and ethical values bear.

Let us shift our focus, then, from the sort of expectations we have of our public officials (and those who officially advise them in matters of policy), to the more quotidian sorts of expectation we have of our peers and our partners in everyday life. Consider for example the sorts of expectations one has of one's friends and colleagues, one's family members, or one's business partners. Alternatively, consider the sorts of expectations that one has—or finds oneself having—as a member of a particular culture. Here I have in mind the sorts of expectations of others that derive from their gender role(s),[17] ethnicity, religion, racial identity,[18] socioeconomic identity, profession, membership in one or another civic or social group,[19] and so forth. To be sure, many of these expectations are illegitimate; they derive from norms or standards that ought to be condemned as unjust or unethical, or as based on practices or institutions that are illegitimate. And not all of the expectations themselves are normative: some are thoroughly predictive in nature. But even here we find that such predictive expectations can bear on normative ones, as when we adjust what we normatively expect of a group of people out of a predictive expectation regarding how they typically behave. Indeed, what Miranda Fricker (2007) calls *testimonial injustice* appears to be a striking illustration of this very phenomenon: testimonial injustice involves the diminishment in the credibility assigned to a speaker's testimony out of prejudice towards a group of which she is a member.

The point I wish to emphasize at present, however, concerns, not our predictive expectations, but our normative ones. The foregoing list attests to the prevalence and variety of the normative expectations we have of each other, embedded as we are in our various knowledge communities. At least some of these normative expectations will pertain to one's epistemic condition; and those that do so pertain will then be employed by people as they assess one other epistemically. It is noteworthy as well that the existence of such expectations will typically shape epistemic performance in a community. This is for the simple reason that members of a community typically will be aware of the normative expectations others have of them, and so will (often) aim to conform to those expectations in how they conduct themselves as a member of the various communities in question. It is in this way that the study of a community's normative expectations can have an empirical payoff for the social epistemologist: research into the normative expectations that are prevalent in a community can lead to empirical hypotheses regarding the sorts of evidence that community members will have, the sources to which they will turn, the ways that they will communicate with one another, and so forth. Herein we can see one benefit of what we might call "applied" social epistemology: the testing of the very empirical hypotheses that are suggested by the community's normative expectations of one another.

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[17] A large literature in feminist epistemology addresses this point. See e.g. Alcoff (2001), Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004), Bleier (1984), Code (1981, 1991), Grasswick (2013), Grasswick and Webb (2002), Keller (1985), Jones (2002), Longino (1990, 1999), Rolin (2002), Scheman (1995), Tuana (1995) and Wylie (2003, 2011).

[18] See e.g. Collins (1990), Dotson (2011b, 2014), Haslanger (2014), and Mills (1997, 2007).

[19] I raised this issue in Goldberg (2016, 2017b, 2018).

It is important to underscore why none of this should make the traditional epistemologist squirm. According to the analysis on offer, the normative expectations of which I speak inform epistemic assessment in a straightforward way: when they are legitimate, they constitute a normative standard against which subjects' beliefs and assertions are assessed. A subject who lacks evidence that is normatively expected of her risks an epistemic downgrade (by way of the phenomenon of normative defeat).[20] Of course, when these expectations are not legitimate—say, they reflect gender or racial prejudice—then, at least as far as the epistemologist need be concerned, the expectations in question do not figure in epistemic assessment. In such a situation, the members of the community in which such normative expectations prevail may well hold each other to such standards, but the epistemologist is free to reject their verdicts, on the grounds that these verdicts reflect an illegitimate standard deriving from illegitimate expectations.

Two implications of the foregoing are worth underscoring.

First, on the picture of social epistemology on offer, there is clear work to be done by (traditional) normative epistemology. In addition to providing an account of the conditions on epistemic justification and knowledge, the traditional epistemologist will also be needed to contribute to an account of the legitimacy of social practices and normative expectations. As I mentioned above, the core of the notion of legitimacy is ethical and political: it has to do with the fairness of the practices and institutions that warrant the expectations in question. But it is also clear that the epistemologist has a contribution to make on this score as well: presumably there are distinctly *epistemic conditions* on legitimate practices and institutions. It may be too much to insist that legitimacy requires that there is *mutual knowledge* among members of the community of all of the features of the practice. But surely some condition of mutual awareness is relevant to the legitimacy of a practice, and normative epistemology can contribute to our understanding of precisely what is involved.[21] (Insofar as we are entitled to be confident in our verdicts of normative defeat, then, reasoning backwards from these, we might infer what sort of epistemic requirement there is on the normative expectations that trigger normative defeat.)

Second, and relatedly, on the picture of social epistemology on offer, it is clear that we should not think to embrace a wholesale form of *epistemic descriptivism*. Popular among some empirically-oriented theorists, epistemic descriptivism is the doctrine according to which our theorizing about knowledge communities should have as its final aim a complete *description* of the social practices that inform a community's normative epistemic expectations, but no *evaluation* of those practices. Without a doubt, social epistemology requires a description of the social practices that inform a community's normative epistemic expectations. But it would be a mistake for the social epistemologist to embrace those practices uncritically. For if she did so, she would have no basis on which to resist the epistemic verdicts that conform to those

[20] Whether this risk materializes will depend on one's theory of normative defeat. According to some theories, the very fact that there is further evidence (or knowledge) one should have had itself defeats one's justification. According to others, it is not this fact, but the epistemic bearing of the evidence (or knowledge) in question, that defeats—in which case one's justification is defeated only if the evidence one should have had bears against one's belief. I will be neutral on this here.

[21] With thanks to Leandro de Brasi for a helpful discussion of this point.

practices—no matter how illegitimate the practices themselves are. On the contrary, social epistemology ought to keep a critical distance from the practices it describes, so as to allow for the possibility of the sort of normative assessment described in the previous paragraph.

With these two implications in mind, I submit that the picture on offer has two key virtues.

First, it avoids the individualistic orientation that informs an unfortunate kind of epistemological conservatism, according to which epistemology as a field of study is exhausted by the attempt to analyze key epistemic notions, and epistemic assessment is restricted in scope to the states and processes of individual epistemic subjects. On the picture of social epistemology I am describing here, social epistemological research needs to take account of the social practices and institutions that structure our knowledge communities, since it is these that give rise to the normative epistemic expectations we have of one another. At the same time, the need for social epistemology to include a characterization of social practices and institutions does not require that we give up on traditional normative epistemology. On the contrary, we need normative epistemology to contribute to our understanding of such matters as the conditions on epistemic justification and knowledge, the scope of normative defeat, and the epistemic condition(s) on legitimate social practices. We ought to combine the descriptive study of social practices, then, with the normative concerns of the traditional epistemologist. That we can do so should suffice to make clear that traditional normative epistemology need not be committed to the sort of conservatism I am repudiating.

Second, the social epistemology programme I have laid out avoids epistemological descriptivism. Describing a community's social practices is one thing; endorsing the norms and expectations that emerge from those practices is another. I hope that the foregoing makes clear that one can embrace the relevance of the former, without having to be committed to the latter. It should also make clear that we can reject epistemological descriptivism while at the same time acknowledging the importance of detailed, empirically-informed characterizations of our knowledge practices. In this way, the route is open to a social epistemology that is informed by the best research on actual knowledge practices (and the values inherent therein), but which stops short of deriving our conclusions about the social nature of knowledge directly from these studies alone.

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It is perhaps worth concluding with a remark about how the proposal I have been describing here relates to the two more familiar traditions in social epistemology.

I have been conceiving of the research programme in social epistemology as focusing on the epistemic significance of other minds. And I have thought of this sort of investigation as having to take stock of at least three fundamental aspects of the epistemic environment: (i) the various forms taken by our epistemic dependence on others; (ii) the variety of norms that underwrite our expectations of one another as we make our way in the common epistemic environment; and (iii) the distinctive epistemic assessment(s) implicated whenever a doxastic state is the result of a "social

route" to knowledge. In this paper I have spent most of my time focusing on (ii), since it is here that we find the relevance of political and ethical values and norms. Still, I should make clear that this is not, and cannot be, the entirety of social epistemology. Once the social epistemologist has a full description of the knowledge practices of a given community, and so has an inventory of the variety of norms that underwrite the members' expectations of one another as they make their way in the common knowledge environment, our social epistemologist then needs to know how to factor this into epistemic assessment itself. My suggestion above is that these norms constitute candidates for identifying possible normative defeaters: if a subject S fails to have the evidence or knowledge that is expected of her, where the evidence or knowledge in question is epistemically relevant to her belief that p, then (either the justification or the knowledgeableness of) S's belief that p is at risk of normative defeat. Whether this risk materializes will depend on whether the expectations themselves were legitimate, as well as on one's theory of normative defeat (see footnote 22).

I believe that the foregoing programme combines the best of the two more familiar traditions in social epistemology. It is clear how an empirically-minded approach to knowledge practices, of the sort advocated by the sociology of science tradition, will contribute to the foregoing. We need a detailed account of our knowledge practices in order to address (ii) itself. This is the sort of research that empirically-minded research in the sociology of science tradition, at its best, can provide. But such a description can only tell us whether the actual practices of the community conform to the standards that the community itself lays down. What such research will not tell us is whether these practices conform to *what we should be willing to embrace as acceptable epistemic standards*. For this, we need to resort to normative epistemology, to determine what such standards are, and how they ought to be applied to cases in which beliefs are formed by reliance on one's community. It is here, I believe, that the tradition deriving from the work of Alvin Goldman will loom large. Here I have in mind not only his *veritism* (according to which true belief is the only ultimate standard for epistemic assessment), but also his *reliabilism* (according to which epistemic justification is a matter of the reliability of belief-forming processes, where reliability is understood in terms of the preponderance of true belief to total belief formed by a process).

Precisely how to employ these notions in epistemic assessment is itself a complicated matter that I will have to leave for another time.[22] My point here is merely that we can and should combine this Goldman-inspired perspective with a detailed account of a community's knowledge practices. Following Goldman's perspective and its characteristic emphasis on the truth-related effects of our knowledge practices, we can explore the effects of a regime of political and ethical values on the acquisition of true belief and the avoidance of error. But we should not stop there, since to do so is to fail to appreciate the full role of our knowledge practices in epistemic assessment itself. To capture this role in its entirety, we need also to appreciate the normative expectations sanctioned by a community's knowledge practices, since these expectations (when legitimate) give rise to the possibility of normative defeat. The resulting picture, I believe, is a programme for social epistemology that combines the best of traditional epistemology with the best of the tradition in the sociology of science. Such

[22] For a part of the story, see Goldberg (2010, 2015a, 2018).

a programme recognizes the relevance of political and ethical values to epistemology, even as it hews rather closely to traditional forms of epistemic assessment itself.

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