

Tutorial Activity 3 - Epistemic Value

1. Evidence and Responsibility:

Discuss/Answer in Groups: One standard of proof in law, at least in the United States and the United Kingdom, is the *Preponderance of Evidence* standard, which is typically taken to mean that one's evidence is good enough for conviction if the probability that one's judgment of guilt is more likely true on the evidence than false ($<.5$). Now consider the following example:

Prisoners: 100 prisoners are mingling in a prison yard. Suddenly, 99 of them attack the guards, putting into action a plan that the 100th prisoner knew absolutely nothing about; she played no role in the assault and could have done nothing to stop it. No one can tell exactly who was doing what.

Suppose the prison warden chooses 1 out of the 100 prisoners in the yard at random and punishes them. Would this be epistemically justified—and would it be just? Explain what you think about this and why below:

2. Education and epistemic value

Education seems to have *epistemic* aims. As educators, we not only want to produce people who can pass tests, or who can be obedient, but who manifest epistemically good qualities and habits. Motivate some epistemic goals of education below (i.e., list two epistemic goals and explain why you chose them).

3. The value of truth I

Someone is epistemically *insouciant* just in case they don't care about the truth. In particular, they speak freely but are casually indifferent to the truth. Do you think that insouciance is manifest in today's politics, media or within society at large? Recently, Professor Quassim Cassam (Warwick University) has suggested that many politicians treat truth as "boring". He says: "Politicians who rely on evidence or experts in formulating their policies are likely to fail when confronted by

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opponents who don't feel the need to burden themselves with such matters" ([Cassam 2018](#)). Should truth matter to us—is epistemic insouciance a bad thing?

Explain why you think so or why you don't:

4. The value of truth II

Discuss/Answer in groups: Suppose a group of students are *indoctrinated*. However, unlike most indoctrinators, they are indoctrinated into believing mostly *true propositions* (i.e., suppose it is a physics or math cult). Could **veritists**, who think that truth is the fundamental epistemic value, have a legitimate problem with such a case of indoctrination? Explain why or why not below (please note where you stand on this question: do you think such indoctrination would be permissible?)