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**INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER AND EPISTEMIC VICE IN
CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF
MARK ALFANO'S VIRTUE EPISTEMOLOGY**

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Abstract

This study critically examines intellectual character and epistemic vice in contemporary Nigeria through Mark Alfano's situationist critique of responsibilist virtue epistemology. The study addresses the philosophical problem of whether stable intellectual character can adequately explain epistemic behaviour when individuals are significantly influenced by social and situational conditions. It adopts analytic and critical methods, drawing on philosophical literature and relevant scholarly studies to examine intellectual virtue, epistemic vice, epistemic responsibility, and epistemic situationism. The study argues that Alfano's framework provides a valuable account of the situational factors that influence epistemic conduct, but its explanatory capacity is limited when applied to the complex cultural, institutional, political, and digital realities of contemporary Nigeria. Misinformation, political manipulation, corruption, academic dishonesty, prejudice, and irresponsible digital communication demonstrate that epistemic vices are produced and reinforced through interactions between individual dispositions and social environments. The study therefore contends that intellectual character should not be understood solely as an individual possession but as a disposition shaped and exercised within particular social contexts. It concludes that developing an epistemically virtuous Nigerian society requires both the cultivation of individual intellectual virtues and institutional conditions that promote epistemic responsibility, critical inquiry, intellectual humility, and commitment to truth.

Keywords: Intellectual Character; Epistemic Vice; Virtue Epistemology; Epistemic Responsibility; Epistemic Humility.

Introduction

Beliefs and evidence do not produce knowledge alone, but are also influenced by the intellectual nature of the persons who question, evaluate, explain, and react to arguments. Virtue epistemology thus puts intellectual virtues at the heart of epistemological inquiry by considering, among others, "open-mindedness, intellectual courage, intellectual humility and intellectual conscientiousness" as conditions of a responsible inquiry (Baehr 1-16). Zagzebski's conception of virtue is a "deep and enduring acquired excellence" that is tied to one's character in the sense that it has to do with the characteristic motivation and reliable success of certain activities (137). In this context, intellectual vices like dogmatism, prejudice, gullibility, closed-mindedness and negligence are dispositions that hinder efficient inquiry (Cassam 159–60). The issues are especially critical for the current Nigerian context, where politics, religion, culture, and digital spaces shape the processes of claim production, circulation, acceptance, and rejection. The type of understanding that people have, then, is worth studying from a philosophical perspective, as is their social environment in which their beliefs are generated.

The main philosophical question is whether the conduct of the intellect is sufficient to determine the behavior of the intellect in a situation where situational circumstances strongly influence the conduct of the intellect. Mark Alfano's findings challenge to the assumption that people always possess and exercise stable intellectual virtues comes from social psychology (223–34). But if normal epistemic behavior is largely situation-specific, then the explanatory value of character-based virtue epistemology is called into question. Cassam also suggests that the intellectual vices are character traits that can hinder effective and responsible inquiry (159–60). The issue, then, is to understand intellectual virtue and vice in the context of complex social and epistemic environments in Nigeria and when individual dispositions are interacting with them.

This study is a critical examination of Alfano's account of intellectual character and epistemic vice as it relates to present-day Nigeria. In particular, it will discuss Alfano's challenge to virtue epistemology, describe and explain the nature and role of epistemic virtues and vices, and evaluate the extent to which Alfano's system is appropriate for understanding epistemic conduct in the Nigerian context.

Literature Review

Virtue Epistemology

Virtue epistemology is a turn away from justifying and evidencing beliefs to considering the intellectual traits of the person who believes. It is connected with Ernest Sosa's virtue-realist theory and subsequent character-based theories that focus the epistemological inquiry on intellectual virtues. In this work, Zagzebski builds up a full-fledged virtue-theoretic theory, and intellectual virtues play a role in the epistemic success both as motivators and as reliable means of achieving it (137). Baehr's argument sets out to differentiate the character-based virtue epistemology from theories about virtue seen primarily as the reliable cognitive faculty, emphasizing that the object of epistemological research is to be intellectual character (1–16).

Intellectual Virtue and Intellectual Character

Intellectual virtue is related to dispositions that facilitate individuals in asking questions in a responsible way, and to help them overcome obstacles to truth-seeking questions. Baehr argues that there are many facets to intellectual virtue, and inquisitiveness, open-mindedness, intellectual courage, carefulness and thoroughness are all central examples (17–32). His distinction between virtues, faculties, talents, temperaments, and skills is important because it restricts virtue to the domain of intellectual agency and character. Virtue, according to Zagzebski, is also an acquired and sustained excellence of the person and is also focused on intellectual character in the context of epistemic assessment (137). These stories imply that knowing isn't just about having right beliefs; it's also about gaining the right intellectual habits.

Epistemic Vice

The literature on epistemic vice is designed to fill out virtue epistemology by focusing on character traits that obstruct responsible inquiry. Gullibility, dogmatism, prejudice, closed-mindedness and negligence are identified as major intellectual vices and intellectual character vices are described as dispositions that obstruct good and responsible inquiry (159–60). What is of importance to Alfano's project is his approach, showing that the assessment of the epistemological value must take into consideration the intellectual defects as well as the intellectual excellence. Furthermore, Cassam claims that these situationist criticisms do not rule out the importance of intellectual vices, making it an important point of contact between virtue and situationist epistemology.

Individual and Social Epistemic Practices.

It is a commonplace in contemporary epistemology that epistemic practice takes place in social relations and within institutional settings. As the reader will see, Fricker's theory of epistemic injustice is an illustration of situations in which people are wronged in a way that is specifically as knowers: when they suffer from a credibility deficit caused by prejudice (20). The social dimension makes it hard to tell a strictly individualistic story of intellectual character, as beliefs and epistemic practices emerge in the context of interaction with other knowers, institutions and cultural contexts. The study of intellectual vice and virtue, therefore, must not only focus on the dispositions of individuals in modern Nigeria, but the social environment that promotes, inhibits, and/or misleads epistemic practices. This literature is the basis for critically examining the adequacy of Alfano's situationist challenge in explaining the intellectual characters and epistemic conduct in contemporary Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Mark Alfano's situationist critique of responsibilist virtue epistemology (2012) is used as the main theoretical framework in this study. The framework is suitable since the study focuses on whether the intellectual character can be sufficient to explain epistemic behaviour in Nigeria's contemporary society, given that the human individual's behaviour is also shaped by social and situational factors. Typically, virtue epistemology includes a component that judges epistemic agents partially on their intellectual virtues, which are acquired excellences that can help them be responsibly engaged in inquiry and achieve epistemic goods. While some approaches focus on reliable cognitive capabilities, the need for the epistemological study of intellectual character and its virtues is an independent one, according to Baehr (1–16). The intellectual virtues consist of such characteristics as open-mindedness, intellectual courage, inquisitiveness, and carefulness, which help agents overcome obstacles in the process of inquiry (17–32).

Alfano's situationist approach poses a major challenge to this character-based approach. In this analysis, the intellectual virtues play a significant role in the exercise of epistemic success in responsibilist virtue epistemology. But Alfano asserts, citing evidence from the field of cognitive and social psychology, that the situational factors can be very powerful determinants of human behavior. He proposes the problem as an apparent conflict between the claim that people have a lot of knowledge and the responsibilist claim that knowledge is the product of intellectual virtue and the situationist claim that most people do not consistently have the intellectual virtues that are necessary for responsibilism. (Alfano 223–25) It is the role of his position to ask whether the intellectual virtues can be seen as good dispositions that will reliably account for epistemic behaviour.

Alfano's theoretical contribution to this study is that it links individual intellectual types to social and environmental factors. If the nature of epistemic conduct is somewhat situationally determined, then intellectual virtues and vices can not be investigated alone in terms of persons. Instead, there may be factors going on in the political world, religious commitments, expectations, interpersonal relationships, institutional settings, and contemporary information technologies that account for how epistemic agents react to evidence and disagreement. If, however, the responsibilist virtue

epistemology cannot support any account of epistemic situationism, then the standard version of responsibilist virtue epistemology needs to be modified or abandoned, Alfano maintains (246–47). This study, for this reason, adopts the Alfano's framework, not in a descriptive manner, but critically. It questions whether his challenge via the situationists is sufficient for the analysis of intellectual virtue and epistemic vice in the current epistemic practices of Nigeria and explores the question, “Is a socially situated analysis of intellectual character needed?” The framework thus serves as an idea to state the relationship between character, situation, virtue and vice as well as epistemic responsibility in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study employed analytic and critical approaches in investigating Alfano's situationist critique of responsibilist virtue epistemology and its implications for contemporary Nigerian epistemic practices. It was a descriptive survey based on the analysis of material found in books and articles. The study made use of related philosophical concepts such as intellectual virtue, intellectual character, epistemic vice, and responsibility, and critically examined them, along with Alfano's views. The application of Alfano's critique was also examined in relation to some epistemic issues in Nigeria such as false information, political manipulation, corruption, examination malpractice, prejudices, and digital information practices among Nigerians.

Mark Alfano's Virtue Epistemology

Alfano's Account of Intellectual Character

Mark Alfano's work in virtue epistemology is most focused on the question of what role intellectual character can play as a reliable account of epistemic behaviour. According to the character-based virtue epistemology, intellectual attributes of agents, not the attributes of their beliefs, are what should be taken into account when evaluating them in terms of their epistemic function. (Baehr 1-16) Zagzebski also understands virtue as a developed and sustained excellence of appropriate motivation and success (137). Alfano questions the stability of these properties as a basis for human epistemic behaviour. According to his formulation in 2012, the “inconsistent triad” consists of the idea of the substantial knowledge that people have, the idea that people learn their knowledge through intellectual virtue, and the idea that most people do not have the stable intellectual virtues that are required for responsibilism (Alfano 223–25). It is not because intellectual virtues are conceptually meaningless that he takes concern, but because empirical psychology makes it difficult for them to be considered as stable explanations of conduct.

Intellectual Virtues and Epistemic Achievement

It is the connection between intellectual virtue and epistemic achievement which is the focus of Alfano's criticism. In responsibilist approaches, virtues are interpreted as dispositions of character, via which agents can be epistemically responsible for their cognitive actions. Baehr defines intellectual virtues as dispositions that enable agents who face obstacles during inquiry (17–32); and Sosa defines epistemic competence as the reliable capacity of an agent to come to the truth by performing the relevant cognitive activities in an appropriate way (22–24). Both approaches are complicated by Alfano's situationist argument, which questions the relation between virtues of epistemic behaviour and lasting character. Social psychological evidence indicates that seemingly insignificant situational considerations can have a profound effect on human behaviour (Alfano 225–32). Thus, one might be intellectually courageous or open-minded in one setting, and not so in another. This gives rise to an important issue about whether this achievement is due to stable character or situational influences or to a combination of both.

Epistemic Vice in Alfano's Framework

Alfano's critique extends beyond epistemic virtue, however, to epistemic vice. Cassam describes dogmatism, gullibility, prejudice, closed-mindedness as intellectual vices that interfere with efficient and responsible investigation (159–60). Battaly also notes that epistemic vice refers to “vices of the

intellect” that are “defective in some way that hampers the quest for epistemic goods” (231–32). But Alfano’s situationism makes the idea that such deficiencies are all to do with a person’s character extremely complex. Whether behaviour differs markedly from situation to situation, one event of gullibility or dogmatism will not prove a settled vice. However, behaviour that is situationally cued can lead to the maintenance and development of dispositional behaviour. Epistemic vice thus needs to be studied in terms of the dynamic between individual dispositions and contexts in which they are manifested.

Social Dimensions of Intellectual Character

Also, intellectual type is socially conditioned. Fricker shows that social prejudice can affect people in particular ways as knowers creating a kind of epistemic injustice, one that isn’t just a matter of cognitive failure (20). Medina also claims that social power relations and epistemic practices that distribute credibility and knowledge play a role in shaping epistemic agency (28–29). They add to Alfano’s situationist understanding by demonstrating how epistemic behaviour takes place in social environments. Intellectual virtues can be fostered in educational institutions, political communities, religious communities, the family and digitally, while epistemic vices can be reinforced in all these places. The concept of intellectual character must thus be understood not only as an internal trait but also in terms of its exercise and development in specific social contexts.

Alfano within Contemporary Virtue Epistemology

Alfano takes a crucial critical stance on the contemporary virtue epistemology because he sees the normative analyses of intellectual character in the light of the empirical facts concerning human conduct. If the thesis of epistemic situationism is right, then responsibilist virtue epistemology needs to be significantly transformed or abandoned (Alfano 246–49). His later *Character as Moral Fiction* continues the situationist critique of intellectual virtue, having an entire chapter devoted to responsibilist virtue epistemology (111–38). The challenge does not entirely preclude the role of intellectual virtues in epistemology, but it does call for a more conservative understanding of their role. Furthermore, even the ‘stability’ of intellectual dispositions is doubted, they continue to be philosophically relevant as a matter of character-based virtue epistemology and as a matter of analysis of epistemic vice (Baehr 191–205; Cassam 159–60). Alfano’s contribution is thus best grasped as a significant reconstruction of virtue epistemology, that is, one that regards both the nature of intellectual character and the contexts in which intellectual character is manifested. This offers an important theoretical framework for a reflection on current epistemic practices in Nigeria, in which individual dispositions are continually expressed in relation to the social, cultural, political and technological environment.

Epistemic Vices In Contemporary Nigerian Society

Misinformation and Gullibility

Misinformation is a major epistemic issue of the present day as its uptake is often a result of poor critical analysis of information. A study of social-media users in Nigeria also suggests that increasing intensity and virality of social media, social networks, and entertainment motivations can speed up the spread of misinformation (Apuke 307–22). Such a condition could foster epistemological gullibility – an undue tendency to take the word of others on trust without considering it carefully. This, from Alfano’s situationist outlook, implies that epistemic vices can be caused not just by individual disposition, but also by environments that promote quick sharing and emotional involvement.

Manipulation and Dogmatism.

Epistemic vice can be exacerbated by political communication in which allegiance to political groups exceeds critical evaluation of evidence. Ethnic-centricity, scapegoating, fear appeals, and emotional rhetoric are some of the strategies employed in online political discourse, as identified in recent research on the 2023 Lagos governorship election (Ademosu et al.). Such activities may foster

dogmatism, especially if people reject counter-evidential information due to party loyalty. Political manipulation thus shows that Alfano is not only interested in intellectual stability, but in social conditions as well, in the influence social conditions can have on epistemic conduct.

Corruption and dishonesty with effort of intelligence

When people knowingly alter, hide or deliberately misrepresent information to their own or an organization's benefit, there is an epistemic dimension to corruption. Intellectual dishonesty is defined as a lack of "respect for inquiry that is truth-directed" and thus is a type of epistemic vice. In the Nigerian context, this problem manifests in various forms such as research misconduct, which has been linked to the fabrication, falsification and plagiarism associated with pressuring for publication and lack of research-ethics knowledge (Adeleye and Adebamowo 15-20). This is against the individual's intellectual integrity and the production of institutional knowledge.

Academic Dishonesty and Research Misconduct

Academic dishonesty is another example of the connection between epistemic character and institutional pressures. The common types of examination malpractice, plagiarism, fabrication and falsification were observed during the examination process in the Nigerian universities and fear of failure and peer pressure were put as important factors (Orok et al. 1-16). Likewise, Okonta and Rossouw reported significant self-reported scientific misconduct among biologists in Nigeria such as authorship disagreements, falsification, plagiarism and misrepresentation (149-57). The results lend weight to a situation-sensitive account of epistemic vice, and suggest that the dispositions that lead to faulty thinking can be reinforced in institutional contexts.

Tribalism, Religious Intolerance and Prejudice

When the credibility of a person or claim is dependent on their tribal or religious identity, this poses epistemic issues of tribalism and religious intolerance. A study of Nigerian electoral discourse discovered in-group ostracisation, stereotyping and demonisation of religious other as a form of othering (Chigbu, Aboh and Ganaah 39-59). These practices are similar to epistemic prejudice in that they are based on group identity and not on the relevant evidence. They consequently undermine open-mindedness, fairness, and intellectual humility.

Online media and epistemic responsibility

Digital media exacerbate the demand for epistemic responsibility because people are now both consumers and distributors of information. While there are informal verification methods among Nigerians, formal fact-checking is still sparse and political, religious, ethnic and economic misinformation is rife (Ogbodo et al.). Epistemic responsibility thus asks users to assess sources, to distinguish evidence from assertion, and to not pass on unverified claims. The way epistemic virtues and vices are realized in the contemporary Nigerian context is therefore a dynamic between individuals' attitudes and their surrounding contexts.

A Critical Application Of Alfano's Virtue Epistemology To Nigeria

Education

Intellectual character in Nigerian education is a theme that can be explored from Alfano's situationist challenge. Intellectual virtues like curiosity, open-mindedness, intellectual courage and conscientiousness are among the most important factors in meaningful learning, and their expression is partly a product of the educational environment. Baehr claims that intellectual virtues facilitate a responsible inquiry, and Alfano asks whether these dispositions are stable in contexts (Baehr 17-32; Alfano 223-25). Nigerian education should hence create not just academic success, but an environment where questioning, logical reasoning and intellectual autonomy are inculcated at every step of schooling.

Democratic Governance

To uphold democratic governance, citizens and political institutions need to have the ability to make rational assessments of competing claims. Alfano, however, proposes that social pressures and group loyalties might have a more significant effect on political behaviour than would stable intellectual virtues. In Nigeria, this is especially important as it has been observed that political disinformation circulates and affects public trust, electoral practices, and democratic processes (Akinola, Adewumi and Ijaiya). Institutions and civic cultures which encourage critical engagement and not partisan conformity are, therefore, essential to developing epistemically responsible citizens.

Corruption

Another perspective on corruption is the connection between intellectual and moral character. While corruption is not itself an epistemic vice, concealment, deception, rationalisation and manipulation of information can have a negative effect on epistemic responsibility. In Alfano's situationism, it is valuable to consider institutional contexts that can create and normalise dysfunctional behaviours. It is therefore appropriate to look into the Nigerian corruption phenomenon not as a personal misconduct on the part of individuals, but as a result of organisational cultures, incentives, and inadequate accountability mechanisms. Such a tension between the ethical ideals and institutional practices has also been identified recently in the public and religious life in Nigeria (Nkpe 46-58).

Digital Information

Perhaps the most obvious and contemporary example of Alfano's framework in the digital world is the concept of "information literacy. The digital environment offers one of the clearest examples of Alfano's framework in contemporary use: the idea of "information literacy. Political propaganda, provocation of religious and ethnic groups and rumours about the economy are among the disinformation Nigerian internet users are increasingly facing. Evidence from the different geopolitical zones of Nigeria has shown that disinformation is now a commonplace phenomenon among social media users, and formal fact-checking is still relatively limited (Ogbodo et al.). Alfano's situationism implies that the responsibility for the epistemic commitment isn't only that of individuals who embody stable virtues; "digital platforms can be designed to foster and promote the rapid dissemination of ideas, emotional reactions and conformity". Media literacy, source evaluation and institutional fact-checking should therefore be part of individual intellectual virtue.

Communal Identity and Epistemic Responsibility

The communal identity is more relevant to epistemic responsibility in Nigeria due to its ethnic and religious diversity. In the case of the Nigerian study, the researchers found that the disinformation found on social media can exacerbate existing ethnic and religious divides (Hassan). In a community where loyalty to the community is a standard criterion for accepting or rejecting claims, the importance of intellectual virtues like open-mindedness and fairness may be undermined. Alfano's perspective allows taking a step back from the notion that all epistemic failures are the result of bad character to examine the social situations that give rise to such responses. Epistemic responsibility, then, involves the act of recognising the potential for bias within one's own community, and assessing claims in light of relevant evidence, not community identity.

The limits of Alfano's Framework

However, Alfano's framework does have its drawbacks when used for Nigeria. He is developing his situationist argument, mostly by engaging with psychological evidence, and with Western debates about responsibilist virtue epistemology (Alfano 223-49). It thus fails to give any comprehensive description of Nigeria's historical, cultural, institutional or communal situation. Further, by presenting behaviour in terms of situations, there is a risk of minimizing responsibility and the moral significance of developing the intellectual virtues. A full account of the situationally influenced nature of a Nigerian account must therefore take into account the principles of social epistemology, epistemic injustice and African philosophy on communal knowledge. Alfano's framework is

therefore best understood more as a necessary point of departure than as a theory of Nigerian epistemic life. It is its best trait that it deems the study of intellectual character to be of the agent only in the context of the environments in which the agent thinks, communicates, and acts.

TOWARDS AN EPISTEMICALLY VIRTUOUS NIGERIAN SOCIETY

More than just access to information is needed for an epistemically virtuous Nigerian society. It demands people and institutions of integrity in search of the truth, balanced appraisal of evidence, recognition of difficulties and errors and the ability to correct them. Alfano's challenge is especially apposite because it shows that epistemic behavior depends on more than just one's personality; it also depends on the contexts in which a personality is put to the test (Alfano 223–32). There is a need to focus attention on the three elements of personal character, institutional structures, and social practices in order to promote the cultivation of epistemic virtue in Nigeria.

Education and Intellectual Character

Education is the most basic context in which to build intellectual character. Curiosity, open-mindedness, intellectual courage, and intellectual humility are the intellectual virtues that help the student to engage in questions in a critical rather than merely replicating others' thoughts (Baehr 17–32). The Nigerian educational environment should therefore shift the focus from examination-centred learning to pedagogical practices that promote questioning and reasoned disagreements, independent investigation, and evidence-based judgement. Because Alfano provides a case study of how intellectual conduct is responsive to context, it is important to repeatedly instill habits of intellectual virtue in students' education, but not rely on the hope that a single course in critical thinking is enough to secure intellectual virtue for life (233–40). Academic integrity policies should also come with cultures that promote academic integrity and not simply the punishment of academic misconduct.

Institutional Epistemic Responsibility

Epistemic responsibility does not stop at individual knowers, but should be applied to institutions that generate, gather and disseminate information. Universities, government agencies, media and professional bodies have roles to play in ensuring procedures are in place for the assessment and rectification of evidence. As Fricker shows, epistemic injustice is a product of institutional practices that can lead to credibility shortfalls and marginalisation of knowers (20–29). Nigerian institutions should thus put in place clear protocols for corroborating claims, rectifying misinformation, shielding whistleblowers and giving proper consideration to relevant voices. From a situationist point of view, designing institutions is an important topic because circumstances can facilitate or hinder virtuous actions.

Digital Citizenship

Digital citizenship has become a significant part of epistemic responsibility; users of social media are now both recipients and interpreters and distributors of information. Studies in Nigeria have shown that social media platforms can potentially spread misinformation quickly, especially when emotional and social factors influence social sharing (Apuke et al., 307–22). The epistemically responsible digital citizen should, therefore, check the facts before sharing, be able to identify the difference between evidence and opinion, consult reputable sources, and be prepared to revise previously accepted information. The epistemic virtues should therefore be included in digital literacy programmes and not just technical skills.

Virtue-Based Leadership

Another avenue for fostering epistemic virtue is leadership. The epistemic environments in which citizens form judgments are shaped by political and institutional leaders. Healthy epistemic cultures are fostered by leaders who welcome evidence, acknowledge problems, allow for disagreements, and distinguish truth from propaganda. On the other hand, there are leaders who distort facts or stifle dissent, who can foster and legitimise epistemic sins like dishonesty, dogmatism and intellectual

arrogance. In both cases, Zagzebski highlights the role of stable dispositions in relation to appropriate ends (137–38), whereas Alfano’s situationism reminds us that institutional contexts can have a strong effect on the expression of such dispositions (Alfano 225–32). Virtuous leadership is thus both personal and institutional, and requires the presence of both good character and institutions which enable responsible epistemic acts.

Individual virtue and institutional reform.

If individual character can be integrated with institutional reform, then it is an epistemically virtuous Nigeria that will emerge. The individual intellectual virtues are essential to any culture, but they cannot thrive in cultures where dishonesty, misinformation, intolerance, or conformity is rewarded. Again, if there is no responsible citizen, the institutional reform may not lead to an effect that is durable in terms of epistemic improvement. The reasons for which epistemic vice is analytically worthy of direct attention, and for which it is also analytically worthy of consideration in relation to circumstances, are revealed in Cassam’s analysis of epistemic vice, and in Alfano’s situationism. For a sustainable epistemic culture, however, there needs to be reciprocity; that is, Intellectual Virtues need to be developed in individuals, and conditions need to be developed in institutions that foster their exercise. The objective is not just to have an information-rich population, but to have a population that is socially nurtured to believe that it is acceptable to seek and find the truth, to be humble in thought, to disagree responsibly and responsibly, and to evaluate statements based on evidence.

Conclusion

This study examined Mark Alfano’s virtue-epistemological account of intellectual character and epistemic vice in contemporary Nigerian society. The study found that intellectual virtues are indeed critical in epistemology for promoting responsible intellectual conduct. The study highlighted epistemic dimensions of open-mindedness, intellectual courage, intellectual humility, and intellectual conscientiousness. However, Alfano’s situationist critique of intellectual character is a reminder that epistemic behavior is not always reflective of one’s inner character. Intellectual virtues and vices are often situational, depending on the social environment in which they are enacted.

When applied to Nigeria, this study finds that the prevalence of misinformation, political manipulations, corruption, academic dishonesty, prejudice, and digital irresponsibility is partly explained by situational factors. It means that epistemic vice is not exclusively a function of individual character. It is also influenced by institutions, political cultures, communal relations, pedagogy, and digital technology. Fricker’s concept of testimonial injustice shows how social systems can gaslight individuals based on their social category, thereby committing an epistemic wrong against them. It means that Nigeria needs to invest in education, institutional reforms, digital literacy, and leadership in cultivating an epistemically virtuous society. Alfano’s account of intellectual character is therefore most useful in this study as a theoretical background to understanding the factors that condition epistemic behavior in Nigerian society.

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