Ignorance and the Community of Knowledge

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• Over 80 percent of Americans support:
  1. labeling of GMO foods “produced with genetic engineering”
  2. “mandatory labels on foods containing DNA”
The Knowledge Illusion

Rozenblit & Keil procedure applied to policy:
- National flat tax; Cap and trade; Unilateral sanctions on Iran

➤ Causal explanation reduced
  1. sense of understanding
  2. hubris

• Reasons did not
The best argument against democracy is a 5-min conversation with the average voter.
People aren’t storage devices

A Few Hundred Thousand Verbatim Copies

= 16 x
The Community of Knowledge

- Ideology as a house of cards
- Emotion, not just thought
Division of Cognitive Labor
A person observes a number of stars whose brightness varies greatly over time. She decides by herself to use the name Evans star for stars with this quality. She realizes that nothing else is known about these stars.

Later, while with a friend, she observes a new star whose brightness varies greatly over time. Her friend asks: “Why is this star like this?,” to which she responds: “Because it is an Evans star.”

To what extent has the friend answered the question (1-7)?
Entrenching the Explanation

A person observes a number of stars whose brightness varies greatly over time. \textit{She learns that the accepted name for stars with this quality is Evans star.} She realizes that nothing else is known about these stars.

Later, while with a friend, she observes a new star whose brightness varies greatly over time. Her friend asks: “Why is this star like this?,” to which she responds: “Because it is an Evans star.”

To what extent has the friend answered the question (1-7)?
Goodness of Explanation as a Function of Label Entrenchment

![Graph showing average ratings of different conditions for extent answered question. The x-axis represents the degree to which the question is considered answered, ranging from No to Yes, and the y-axis represents the number of features, ranging from Single to Multiple. The graph illustrates a trend where the goodness of explanation increases with label entrenchment.]
Disrupting the Echo Chamber

• Knowledge bubbles
  ➔ need a more inclusive community.

• A community of expertise:
  – Expertise is everywhere
  – About collaboration.
Harnessing Technology to Increase Buy-in

New technologies allow broad, dynamic epistemic communities

1. Crowdsourcing to aggregate diverse expertise.
2. Blockchain technologies: Sophisticated methods for effectively sharing reputation, risks, and rewards even in the absence of trust.
Conclusions

1. Humility is appropriate.
2. Thinking is a communal enterprise.
3. So is explaining.
4. Ignorance enables a form of bliss: Outsourcing cognitive tasks.
   – Must appeal to anyone who has knowledge or a stake
THE KNOWLEDGE ILLUSION
Why We Never Think Alone

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