

Social Exclusion, Epistemic Injustice and Intellectual Self-Trust

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This commentary offers a coherent reading of the papers presented in the special issue ‘Exclusion, Engagement, and Empathy: Reflections on Public Participation in Medicine and Technology’. Focusing on intellectual self-trust it adds a further perspective on the harmful epistemic consequences of social exclusion for individual agents in healthcare contexts. In addition to some clarifications regarding the concepts of ‘intellectual self-trust’ and ‘social exclusion’ the commentary also examines in what ways empathy, engagement and participatory sense-making could help to avoid threats to intellectual self-trust that arise from being excluded from participation in communicative practices in the of context healthcare.

Keywords: social exclusion; hermeneutical injustice; self-trust; patient involvement

Introduction

The second edition of Grimm’s Fairy Tale collection contains on position 34 the story of ‘Clever Elsie’ (Grimm and Grimm 1884). Elsie is presented as an intelligent and sensitive but not very industrious young woman. One day after sleeping the whole afternoon in the field instead of cutting the corn Elsie finds herself wrapped in a fowler’s net with little bells that jingle at each of her movements and which – as the reader knows – her husband Hans threw over her while she was asleep. Half-awake and frightened by the strange sound of the bells Elsie falls into doubt about who she really is. ‘Is it I, or is it not I?’ (p. 141) she asks herself. Being unable to give an answer for herself, she decides to go home and ask Hans. But as she comes home she finds the house locked. Standing outside she cries ‘Hans, is Elsie within?’ and Hans responds from inside the house ‘Yes, she is within’ (ibid.). Elsie, who has good reasons to believe her husband, infers that if Elsie is inside the house, she cannot be Elsie. This frightens her more than ever. Utterly unnerved she goes on to knock on the doors of the other houses in the village to ask the inhabitants who she is. But no one opens.

This is a disturbing story. Yet, from an epistemological perspective it contains at least two important insights. First, it shows that cleverness alone is insufficient to actually hold one’s beliefs as true. Elsie’s intellectual capacities are intact – she remembers the way home and knows that Hans is her

husband, she is able to understand his words and to draw logically sound inferences – but yet she fails to believe the obvious: that it is herself who is standing outside the house. This is remarkable insofar as the question she directs at Hans implies that she must have considered the possibility of standing outside the house. If Hans would deny that Elsie is in the house, this would be an indication for Elsie that her belief that she is outside the house is reliable and that she is thus probably Elsie. But Elsie, even though she is clever, is unable to overcome her doubts on her own. In order to hold her belief as true it is not sufficient that she is sensitive and reasonable. She must also be able to trust the deliverances of her own mind. Second, the tale shows in a disturbing way how trust in ones own intellectual capacities can be undermined through being mistreated or misunderstood by others. Elsie seeks other’s validation for her belief, that she is still Elsie. But this validation is not only denied (neither Hans nor the other villagers open their doors) but actively foiled through Hans’ malicious lie. Hans takes advantage of the trust Elsie invests in him to get rid of his (in his eyes) feckless wife. And he is ready to leave her stranded with inextricable self-doubt in an almost insane state of mind in which she is unable to figure out on her own what to believe and what not. Often, it seems, we need intersubjective validation of our beliefs to be able to accept them as true. If this validation is lost or actively undermined by others, we, like Elsie, lose the confidence that our perceptions and inferences are actually reliable; we cease to intellectually trust ourselves.¹

In this commentary I shall explore the phenomenon of intellectual self-trust and its social and intersubjective preconditions in order to shed light on the individual consequences of social exclusion in the context of healthcare. The commentary aims to add a further perspective on the harmful epistemic consequences of social exclusion and on empathy and engagement as means to overcome them. I will use the tale of ‘Clever Elsie’ as an illustrative guide to understanding the link between social exclusion and the phenomenon of deprived intellectual self-trust. Using several examples from the papers of this

1. The final episode of the tale of ‘Clever Elsie’ can also be framed as a case of ‘gaslighting’, viz. the practice of manipulating a person such that their self-conception as an independent locus of judgment and deliberation is undermined. For a discussions of the epistemic dimensions of gaslighting see also (Spear 2019).

special issue, I will show that mechanisms of social exclusion that work on the level of collective discourses as well as on the level of interpersonal communication can undermine the preconditions for gaining and maintaining solid intellectual self-trust. The plan is as follows: In the next section I will introduce a general notion of intellectual self-trust by explicating its necessary conditions with reference to the recent literature. In sections 2 through 4 I will analyze the specific sense of the term ‘social exclusion’ that is deployed in many of the papers in this special issue and reveal how this understanding can be linked to concerns about intellectual self-trust. In the final section I will discuss these links with respect to examples from the papers by Hilbrich and Hansen, van Grunsven and Roeser, and Mitchell et al. (Hilbrich and Hansen 2021; Mitchell et al. 2021; van Grunsven and Roeser 2021), and comment on the potential of engagement, empathy and participatory sense-making as antidotes to social exclusion and deprivation of intellectual self-trust.

Intellectual Self-Trust: Individual attitudes and intersubjective conditions

To explore that relation between intellectual self-trust and social exclusion it will be helpful to first say a little more about the nature of intellectual self-trust. As the nature of intellectual self-trust has been and is still the object of lively philosophical discussion and because accounts of the concept differ in detail (Dormandy 2020; El Kassar 2020, 2021; Fricker 2016; Jones 2012; Tanesini 2020; Zagzebski 2012), I will not try to defend any substantial account. Instead I will focus on a minimal conception of intellectual self-trust as an attitude a person takes towards her own capacities to form beliefs, to give reasons for beliefs, and to reach an understanding of the world. This minimal conception is made up of three conditions that I take to be necessary in any account of intellectual self-trust but that together are arguably insufficient.²

2. Some earlier accounts of intellectual self-trust identified self-trust with reliance on the deliverances of one’s epistemic faculties (e.g. (Foley 2001)) and thus, what I take to be the first condition of intellectual self-trust. Taking into account questions about the aptness of intellectual self-trust in various social contexts and social mechanisms that undermine epistemic self trust, more recent accounts have shown that self-trust, just like interpersonal trust, involves more than mere reliance, (for example see Dormandy 2020).

First, there needs to be some reliance condition. In order to have intellectual self-trust a person must be disposed to rely on their own epistemic faculties and abilities. A person who is disposed in this way accepts the deliverances of their perception and memory as correct representations of the facts and takes the cognitive mechanisms which process these deliverances as functional for the formation of true belief, despite being aware of the possibility of error. Awareness of the sheer possibility of error does not undermine the disposition to rely on these faculties. One can be aware that perceptions are occasionally deceptive and that thinking is prone to various cognitive biases. Insofar as one relies on one's epistemic abilities, the fact that one is aware of their fallibility does not affect one's acceptance of what appears to be true. However, the disposition to rely on one's own epistemic faculties and abilities can be undermined by too much doubt and reflection, and this gets us to the second condition.³

Second, intellectual self-trust requires confidence in the power of one's epistemic faculties and abilities. Such confidence can be spelled out in various ways but usually involves cognitive and affective components. The cognitive component comes in the form of beliefs about one's epistemic abilities. A person with intellectual self-trust must believe that they are able to make good judgments on whether or not to accept the deliverances of their own epistemic faculties and the testimony of others. Such belief in one's own judgment is necessary in order to be able to manage conflicts with the epistemic judgments of others. A person that does not believe that their own epistemic faculties and abilities are reliable, will too easily abandon their beliefs in cases of conflict. As a general disposition this would be a sign of lacking intellectual self-trust. However, as several authors have pointed out the cognitive component alone is insufficient to satisfy the confidence condition. Karen Jones coined the example of a traveler, who constantly checks whether she has packed her passport, even though she generally relies on her epistemic faculties and has good reasons to believe that she packed it (Jones 2012, p. 240). The point seems to be that in order to achieve the kind of certainty required for intellectual self-trust and to stop

3. This component of intellectual self-trust is important for practically coping with skeptical scenarios. It seems that one must at least presume the reliability of sense perception under normal circumstances in order to get ahold on the Cartesian evil demon.

questioning one's beliefs one also needs a feeling of certainty, i.e. a positive affective attitude towards one's beliefs.⁴ Alessandra Tanesini made a similar point in urging that it is ultimately impossible to put one's own mind at ease by referring to ever more beliefs. As every belief can be undermined by doubt, belief in the power of one's own epistemic faculties must ultimately be grounded in a feeling of confidence (Tanesini 2020, pp. 221).

Finally, intellectual self-trust requires a person in one way or another to express their beliefs through certain actions. It would be implausible to ascribe (full) intellectual self-trust to a person who is unable to express themselves with confidence, who lacks the courage to speak up in front of others, or who is generally unable to maintain their beliefs when they conflict with the views of others. Hence, intellectual self-trust as an optimistic stance toward one's own intellectual capacities must also manifest itself in the person's behavior (El Kassar 2020, p.16).⁵

Besides the individual attitudes and dispositions that characterize intellectual self-trust, the development and maintenance of self-trust depends on intersubjective enabling conditions.⁶ Self-trust is typically gained and lost in social interaction. People gain self-trust by being recognized for

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4. The example is instructive because, as Jones shows, the urge to recheck whether one has packed the passport is not responsive to epistemic reasons. The person does not have reasons to believe she lost her passport. Rather the mere imagination that she could have lost the passport seems to motivate the doubt.
 5. This condition will probably be the most contested one because intellectual self-trust could be seen as a purely mental attitude. However, conceptualizing intellectual self-trust in this way would render the concept practically useless. The purpose of having a concept of intellectual self-trust is to explain certain patterns of a person's behavior and therefore the concept should include a condition addressing behavioral dispositions as well.
 6. Interestingly the literature on intellectual self-trust traditionally focused on the rationality of trusting one's intellectual capacities. This concern is independent of social enabling conditions for self-trust. It was argued on an abstract level that there is an independent demand of rationality to trust one's epistemic faculties as an inevitable 'leap of faith' needed to escape the skeptical challenge, cf. (Foley 2001).
 7. Reconsidering the tale of Clever Elise, this is obviously the mechanism Hans takes advantage of when he falsely asserts that Elisie is in the house. Elisie's belief that she is outside the house is not confirmed when he gives her a reason to think of herself as intellectually untrustworthy.

contributions to what is considered to be valuable within their respective social environment. Sharing a skill, employing experiences in a joint project with others, or communicating one's knowledge are possibilities to become recognized in this sense (Bruin 2014). The role of social recognition as a social enabling condition of self-trust is best articulated by turning to interpersonal trust. My trust in you is an expression of my belief that you are trustworthy. In trusting, I express that I believe you to be able to act reliably and competently with respect to a good I entrust you with. The recognition of your reliability and competence expressed through my trust enables you to become aware of your capabilities. There is someone that holds you in high esteem in your capacity to act competently and reliably and this is a reason for you to see yourself in a position to act competently and reliably. The development and maintenance of self-trust, therefore, crucially depends on the possibility to make socially valued contributions and on the respective awareness of becoming recognized as trustworthy.⁷ The same goes for the more specific form of trust in one's own intellectual capacities. Building and maintaining intellectual self-trust crucially depends on being recognized in one's capacity as a contributor to the social practice of searching knowledge. In the last section of this article, I will focus on this precondition of intellectual self-trust and investigate the link between social exclusion as hermeneutical injustice and intellectual self-trust more closely. Referring to specific examples from the papers by Hansen and Hilbrich, van Grunsven and Roeser and Mitchell et al. I will also show how practices of engagement and empathy may affect a person's trust in their intellectual capacities.

However, before doing so it will be important to discuss two further points. The first concerns a clarification of this minimal account of intellectual self-trust: The account does not specify the conditions under which intellectually trusting oneself is epistemically adequate. The following norm, however, seems to be an obvious candidate for epistemically apt intellectual self-trust: One should only trust oneself intellectually if, one's intellectual faculties are sufficiently reliable in generating true beliefs, if one's intellectual abilities are trustworthy in the sense that they help one to form true beliefs and to gain knowledge, and if one neither overrates nor underestimates one's intellectual capacities with

respect to these epistemic goals. Adequate intellectual self-trust matches the objective epistemic quality of one's intellectual faculties.

The second point requires a more thorough investigation as it concerns the link between problems of intellectual self-trust and practices of social exclusion. As social exclusion might also motivate a person to oppose and to resist the misrecognition of their position, we need a more precise account of how and under which conditions social exclusion can negatively affect intellectual self-trust. I will give such an explanation with respect to specific practices of social exclusion mentioned in the papers of this special issue in the following three sections.

Defining Social Exclusion

One way of linking problems of intellectual self-trust to questions about public engagement runs via the concept of social exclusion. Being denied recognition as a contributor to the social practices of inquiry can be a form of social exclusion. In a first sketch 'social exclusion' can be described as a four-place relation: A subject A is excluded by an excluding subject B from participation in a shared social practice C by means of certain activities D. This basic relation can be realized in various ways and can involve a variety of entities at the place of each of the four variables. A and B, for example, can refer to individual people as well as to social groups and collectives.⁸ C can be spelled out as any activity that involves the shared intention of two or more people from debating a policy issue to running a club to writing a text together. Finally, D includes all of B's activities that effectively keep A from participating in C. These activities occupy a large spectrum that ranges from actively hindering someone to participate (e.g.

8. I distinguish between groups that are tied together by shared aims and intentions of their members and collectives that are held together by a normative structure that is independent of individual aims and intentions. Groups are constituted by individuals that act together to realize shared interests. Collectives are social systems constituted by norms whose prevalence shapes the behavior of individuals within the system. For the interdisciplinary readership of this commentary it might be helpful to note that this terminology differs from the terminology that is sometimes applied in empirical social science research where 'group' is simply meant to denote a number of people that happen to share certain properties, and where 'collective' seems to denote a number of people that have shared intentions and act together in order to achieve a shared aim, i.e. what I termed a 'group'; for an example cf. (Beier et al. 2016)

discharging someone from office, keeping off someone physically) to more passive and subtle forms such as ignoring the person or not taking them seriously in conversation. This approach to social exclusion is contractualist in spirit. Conceptions of social exclusion following this scheme are normatively neutral insofar as they do not conceive of the phenomenon as intrinsically wrong. Being excluded from a group can be legitimate, when one has violated the very norms which are constitutive of that group and which one has implicitly or explicitly endorsed by becoming a member. And it can be illegitimate and even morally problematic, if it is based on criteria other than these or if the norms one has implicitly or explicitly endorsed are themselves unjust.

The concept of social exclusion put to use by most authors of this special issue, however, does not have these contractualist underpinnings. What is at stake is a more specific, normative sense of ‘social exclusion’ in the tradition of critical social theory (Herzog 2021). On this interpretation, what the contractualist terms ‘shared social practices’ takes the form of collective evaluations. By distinguishing between accepted and non-accepted modes of expression, these collective evaluations produce social exclusion, which in turn leads to the marginalization of those who are unable to express themselves by making use of the accepted modes of expression. Thus, on this interpretation being excluded from a collective is not like having one’s membership in a club terminated. It is rather like not even being recognized as someone who could potentially become a member. As Simon Susen makes clear, social exclusion in this sense means being denied access because of being regarded as different (which means being non-human in the specific context of his paper (Susen 2021)). Therefore, social exclusion is structural. It is an effect of the norms, practices and concepts that shape the collective’s functioning. As social exclusion in this sense is something impersonal and systematic, it is difficult to determine a particular subject that can be held responsible for acts of social exclusion. Yet, social exclusion tends to undermine democratic norms of equality according to which everyone deserves to be recognized as a human being with dignity irrespective of their physical properties, their gender, their social position, their religious beliefs and so on and is therefore conceived as an intrinsic wrong. In short: ‘social exclusion’ results from unequal treatments of morally equal subjects produced by structural features of a collective.

Social Exclusion as Hermeneutic Injustice

When social exclusion is the result of drawing differences between subjects that deserve equal treatment in their capacities as epistemic agents, it becomes a form of epistemic injustice. Since its introduction by Miranda Fricker ‘epistemic injustice’ has developed into an umbrella term capturing the various forms of unjust treatments that relate to issues of knowledge, understanding and participation in discourse. More specifically, social exclusion in the relevant sense constitutes a ‘hermeneutical injustice’. Hermeneutical injustices are epistemic injustices that occur when, as Fricker puts it, ‘a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair advantage when it comes to making sense of their social experience’ (Fricker 2010). As the examples from the studies by Hilbrich and Hansen and van Grusven and Roeser show, relatives of organ donor’s in the German transplantation system as well as people on the autism spectrum using AAC technology for communication can be described as disadvantaged in making sense of (some of) their social experiences in the respective contexts. As these disadvantages are framed as instances of ‘social exclusion’ in the normative sense at stake, conceiving of them as ‘unfair’ and applying the concept of ‘hermeneutical injustice’ is apt.

It has often been emphasized that intellectual self-trust can be undermined by suffering from epistemic injustices, as it is gained and maintained to a significant extent through being recognized by other’s in one’s capacity as a knower (Bruin 2014; El Kassar 2020; Fricker 2010). As one can learn from the tale of Clever Elsie a person can only conceive of themselves as a knower and trust their own beliefs if they have possibilities for intersubjectively validating her beliefs in cases of doubt. It is, however, unclear how exactly social exclusion as a form of ‘hermeneutical injustices’ can negatively affect intellectual self-trust. What exactly is the harm done to a person’s self-trust when they are excluded from a discourse? In principle this harm could be analyzed in consequentialist terms. The misrepresentation of a person’s experience in a public discourse or in other instances of communication will be morally problematic insofar as it hinders the person from engaging in activities that contribute to her overall wellbeing. On this reading the relatives of organ donors would be unfairly disadvantaged within the German transplantation system because being able to make sense of one’s experiences and to understand one’s situation is an essential precondition to act according to one’s interests and values. As

Hilbrich and Hansen’s analysis shows, the general narrative of organ transplantation deprives relatives of organ donors from making sense of some of their practical experiences within the system because this narrative contradicts the actual practice. This leads to confusion, uncertainty, the inability to act, and make decisions and thus undermines their wellbeing (Hilbrich and Hansen 2021).

However, a purely consequentialist interpretation of harm sits uncomfortably with the idea that social exclusion is intrinsically wrong. Under certain conditions consequentialists can accept that certain groups suffer from confusion, uncertainty and inability if this serves the overall wellbeing of society. Therefore, an analysis of harm in deontological terms would be more appropriate. A deontological reading of this failure in line with Fricker’s analysis of testimonial injustices would hold that social exclusion is morally wrong, because it amounts to treating others solely as a means to one’s epistemic ends, viz. one treats them as mere sources of information rather than as informants.⁹ While this distinction between treating someone as source of information and treating someone as an informant with their own epistemic aims, helps to make sense of the connection between testimonial injustice and deprived intellectual self-trust, it does not allow one to construe ‘social exclusion’ as a structural feature of a collective. Treating someone solely as a source of information presupposes a subject that engages in such treatments. To be misused or exploited in one’s capacity as a knower one’s experiences and knowledge must at least be taken up in the thinking and acting of a subject who exploits and misuses. But ‘social exclusion’ in the relevant sense differs from this understanding as well. Being socially excluded in the sense at stake is being invisibilized in the public discourse, not being instrumentalized

9. Fricker distinguishes between a hearer’s third-personal and second-personal relation to a speaker. If one relates to a speaker in the former way one gathers information by way of observing and analyzing the speaker’s expressions. One then treats the *speaker as a source of information* as one would treat a measuring device from which one reads off data points. If one relates to a speaker in the second-personal way, one recognizes the speaker *as an informant*, i.e. as someone who communicates with intention. Treating the speaker as an informant implies presuming to be addressed by the speaker. In treating a speaker as an informant, one does not merely read off information from the speaker’s behavior but takes oneself as being provided with information by someone who communicates intentionally; cf. (Fricker 2012) for further development of the related assurance view of testimony cf. also (Hinchman 2005; Moran 2005).

as a means to somebody else's ends. I, therefore, urge that the harm done through social exclusion in the specific sense at stake is best analyzed in terms of the deprivation of communicative resources.

Communicative deprivation

A person who is deprived of the communicative resources she needs to make sense of her experiences cannot adequately use her epistemic faculties and abilities. One can have the sharpest eyesight or the most reliable reasoning skills, but if one lacks the conceptual resources to interpret one's experiences and to share them with others, these faculties are of very limited practical value. Moreover, in order to cope with skepticism regarding the reliability of their experiences, people are in need of intersubjective validation. If the possibility of intersubjective validation is structurally disabled in a collective, a person is epistemically deprived. Such deprivation is a direct problem for the maintenance of the person's intellectual self-trust, because it hinders them from experiencing themselves as a knower. If one cannot make sense of one's experiences one cannot act on them; and thus one cannot build the positive self-relation that allows one to experience oneself as a knower. Therefore, the deeper moral problem with respect to hermeneutical injustices – and with respect social exclusion in particular – is the denial of recognition as an autonomous agent. The harm done to a person through social exclusion, therefore, is neither their objectification nor their exploitation, but the misrecognition as a knower, which deprives them of the resources to build trust in their intellectual capacities. When the misrecognition extends to other than intellectual faculties, it can even deprive the person of the resources to experience themselves as an autonomous agent and thus as a member of a community of morally equals.

Lack of intellectual self-trust through communicative deprivation is, however, not the only epistemically detrimental effect of social exclusion. The communicative deprivation of the excluded fires back on the epistemic standing of the dominant excluding group. The reason is simple. As the marginalized's experiences and perspectives are excluded from the discourse, members of the dominant group do not have access to information that would be needed to grasp the full picture of the phenomenon in question. From an epistemological perspective social exclusion is a double-edged sword: It deprives the marginalized from the communicative resources they need to express themselves,

but it also deprives the dominant group of relevant information. As the public discourse is structured to their advantage, it is too easy for members of the dominant group to find intersubjective validation for their experiences. As a result they are likely to be overly self-confident and to overrate their intellectual capacities.¹⁰

Empowering Intellectual Self-Trust through Empathy and Engagement

The focus of the papers in this special issue are communicative practices in (primarily) healthcare related settings. It is therefore important to recall the fact that communication is (also) an epistemic practice. A crucial part of communication is the exchange of information between the participants in communicative interactions. Hence, it comes hardly as a surprise that the influence of communicative practices on the participant's intellectual self-trust and – relatedly – on their capacity to share information and to take up testimony has been a topic of investigation. However, the focus of these investigations has primarily been on linguistic practices such as discriminatory speech (Mikkola 2020). The papers in this special issue concentrate on communicative practice in a different way. They are not so much concerned with how something is said, but rather with what is or actually can be communicated in a specific context. Thus, this section will not concern itself with the effect of certain linguistic practices on intellectual self-trust but with the effects of structural conditions of communicative situations such as e.g. implicit presuppositions in healthcare discourses and the implicit norms of communicative technologies.

As an example of the effects of implicit discursive presuppositions, consider the problem of the epistemically opaque communicative situation, in which a relative of a potential organ-donor might find herself when she is expected to decide whether or not it would be the potential organ donor's wish to donate. According to Hilbrich and Hansen this situation is epistemically opaque for relatives not only

10. This point has also been made by (Jones 2012), who diagnoses an escalating problem. If a person's view is affirmed due to privileged rather than competence, this will lead to a perpetuation of the established social hierarchy. Excess intellectual self-trust of the privileged conditions further corrosion of the disadvantaged's intellectual self-trust.

because they lack the relevant information about the actual practice of organ-donation and their role as relatives in this practice (Hilbrich and Hansen 2021). Rather the situation is structurally opaque because the relevant information is not officially available - neither for relatives nor for medical professionals that do not happen to be insiders of the organ donation system. As a result, relatives are repelled to their genuine experience of the situation, which does not fit with the official information about how the process of organ donation is organized. This leaves them in a state of insecurity and ambivalence. Given the officially available information that emphasizes the donor's autonomy and a very restricted role for relatives in the decision- making process, they face the question of whether or not to trust their genuine experience. The lack of official venues to communicate these experiences in turn aggravates their situation. The relatives are trapped in a situation in which it is extremely difficult for them to make sense of their experiences and to take action based on them. They are cut off from the possibility to experience themselves as people with relevant knowledge, which in turn deprives them of the possibility to be recognized as knowers. It is this lack of recognition that hampers the intersubjective validation of their experience and thus potentially undermines their trust in their own intellectual faculties.

However, singular acts of misrecognition as a knower do not determine undermined epistemic self-trust. As Hilbrich and Hansen's empirical material reveals there are some more informal venues for relatives to communicate unsettling and ambivalent experiences with the practice of organ-donation. Though the public discourse on organ-donation is shielded from the relatives' experience, Hilbrich and Hansen report that the topic establishes itself among doctors in an information event and observe how a self-help group creates a space for articulating these experiences. However, while these seem to be singular events too limited to challenge the overall structure of the discourse, they nonetheless point out possibilities to make the relative's experiences discernible and to surmount their marginalized discursive position. Sharing one's perspective with others and actually being heard and recognized by them validates a person's experience and can strengthen their intellectual self-trust through providing opportunities to express their beliefs in action and through building confidence in the reliability of her beliefs.

A similar ambivalence with respect to the effects on intellectual self-trust is described in van Grunsven and Roeser's paper. In their case, user's of AAC technologies are described as suffering from the technology's in-built restrictions for authentic self-expression. These restrictions are not only and not primarily due to technical constraints but result from a design that models communication between users of AAC technology and non-disabled people according to the communicative practices of the non-disabled. This is most striking in the case of user's on the autism-spectrum, whose ways of self-expression differ so drastically from those of neurotypical users that the latter, for most part have been unable to conceive of these expressions as interpretable behavior. Hence, even though AAC technologies are meant as a means to foster social inclusion of non-neurotypical persons, they seem to be problematic as a means of self-expression and thus as a means to support the development and maintenance of intellectual self-trust (van Grunsven and Roeser 2021).

Unlike the organ donation case, the problem with AAC technology does not concern a public discourse that lacks venues for the intersubjective validation of experiences that express a particular content. Rather, AAC technology does not allow for the articulation of certain types of subjective experience. Thus, from the perspective of intellectual self-trust, this case differs significantly from the case of organ donation. If intersubjective validation is not only hampered for some experiences but for a whole class of experiences or even for all genuine experiences a certain individual is able to have, the possibility of sharing these experiences is lost in its entirety. Being able to share ones experiences is, however, a precondition for being recognized as a knower. Those who are unable to share their experiences do not even come into view as potential knowers. This kind of social exclusion can also affect the person's relation to their own beliefs. Someone who is unable to share their experiences with others for example lacks an important source for overcoming ambivalences between beliefs and will thus have more problems to consider their beliefs reliable. A further problem is that attempts to articulate beliefs will be a source of disappointing experiences for the individual, as these attempts are likely to be unsuccessful. As a result, this will not only enforce the individual's marginalization, but also affect their attitude toward the epistemic status of their own beliefs. Not being recognized as a being capable of

rational self-expression, is a fundamental threat to self-trust in general and intellectual self-trust in particular.

Fortunately van Grunsven and Roeser offer a route out of these problematic communicative constellations, by providing a new approach to communicative practices between people on the autism-spectrum and neurotypicals. Against the traditional notion of empathy, which denotes a kind of perspective-taking that presupposes a theory of mind and a minimal psychological and cognitive similarity between a speaker and a hearer, they suggest the enactivist notion of participatory sense-making (van Grunsven and Roeser 2021). According to the enactivist approach, living beings are naturally in the business of orienting themselves in the world and thereby to enact and participate in what matters to them. Accordingly their behavior should be interpreted as sense-making behavior that is (at least subjectively) meaningful. Human beings can engage in sense-making activities together, e.g. when they see each other as participants in a shared communicative environment, like children playing together being knights or musicians playing a piece of music. This shared space of meaning requires both parties to interact by being responsive to each other. This responsiveness has a crucial bodily dimension which is expressed in synchronized movements, or tone of voice responsive to the situation, or a certain rhythm of the joint actions. In contrast to empathy, participatory sense-making is not about interpreting the other through imagining what it would be like ‘to be in their shoes’, but about finding a shared space, in which one understands by being open and responsive to the expressions of the other. While participatory sense-making seems promising for overcoming the problems of misrecognition and social exclusion, it is a challenge for our concept of intellectual self-trust that cannot so easily be adapted to the enactivist approach. This is because ‘intellectual self-trust’ denotes a person’s attitude towards her own cognitive states, while sense-making is a practical, outward directed activity. Trust in one’s own intellectual capacities is a mode of representing one’s own intellectual activities and it is, thus, to a large part a contemplative stance. Sense-making instead is a kind of active engagement with one’s environment, something that cannot be grasped as a contemplative stance. Therefore, it is hard to see how beyond the general effect of overcoming social exclusion as a condition for diminished intellectual

self-trust, participatory sense-making could enable or undermine the above conditions for intellectual self-trust.

A similar problem for an analysis of intellectual self-trust can be found in the paper by Mitchell et al. In this paper the authors describe the process of opinion shifts in a heterogenous group of professional health care managers, clinicians and patients through social learning processes that take place within a hybrid forum. The format of the hybrid forum in this particular case follows a special design that is meant to promote practices of ‘dynamic updating’ and ‘deliberative openness’ which should secure the equal consideration and discussion of all represented perspectives (Mitchell et al. 2021). Therefore, from the perspective of intellectual self-trust the relevant question seems to be whether the design of the described hybrid forum is in fact suited to prevent misrecognition of patient perspectives and to promote communicative equality between the participants.

As the author’s report at length, the latter was largely the case. They observed that participants claimed unformed opinions, withheld evaluation of the object under discussion, solicited perspectives from others, and expressed the desire to consider other opinions; activities that were all interpreted as measures for the participants ‘deliberative openness’. Similarly it could be shown that patient narratives played a crucial role as reference points for updating collective opinions at various stages of the process; an observation that was interpreted as a measure for ‘dynamic updating’. The authors show that inclusion of often marginalized groups into hybrid forums alone is insufficient to account for the epistemic function of integrating various perspectives. Communicative practices must also support equal consideration of all opinions within the deliberative process. The design described in their paper seems to support this goal and could thus be understood as a means to overcome social exclusion and to decrease its effects on individual intellectual self-trust.

Thus, all of the above cases show that the right mode of engagement – opening the discourse for unpopular perspectives, engaging in participatory sense-making, and designing hybrid forums such that communicative equality of all participants is secured – will not only serve the quality of collective decisions and the openness and inclusiveness of public discourse. It will also – and perhaps even more

– counter the persistent threat of misrecognition and thus contribute to the development and maintenance of intellectual self-trust on the individual level.

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