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THE COGNITIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF REIDIAN EPISTEMOLOGY OF TRUST IN
RELATION TO SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the applicability of Thomas Reid’s epistemology of trust and the cognitive significance in connection to social entrepreneurship. It makes the case that Thomas Reid’s epistemology of trust is not an epistemic component, but a strategic asset in creating sustainable, community-focused social change. In its pre-paradigmatic condition, social entrepreneurship lacks a well-established epistemology. A social entrepreneur recognizes a social problem and uses entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage a venture to achieve social change. The study makes the claim that epistemic trust is necessary for entrepreneurial activity. According to Thomas Reid, trust is not something that needs to be defended; rather, it is a fundamental common-sense belief that is rational in and of itself. He makes a distinction between the various kinds of evidence produced by our faculties, including memory (trusting our past), consciousness (trusting our present mental states), and sense (trusting perception). Through a review of the literature, the study uses a qualitative approach to investigate the applicability of Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust to social entrepreneurship. The study argues that while previous incentives to support entrepreneurship should be preserved, policymakers should also focus on the importance of trust that is developed through unofficial networks.

Keywords: Epistemology, Epistemic trust, Thomas Reid, Social Entrepreneurship.

INTRODUCTION

There has long been a philosophical interest in the epistemology of trust. Every type of coordinated human effort depends on it. Furthermore, epistemic trust is essential to the effective exchange of knowledge and, consequently, to almost all practical planning and debate. Without epistemic trust, we wouldn't know much and wouldn't be able to accomplish many of our aims. Thomas Reid was a Scottish philosopher born in Strachan, Aberdeenshire, Scotland. In his books *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (2002) and *An Enquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense* (1997), Reid contends that, like perception, trust in testimony is an essential, innate principle of human nature. According to him, there are two types of perceptions:

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those that are acquired and the result of experience, and those that are natural and unique (Reid, 1997, p. 171).

According to Zahra et al. (2009), social entrepreneurship encompasses the activities and processes undertaken to discover, define, and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner. Based on two complementary principles, the paper investigates Reid's epistemology of trust and his defenses of testimony as a primary source of knowledge: (1) the principle of credulity, which is an innate, inborn disposition to trust testimony and believe what others tell us acting as a foundational component of human knowledge, and (2) the principle of veracity, which is an original principle of human mind acting as a natural, instinctive inclination to tell the truth and trust the testimony of others. In order to acquire the trust of those who are unable to fully understand what is being offered to the market, an entrepreneur must act as both a trustee and a trustor. It recognizes that epistemic trust becomes significantly relevant in social entrepreneurship precisely because of inherent uncertainty and vulnerability.

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

The following problems are the focus of this research:

- (a) Acknowledge the cognitive significance of Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust as a natural common sense belief system that enables effective social interaction.
- (b) Examine the social construction and validation of Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust in social entrepreneurs.
- (c) Examine how Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust supports the veracity of their assertions about the social impact of entrepreneurship.
- (d) Analyse Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust's shortcomings when examining institutional trust in social entrepreneurs.
- (e) Understand how Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust necessitates moral consistency and integrity, which is consistent with the requirement for moral conduct in social enterprises.
- (f) Examine how Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust and, consequently, social capital are crucial for social enterprises' financial, environmental, and social viability.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions have been developed

- (a) What cognitive significance does Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust have as a natural common sense belief system that facilitates effective social functioning?
- (b) How can we use Thomas Reid's epistemology to the social construction and validation of trust in social entrepreneurs?
- (c) In what ways does Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust support the veracity of their statements about the social impact of entrepreneurship?
- (d) What are the constraints of using Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust to research institutional trust in social entrepreneurs?
- (e) In what ways does Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust correspond with the need for moral behaviour in social enterprises by requiring moral consistency and integrity?
- (f) What role does Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust play in the financial, environmental, and social sustainability of social enterprises?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Epistemology of Trust and Social Entrepreneurship

There is significant philosophical dispute over what trust is, how it is normatively restricted, and how it is best theorised in relation to other things we value, despite the essential significance of the epistemology of trust in human life. The justification, logic, and circumstances in which trust functions as a source of knowledge (testimony) as opposed to merely belief or reliance are examined in the epistemology of trust. An essential part of our relationships with others is epistemic trust. It serves as the foundation for both social and economic relationships. Because Reid epistemic trust is helpful in uncertain situations, it is inextricably tied to social entrepreneurship.

Sperber et al. (2010) noted that epistemic trust is defined as trust in communicated knowledge. People use epistemic trust to learn from, respond to, and adapt to their social environment; if they are unable to do so, they are unable to fully benefit from cooperative processes and from being a full member of a community. It is possible that epistemic mistrust that was formed in a particular setting will not adapt to new circumstances.

Pratono (2018) observed that epistemic trust plays a crucial part in social entrepreneurship. A network structure is necessary for product development and performance enhancement. Companies that wish to establish a network structure must have epistemic trust. The company will be more vulnerable and have an even higher failure rate if there is no epistemic trust. In addition

to having marketing, sales, and pricing capabilities, a network structure with epistemic trust will be more risk-taking.

Liu et al. (2020) highlighted that social entrepreneurship has a variety of traits. In addition to bringing about new social change and fixing the flaws in government operations, it can also open up new markets. The idea of epistemic trust describes how relationships of trust are shaped and impacted by knowledge or are focused on knowledge perspectives. In this case, concerns of knowledge become relevant in two ways, making the relationship between trust and knowledge conceptually complex. On the one side, the question is what level of knowledge is necessary to be able to trust someone? However, it is still debatable under what circumstances one can legitimately trust the knowledge of others. Here, knowledge is mentioned twice: once as a foundation and once as an object or objective of trust.

Segers and Mertes (2022) noted that epistemic trust is predicated on two expectations: (1) how someone will act, and (2) how they should act. Granovetter (1983) emphasised that the strength of human connections is found in clusters of closely knit social networks that are connected by weak ties among members of each group. In a social network, the people at the ends of each weak link between the groups are called boundary spanners. Granovetter refers to information flows and communication links rather than epistemic trust. When he discusses epistemic trust, he makes the assumption that it results from communication flows. However, one may argue that epistemic trust is necessary for the beginning and continuation of these information flows, which constitute weak and strong ties.

Fukuyama (1995) observed that epistemic trust is what drives people and organisations to engage in spontaneous socioeconomic endeavours. As a result, trust is the belief that members of a society will behave consistently, honestly, and cooperatively in accordance with widely accepted norms.

Leading reductionist Hume (2000) noted that trust on testimony is predicated on evidence of testimonies' customary conformance to facts. We rely on other people because we have independent reasons to believe them because experience has demonstrated their dependability. According to him, our faith in testimony is supported by our observations of the reliability of witnesses rather than by a basic concept. The philosophical differences between reductionists and anti-reductionists regarding testimony can be linked to the distinction between derivative and fundamental authority. According to Reid's non reductionist perspective, testimony is a basic type

of evidence that cannot be reduced to or justified in terms of other types of perceptual or inferential evidence. Reid considered epistemic trust to be essential, while Hume contends that trust is a reasonable assessment of social circumstances and must be validated by experience.

Hardwig (1991) observed that trust is epistemic when it serves as a justification for believing someone's testimony. When A is epistemically dependent on B, epistemic trust is an alternative to A remaining ignorant of P. Epistemic dependence occurs when A has an interest in B's knowledge but is unable to access the knowledge on her own. In a relationship of epistemic trust, one person A trusts another person B to have good reasons to believe that P, and A's trust in B is a reason for A to believe that P. In many non-expert relationships, this is true.

Establishing the epistemic trust requires honesty and sincerity. Hawley noted that by asking the trusted individual to perform with the proper motivation, the good will criteria set an excessively high standard for reliability. Because it forces the trusted individual to live up to the expectations of people who trust her, the goodwill criterion is demanding. However, expectations could be unrealistic or inappropriate, and it would be strange to label someone as unreliable for not being able or willing to meet such demands. According to Hawley, trust entails more than just depending on someone else to complete a task (Hawley, 2019, p.2).

Lezanyi (2017) noted that social entrepreneurship is not directly impacted by epistemic trust. However, we must understand that epistemic trust is one of the fundamental pillars of the social capital required as a type of interpersonal skills to be able to build relationships between people so that each person can use their own strengths in concert to produce a good performance. In addition to being crucial for social entrepreneurship, epistemic trust also helps teams collaborate well and exchange information. Additionally, they are able to establish networks that enable them to identify and market their goods and services as well as locate the best suppliers.

Sako (1992) highlighted that Competency trust, contractual trust, and goodness trust are the three elements of epistemic trust. The skills, abilities, and traits that allow a party to have influence within a certain domain—that is, the proof of a partner's ability to execute as expected—are referred to as competency trust. In a sense, competency trust is a prerequisite for contractual trust; a partner must have proven their ability to carry out an expected action, and the contract establishes and strengthens that a priori trust. Additionally, contractual trust is demonstrated when partners uphold an ethical standard, namely that of keeping promises.

John (2018) observed that if a testifier's personal opinion deviates from the majority, they may try to suppress it. If by sincerity one recognises the virtue of aligning one's public claims with one's private attitudes, then the testifier is being dishonest. An agent's public statements must accurately represent their beliefs in order to be considered sincere. However, there doesn't seem to be anything wrong with testifying about a consensus opinion rather than a personal opinion, even in cases of insincerity. Because prudential motives are insufficient to ensure that someone will be a trustworthy testifier, the self-interest account of reliance cannot completely replace the moral account of epistemic trust. This is due to the fact that dishonesty is hard to spot and, even when it is, the penalties are insufficient to serve as a strong deterrent.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Through a literature review, this study employs a qualitative methodology to investigate the applicability of Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust to social entrepreneurship. It makes the case to move philosophy away from crippling skepticism and towards an understanding that knowledge is fundamentally social and our epistemic trust is essential.

Thomas Reid Epistemology of Trust

According to Thomas Reid's epistemology of trust, humans are predisposed to believe that cognitive abilities such as memory, perception, and witness are trustworthy sources of information. He contends that these abilities are reliable because they come from common sense rather than reason, making trust a basic, pre-rational requirement for knowledge. When we accomplish these goals, it can be claimed that our abilities are operating correctly—that is, in the manner that the creator of our nature intended. Our senses are given to us by nature to provide us with accurate information about things that are within their reach, not to deceive us. Therefore, we must determine the aim of our faculties based on their sound and natural state. (Reid, 2002, p.2).

Reid noted that our abilities were created to function in very certain settings. Therefore, even when one faculty operates as intended, there may be times when the environment and the faculties don't match, leading to the production of primarily inaccurate ideas. Because this would imply that at least one of our faculties is trustworthy, Reid does not try to demonstrate that our faculties are trustworthy by drawing conclusions from the existence of a loving creator: whether a self-evident belief results from the ability to reason or, as Reid contends, from some other ability (Reid, 2002, p.2).

However, we may conclude that scepticism is the only reasonable course of action given our incapacity to offer any solid justification for having faith in our abilities. However, we must use at least one of our faculties in order to reach this point. It would be impossible to beat a sceptic out of this stronghold by argument if he were to base his scepticism on the idea that all of our reasoning and judging abilities are flawed, or if he were to decide to at least withhold assent until it was demonstrated that they are not. He would even have to be allowed to enjoy his scepticism. (Reid, 2002, p.480). Reid observed that we can't help but have some faith in the dependability of our cognitive abilities. All men were placed on an equal footing by the verdict based on the evidence of sensation, memory, and consciousness. Regarding these, the philosopher has no authority over the uneducated or even the barbaric. They rely just as much on the testimony of these faculties as he does (Reid, 2002, p. 412). In light of this situation, the main goal of epistemologists is to suggest a metaphysic that is superior to all others due to its ability to better maintain the logic of the faith we must have in our abilities.

Because a theistic metaphysics is a system of beliefs that neither affirms nor leads to the rejection of the dependability of our faculties—a quality that cannot be claimed of a system like David Hume's. Reid contends that since denying our fundamental abilities—sense, memory, reason, and testimony—leads to absurdity or scepticism, we must have faith in them. In response to David Hume's sceptical arguments, he argued that even sceptics must have faith in their faculties in order to develop their scepticism. According to him, trust is a basic component of human nature that enables reasoned thought and daily existence. Reid contends that our cognitive abilities were created to accomplish a number of goals, including the protection and welfare of our species, the capacity to make wise decisions about what is generally right, which is our responsibility, and so forth. Reid (2010), contends that even if common sense is flawed, we should still have faith in it. Reid maintains that his constitution immediately leads him to believe in an outside world. He clarifies that the sceptic asks, "Why do you believe in the existence of the external object that you perceive?" Reid writes "This belief, sir, originated from the mint of nature and is not something I created. If it is incorrect, it is not my fault because it contains her image and superscription. I didn't even suspect it; I just trusted it. (Reid, 1997, p.168). Reason is one of our abilities, just like perception, but using the Cartesian method of reasoning enables us to create sceptical arguments that refute sense perception. We naturally develop beliefs through both perception and reason. If we don't trust the faculty of perception, why should we trust the faculty of reason? Our senses'

dependability cannot be demonstrated by reason, but neither can reason's dependability be observed by the senses. We should trust both if we are to just one. On the principle of credulity and veracity, Reid proposed an innate principle of credulity (a propensity to trust others) and a principle of veracity (a tendency to tell the truth) which makes social communication acquisition possible. Reid introduces the two key principles of his theory of testimony in the inquiry in the following passage: the wise and the beneficent author of nature, who intended that we should be social creatures, and that we should receive the greatest and most important part of our knowledge by the information of others, hath, for this purpose, implanted in our natures two principles that tally with each other.

The first of these principles is a propensity to speak truth and to use the signs of language, so on as to convey your real sentiments. (Reid, 1997:193). Another original principle implanted in us by the supreme being is the disposition to confide in the veracity of others and to believe what they tell us. This is the counter-part to the former: and as that may be called the principle of veracity, we shall for want of a more proper name, call this the principle of credulity (Reid, 1997, 194). These principles are the key elements in his account of how the worlds of others come to be signs conveying to us things we would not have come to know on our own. Reid's formulation of the principle of veracity immediately prompts a vital question, by a propensity to speak truth, does Reid mean a propensity to speak what is in fact the truth? His unqualified use of the expression to speak truth in the first clause suggests the latter.

Truth is the inherent concern of the mind and is constantly at the front. All we need to do is give in to a natural inclination; there is no need for art, training, incentive, or temptation. Contrarily, lying is a violation of our nature that is never done without some temptation, even by the worst of mankind (Reid, 1997, p. 193). Reid argues that moral and political factors are insufficient to support his belief that the inclination to speak the truth is innate. Even young infants exhibit this inclination before these factors can have any impact on them. Like perception, trusting the testimony of others is an intrinsic, fundamental component of human knowledge rather than a learned action. Reid contends that although trust is essential, beliefs are nevertheless supported by evidence (epistemic justification), even if that evidence is more readily sensed than articulated. Evidence, according to Reid, is the basis for judgement or belief (Reid, 2002, p. 228). This relationship of being grounded upon is both psychological and epistemological: evidence is that

which, to a certain extent, persuades the agent to adopt a belief and that may, under specific circumstances, make the belief epistemologically legitimate. (Alston, 1989, p. 41).

According to Reid (Reid, 1969, p. 228), a man cannot believe anything for as long as he believes there is evidence. He believes that evidence is more easily sensed than stated by individuals who have never considered its nature. Evidence has an involuntary tendency; if an agent perceives evidence supporting the truth, he cannot choose not to believe it. (Reid, 2010, p.87). However, a person may fail to recognise that he has solid evidence for a belief if his cognitive abilities are impaired or if he does not appropriately engage in a voluntary intellectual activity, or that what he considers to be solid proof is actually nothing of the like. According to Reid, the degree of evidence an agent believes she has determined how strong or firm her beliefs are (Reid, 2002, p. 229). For instance, let's say agent S considers propositions p and not-p on Reid's account. If it appears to S that either p or not-p have equal degrees of evidence or that there is no evidence at all, she is not allowed to make a decision; instead, her judgement must remain in perfect suspense.

However, the judgement is inclined proportionately if S believes that one or the other proposition has the least amount of evidence supporting it. As a result, Reid S creates or maintains a particular level of evidence supporting the veracity of p at t, and this level of evidence is commensurate with her level of belief in p at t. According to Reid (Reid, 2002, p. 421), a just foundation of belief is that which results in judgements that are just and true, serving as the voucher for all truth, while mere evidence is that which gives rise to a belief and excellent evidence (Reid, 2002, p. 481), or which, as rational beings, should guide our beliefs (Reid, 2002, p. 230).

It must be noted that Reid employs the term "justify" to describe the epistemic status attained as a result of an agent's actions, such as demonstrating the validity of a belief by presenting an argument. Reid observed that, there are two fundamental types of evidence: demonstrative and probable. Reid makes a distinction between the term "probable" as it is used by philosophers and in everyday speech. In the former instance, it only relates to a specific level of belief. Therefore, if S says that p is plausible in everyday language, it implies that even if S may believe p, he does so with some degree of uncertainty or doubt. However, in the philosophical sense, probable evidence offers a variety of levels of epistemic justification, ranging from the lowest to the highest, which we refer to as certainty. It is different from demonstrative evidence in that it can never give the kind of justification that Reid refers to as absolute certainty because this type of justification

only applies to necessary truths, and views based on probable evidence must always be contingent. According to Reid, the strongest possible evidence should lead to a level of confidence comparable to that provided by proof. Most of the time, we gauge the strength of the evidence by how it affects a sound understanding when it is understood impartially and clearly. (Reid, 2002, p. 557).

The Field of Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship is the innovative method of using business techniques to create larger scale social change, rather than merely maximizing shareholder value. A social entrepreneur is a person who identifies a social, environment, or cultural issues and leverages entrepreneurial skills to establish a new, sustainable equilibrium that fixes it. Social entrepreneurs drive positive change by innovating solution to community challenges. Social entrepreneurship prioritizes creating societal impact over financial gain through innovative solutions to community challenges. The term social entrepreneurship describes sustainable ventures that combine business principles with a passion for social impact. Tey strive to create social value as a primary organizational objective by employing business concepts to sustain their operations in pursuit of this objective Weerawardena and Sullivan, (2001).

Surice and Ashley (2008) positioned social entrepreneurship on a map of organizational forms relative to the ways organizations plan to implement social change and the degrees to which they apply business practices to do so. Although entrepreneurship has long been acknowledged as a major force for economic development (Schumpeter, 1934). Only recently has the important role social entrepreneur plays in contributing toward both economic and social well-being. This is not surprising since, according to Surice and Ashley (2008), social entrepreneur and entrepreneurship are not dichotomous: they occupy different positions along the same continuum. Recently social entrepreneur research has gained much attention as evidenced by, among other things, the growing number of scholars focusing on the topic Zahra, et.al, (2009). There is no single, widely agreed upon definition of social entrepreneurship, although, it is generally accepted that its goal is to change the social equilibrium to a more desired state Light, (2008). This clearly reflected in the (Martin and Osberg, 2007) definition which states that a social entrepreneur is someone who targets an unfortunate the neglect, marginalization, or suffering of a segment of humanity: who brings to bear on this situation his or her inspiration, direct action, creativity, courage, and fortitude, and who aims for and ultimately affects the establishment of a new stable equilibrium that secures permanent benefit for the targeted group and society at large (p.39).

Dees and Battle (2006) identified a set of criteria to be used to determine whether the actions of an individual can be considered to be socially entrepreneurial. Social entrepreneur play the role of change agents in the social sector: by adopting a mission to create and sustain social value, not just private value, recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission, engage in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning, acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand, and exhibiting heightened accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created (Dees, and Battle, 2006, p. 4).

The emerging definition of social entrepreneurship has either been inclusive in that they are broad enough to include more individuals, ideas, opportunities, and organizations into the tent (Light, 2008, p. 11), or exclusive when they, for example, exclude for profit enterprises from being called socially entrepreneurial. in a similar vein Perrini (2006) distinguished between scholars who take what he called a limited view of social entrepreneurship that mainly considers changes in the not-for-profit sector when these organizations strive to enhance their sustainability by generating more revenue, and the extended view, which considers social entrepreneur, as something often than simply an enhancement of not-profit enterprises. Dees and Battle (2006) were proponents of an inclusive, or extended perspective on social entrepreneur based upon the argument that the decision as to what legal form to use for a venture is simply a choice about which tool to use and not a factor to use to include or exclude an organization from being called socially entrepreneurial

Emerson (2003) suggested that social entrepreneurship organizations could obtain their financial resources from a wide range of sources, from agents and charitable gifts to traditional equity investments. Reusing monthly through the traditional capital market, however, has been difficult for non-profit organizations (Emerson and Bonini, 2003). The non distributive restriction on surplus generated by non-profit organizations and the embedded social purpose for profit or hybrid forms of social enterprise limits social entrepreneurs from tapping into the same capital markets as commercial entrepreneurs (Austin, et.al. 2006, p. 3). Despite the persistent limitations on resource availability social entrepreneurs tend to find ways to survive and even thrive. Other personal factors social entrepreneurs draw upon to acquire needed resources include their personal credibility as established by their network of contacts, status, and professional histories, framing and reputational effects which involves persuading others to support their missions by stressing, the social values they espouse, and leveraging their social network. Certain personality traits of social entrepreneurship have been found to have a positive influence on the starting up and long-

term success of their social entrepreneurship ventures (Nga and Shamuganathan, 2010). Some scholars have expressed some concerns about the apparent proliferation of social entrepreneurship (Dempsey and Sanders, 2010) argued that social entrepreneurship is essentially the marketization of the non-profit, and called for critical examination. Marketization describes the process whereby social domains, such as church, schools and the state, adopt the techniques and logic of the market or business (Cheney, 2002), critics warn that marketization may subvert socially oriented missions and the values of nonprofit organizations, thereby threatening their ability to create and maintain a vibrant civic society (Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004). Bull (2008) also called for critical reflections in order to assess different perspectives and provide some challenge to the dominant view on social entrepreneurship.

The language of social entrepreneurship may be new but the phenomenon is not. We have always had social entrepreneurs, even if we did not call them that. They originally built many of the institutions we now take for granted. However, the name is important in that it implies a blurring of sector boundaries. In addition to innovative non-profit ventures, social entrepreneurship can include social purpose, business ventures, such as for-profit community development banks, and hybrid organizations mixing not-for profit and for-profit elements, such as homeless shelters that start business to train and employ their residents. The new language helps to broaden the playing field. Social entrepreneurs look for the most effective methods of serving their social missions. Though the concept of social entrepreneurship is gaining popularity, it means different things to different people, this can be confusing. Many associates social entrepreneurship exclusively with not-for-profit organizations starting for profit or earned income ventures. Others use it to refer to business owners who integrate social responsibility into their operations.

Epistemic Trust as Fundamental Cognitive Structure for Social Entrepreneurship

Regarding the dependability of our cognitive faculties, Reid's epistemology highlights our faith in our senses and the dependability of our faculties. This can be applied to social enterprises that depend on community trust, knowledge sharing, and open, direct communication with stakeholders. Epistemic trust is regarded as a crucial asset for social enterprises, especially during the startup phase, helping to establish networks and credibility. Reid's emphasis on common sense suggests that successful social entrepreneurship address community needs based on directly observable realities rather than excessively abstract, ideological theories. We do not need to

constantly verify our memories or senses, we feel the influence of this evidence and are justified in acting upon it.

To obtain the legitimacy required for long-term functioning and impact in community-focused activities, epistemic trust is crucial. In this context, reliability is defined as generally producing true beliefs. In a slightly different context, we could consider this to be producing accurate beliefs (Reid, 1969, p. 40). Reid claims that all solid evidence is referred to as reasonable evidence, and quite rightly so, since it should guide our beliefs as rational beings (Reid, 1969, p. 392). The fact that all people are naturally inclined to implicitly trust the unique testimony of their senses long before they are capable of any bias due to prejudice from education or philosophy is too obvious to require proof (Reid, 1969, p.625). Epistemic trust serves as a lubricant that enables stakeholders to interact with novel solutions since social initiatives sometimes entail creative, unproven ideas. The possibility of receiving financial help from partners, governments, and investors can be embraced by high levels of social trust. Social entrepreneurs must operate with cultural sensitivity, especially in indigenous or foreign environments, to guarantee they do not create harm in order to gain epistemic trust. Building trusting relationships between mentors and social entrepreneurs can lead to opportunities and provide crucial feedback. Being trustworthy is a critical differentiation since social entrepreneurs frequently work with marginalised people or on delicate subjects.

There is need for Community-Led Initiative, trust is built by working with local stakeholders, respecting local knowledge and tradition and fostering long term, genuine connections. In the area of emerging economies with less formal institutional support, epistemic trust and social networks are even more crucial for entrepreneurs. Reid suggest that that knowledge can be collective and institutionalized within a community-led models where the common sense of the local community shapes the enterprise's direction, rather than external expertise alone. In contexts with stronger formal institutions, epistemic trust remains important but may not act more as a complement to existing legal protections rather than a direct substitute.

Epistemic Trust, Social Entrepreneurship and Challenges

Because social entrepreneurs operate in uncertain, resource-constrained, or novel epistemic environments, epistemic trust serves as the critical mechanism bridging the gap between uncertainty and necessary collaborative action, requiring stakeholders to be vulnerable. Uncertainty as a precondition: entrepreneurship involves navigating uncharted territory, where

outcomes cannot be fully insured against or predicted, making epistemic trust essential for managing this ambiguity. Given that the situation is as previously stated, should we trust our basic cognitive abilities? The practical problem we face depends on what we have as choice. (Reid, 1997, p. 82).

We fall into epistemic circularity only when we assume the veracity of the very faculty we are seeking to validate. Since epistemic circularity infects all attempts to demonstrate the reliability of a basic ground of belief, there is no rational basis for accepting some and not others without justification. In high-risk situations, such as social ventures with long-term impacts, trust enables cooperation and reduces the risk of exploitation, which is crucial when formal, legal contracts are insufficient or absent. According to Reid, “it would be pleasant to travel to the moon and visit Jupiter and Saturn, but when I realise that nature has bonded me to this planet by the law of gravitation, I am satisfied and silently allow myself to be swept along in its orbit. Perception carries my belief with it, just as the earth carries my body. It is not a deduction of reason” (Reid, 1970, p. 208) that our sense of touch implies something exterior, extended, figured, hard, or soft. However, it is a natural premise. Our constitution includes both the idea of it and the confidence in it. Untrustworthy of epistemic trust, if we are tricked in it, we are tricked by the one who created us, and there is no cure.

CONCLUSION

In social entrepreneurship, epistemic trust is an essential non-financial resource that acts as social capital to support community cooperation, resource acquisition, and legitimacy. In a low-information context, it helps entrepreneurs manage uncertainty and build connections with partners, stakeholders, and beneficiaries—all of which are critical for increasing impact and obtaining finance. By having faith in our abilities, we can not only gather an infinite amount of knowledge on a wide range of other topics, but we can also discover that these abilities are innate gifts, that every normal person depends on them, at least practically, and that using them is essential for living. A functioning mind must accept its own cognitive apparatus as reliable, without this foundational trust, knowledge would be impossible.

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