Intellectual humility: benefits of being open-minded

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Abstract
Being open to ideas and experiences has far more consequences on society's progress. Leaders at scientific and administrative bodies put themselves in a mindset where new ideas and opposing views are welcomed and discussed. The ancient Bhagavad Gita has also laid importance on being humble to remain pertinent to true knowledge. Intellectual humility is the ability to be open to different points of view and admit that one's beliefs and opinions might be wrong. It is also the foundation of critical thinking, which helps us become more consistent and tolerant instead of just open-minded. Research shows that intellectual humility makes people more prosocial. Open-mindedness is a corrective virtue that helps individuals to become flexible in cognitive affairs and, therefore, more defiant to recommendations and manipulations. Being open-minded leaves us with choices, uncertainties and opportunities to cope with the catastrophes and challenges of life by undertaking unconventional means. A big part of education is to teach students how to be productive when they don't know something. Intellectual humility has become an important trait in the new social science of character. Research suggests that changing the way people think about their own intelligence might be a good way to encourage intellectual humility.
Keywords: Intellectual humility, open-mindedness, virtue, tolerance

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I.   Introduction

"I could be wrong, but…" was a starter in almost every speech of Benjamin Franklin in his long political career in the United States which essentially turned the disagreement of people opposing his ideas and beliefs less personal (Snow, 2018). It has been seen since time immemorial that being open to ideas and experiences has far more consequences on society's progress and is likely to be associated with lesser agitation, unrest and doubts. Often leaders at scientific and administrative bodies put themselves in a mindset where new ideas and opposing views are welcomed and discussed, resulting in elevated performance and productivity. Religious leaders frequentlyperceives the confession of people for their transgression as an opportunity to revise the sinful soul and rebuild a better person (Hook et al., 2015). Medical professionals disconnect their ego and personal beliefs while treatingsevere health conditions and seek help from experts and advanced medical technologies to remain perseverant towards the patient's well-being. Even legal practitioners search for criticisms and opinions from others in dealing with obscurity to maintain accountability of the judicial system (Miller, 2021). We have seen entrepreneurs like Ratan Tataand Bill Gates,who have always put forth the value of humility and generosity while approaching new ideas, irrespective of the source. The ancient Bhagavad Gita has also laid importance on being humble to remain pertinent to true knowledge and thereby obtain wisdom "The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater.." (*Bhagavad Gita 5.18*, 2012).

As most of us see ourselves carrying vessels of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and capabilities, which we are skeptical of being challenged, threatened and revised, we miss the opportunity to see the endless possibilities in the world. We make agreements with ideas that are close to our own, approach and make relations with people who are like us, do things we believe to be appropriate, stay among people who comfort us, and that is not wrong, per se. But in securing comfort, we make bubbles around us that we merely break apart and let others and their ideas in whether it be better than ours. This has happened everywhere since we started living in groups within a society, restricting it to the vow of norms and standards.

But evidence shows people with flexibility and openness frequently challenge their positions and renounce whatever they believe to be true in times of change, emergency and survival as they learn over time. These people make the most positive difference in the world and can discern when they need to change and be brave enough to do so even when the cost is high(*Intellectual Humility*, n.d.-b). What leads them to do so, even

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in uncertain times, was a question asked for many decades in leadership, organizational behaviour, psychology and many others. And here comes thevirtue of intellectual humility,where the above examples fit in. Being etymologically rooted in different philosophies around the world, this one quality we are to thrive for revising our viewpointstowards self and others (*Intellectual Humility*, n.d.-a).

Intellectual humility

"A great man is always willing to be little" are the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson which encompass the idea of intellectual humility as a shared quality of great personalities worldwide. Whether scientists, political leaders, spiritual sages, or corporate tycoons, we all have limits to the way we think, but those who are aware of them are much better at anything. Intellectual humility is the acquired ability to be open to different points of view and to admit that one's own beliefs and opinions might be wrong. This is not something people are born with, but it is something they can certainly give themselves. In other words, intellectual humility is knowing how much you don't know and being able to appreciate how smart other people are. It is also the foundation of critical thinking, which helps us become more consistent and tolerant instead of just open-minded. Intellectual courage and intellectual empathy, which are parts of intellectual humility, make people more likely to work together, so they learn important skills for being happy in a democratic society. In secular civilizations with many different cultures and religions, every future citizen needs to practice tolerance. Research shows that intellectual humility makes people more prosocial (Krumrei-Mancuso, 2017), open to different points of view(Porter & Schumann, 2018), social (Bąk et al., 2022), religiously tolerant (Hook et al., 2017), forgiveness and empathic concern and a better person overall(*What Is Intellectual Humility?*, n.d.). The reason behind it may be attributed to the factors underlying intellectual humility as defined by Mancuso and Rouse, which are respect towards viewpoints of others, absence of intellectual overconfidence, separation of ego from intellect and willingness to revise own viewpoint. In other words, intellectual humility is "a non-threatening awareness of one's intellectual fallibility" (Krumrei-Mancuso & Rouse, 2016), a perception that one's knowledge and belief can be proven wrong at any point in time under specific circumstances. It helps people admit their fallibility of being wrong and gives endless opportunities to make it right and adapt to a growth mindset rather than clinging toa fixed mindset (Porter, 2015).

Roots and correlates

Following Aristotelian ethics, amoral virtue like intellectual humilityfalls between two vices,i.e., intellectual arrogance and intellectual gullibility,the same as courage stands between cowardliness and recklessness. The concept of intellectual humility varies across theorists, and some call it a personality trait, intellectual tempers, and others call it a self-regulatory habit (*What Is Intellectual Humility?*, n.d.). Still, whatever it is named, the essence remainsthe same which is an intellectual virtue and a matter of metacognition (Krumrei-Mancuso et al., 2020).Earlier, it was only a concern in religious philosophies until psychologists showed some interest in how it develops and affects other domains of behaviour and learning. Porter et al., (2022) matrixeda few studies tracing the correlates of intellectual humility and found positive associations with psychological constructs like need for closure (Porter & Schumann, 2018), modesty (Alfano et al., 2017), openness to experience(Haggard et al., 2018), general humility(Krumrei-Mancuso & Rouse, 2016), epistemic curiosity(Krumrei-Mancuso et al., 2020), growth mindset (Porter et al., 2020) and negative associations with narcissism (Leary et al., 2017),need for cognition(Davis et al., 2016), dogmatism (Christen et al., 2019) and neuroticism (Brienza et al., 2018).

Heuristics, biases, and intellectual humility

People can't do rational calculations because their brains aren't powerful enough. Instead, they use shortcuts that are prone to mistakes, which we call "heuristics." One version of this perspective says that even when people could optimize, or figure out the best decision, they often use heuristics instead to save time at the cost of some accuracy. The first one assumes that we can't find the best solution, and the second one is a practical decision that it might not be worth our time. Both assumptions are based on the idea that accuracy and effort are trade-offs: the less information, computation, or time we use, the less accurate our judgments will be. Researchers think that this trade-off is one of the few general laws of the mind that leads to cognitive bias. It is a pattern of wrong thinking that happens when people try to understand and make sense of the world around them. It affects the decisions and judgments they make.

The human brain is robust, but it has its limits. Cognitive biases often happen because our brains try to make processing information easier. Biases are often like rules of thumb that help us understand the world and make decisions quickly. Confirmation bias, self-serving bias, and myside bias are among many that people commonly commit, which can directly be challenged by virtue of intellectual humility. As found in these types of biases, people's inclination towards their own arguments, beliefs and knowledge are major factors which can be taken care of by acceptance of the idea of being wrong, incomplete and little. As biases lead to deceptive

decisions followed by fatal consequences, we must embrace intellectual humility in people so that decisions are rightly taken or rightly proven to be existent.

Benefits of being open-minded

The words of Charles Kettering "People are very open-minded about new things…as long as they're exactly like the old ones!" denotes people's general fallibility in searching for new and unconventional alternatives to certain things or actions. This limits our opportunities to make life different (usually better; or worse, in some cases) than it would have been. Our inclination towards our own belief, goals or plans consistently pushes us not to take a chance or break to explore new choices, beliefs, and practices. It keeps us under a bubble of comfort zones, safe sides which, when crisis arises, breaks apart into fragments turning our lives vulnerable. On the other hand, being open-minded leaves us with choices, uncertainties and opportunities to cope with the catastrophes and challenges of life by undertaking unconventional means resulting in increased resilience. Open-mindedness is a corrective virtue that helps individuals to become flexible in cognitive affairs and, therefore, more defiant to recommendations and manipulations. It has also been found to impact performance, exposure and prophecy in achieving long-term goals.Research shows that Open-mindedness is a subset of intellectual humility,broadly demonstrating people's adaptiveness to cognitive activities resulting in better decision-making. Therefore, intellectual humility and open-mindedness are intertwined in such a manner that is inseparable in explaining the concepts.

II.   Discussion

A big part of the point of education is to teach students things so they can have informed conversations or do well on tests. But for education to be successful and for students to do well in the classroom and in life, it can be just as important to teach them how to be productive when they don't know something. Intellectual humility, which means knowing what you don't know and being willing to learn from others, has become one of the most important character traits in the new social science of character (*Promoting Intellectual Humility in Classrooms*, n.d.). So, if intellectual humility makes people more open to different points of view, are there ways to get more of it? A lot of research suggests that the way people think about their own intelligence might be a good way to encourage intellectual humility. A "growth mindset" about intelligence is the belief that one's intelligence can change and grow. This helps develop many qualities that are thought to be linked to intellectual humility, such as more motivation to learn, less defensiveness, and a more accurate sense of one's knowledge and abilities (Ehrlinger et al., 2016). A fixed mindset about intelligence, on the other hand, which is the belief that intelligence can't change, could hurt intellectual humility by making people more self-centered and defensive (Nussbaum & Dweck, 2008).

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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