

Pharmacological cognitive enhancement and virtue epistemology

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Abstract: According to one prominent position in mainstream epistemology—*virtue epistemology*—(e.g., Sosa 2007; 2011; 2015; Greco 1999; 2003; 2010; 2012; Zagzebski 1996) propositional knowledge is essentially a kind of cognitive *achievement*, i.e., a cognitive success (i.e., a true belief) that is primarily because of, or creditable to, the subject's exercise of intellectual virtue or ability. Given that the latest science and medicine has made it increasingly possible to enhance cognitive functioning beyond normal healthy levels through nootropic 'smart drugs' (e.g., Ritalin, Adderall; Modafinil) that affect motivation, attention and working memory (e.g., Persson and Savulescu 2012; Sandberg and Bostrom 2006; Carter and Pritchard 2017), an important and thus far largely unexplored question surfaces: are beliefs formed via the use of smart drugs creditable to our virtues or *abilities*? Alternatively, are beliefs formed in this way externally influenced in such a way that they are *de facto* not achievements creditable to us, and thus, not *knowledge* by the lights of virtue epistemology? In this paper, I aim to explore such questions in a way that draws from recent work in mainstream epistemology, bioethics, and the philosophy of mind and cognitive science.