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The Affective Component of Intellectual Self-Trust: A Reply to Jones

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Thanks to Karen Jones for her valuable comment on my article. Let me start by agreeing with Jones’s observations about the role of trust-responsiveness for individual intellectual self-trust and “flourishing communities of inquiry” (Jones 2021, 2). I would add that trust-responsiveness is central both for individual and collective intellectual self-trust. And it is such collective intellectual self-trust that Jones is skeptical about. She suggests that collective intellectual self-trust may still be individual intellectual self-trust, namely “group scaffolded individual intellectual self-trust” (1). This suggestion translates into three questions about the nature of collective intellectual self-trust.

### **The Nature of Collective Intellectual Self-Trust**

First, Jones, like Congdon in his comment (2021), notes that the conditions of collective intellectual self-trust are too weak. Second, she wonders to which collective the group attitudes belong. Third, she asks how a collective can have self-reflective attitudes.

As I have noted in my reply (2021a) to Congdon, I fully agree that we need more conditions to distinguish collective intellectual self-trust from individual intellectual self-trust and thus show that collective intellectual self-trust is not just “group scaffolded individual intellectual self-trust” (Jones 2021, 1). Condition (4), mutual awareness of collective intellectual self-trust, cannot carry this load on its own. I propose that we should add “mutual recognition” as another condition: the members recognize each other as members of the group. Mutual recognition is a manifestation of the group cohesion is found in collective intellectual self-trust (cf. also my forthcoming).

Jones suggests that procedures such as aggregation could also ensure collective intellectual self-trust, but I do not think such organized structures of belief formation are necessary. If we focus on these procedures, we limit groups that can have collective intellectual self-trust to those groups that employ such procedures for belief formation, group formation, etc. But less structured groups can also have collective intellectual self-trust, as Jones notes, too. All that matters is that beliefs, affects and behavior that manifest collective intellectual self-trust as well as shared intellectual capacities, such as shared recognitional capacities, are “operative” within the group (Anderson 2016, 76). Elizabeth Anderson introduces this expression of “being operative” in her explanation of how a group can know a moral principle (76).<sup>1</sup>

A belief that is operative within a group is not necessarily believed by every member. Anderson adds, “[r]ather, a group shares a conviction about a principle only if that principle shapes discourse within the group in particular ways: it is taken for granted within the group as a premise for further argument, not needing independent justification; its truth is treated as a settled matter; disputing it is regarded as, if not crazy or beyond the pale, then requiring a heavy burden of proof; disputants are liable to censure or even social exclusion for calling such convictions into question” (Anderson 2016, 76). Consequently, we don’t need a process of group formation for group belief nor fixed processes of belief formation for group belief

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Tollefsen and Lucibella 2018

or for collective intellectual self-trust. A group with collective intellectual self-trust simply shares those beliefs that are “operative” within the group.

This setup also explains how collective intellectual self-trust is not restricted to niche groups, or groups that employ particular decision procedures. Any group that has shared beliefs and shared recognitional capacities can have collective intellectual self-trust. And note that such collective intellectual self-trust is not intrinsically valuable. The shared beliefs and shared capacities can be morally and epistemically pernicious (cf. my forthcoming.).

Jones’s second and the third question ask how groups can have self-reflective attitudes and to whom the group attitudes belong. Collectives can have self-reflective attitudes by reflecting on the shared capacities of the members that constitute the capacities of the group. These shared capacities are instantiated in the members of the group and they are the object of self-reflection. The capacities are reflexively studied by the group members through their individual capacities but in the context of the collective as members of the collective, i.e. the reflection is exercised by the individual capacities and shared capacities. Thus, the capacities are capacities of the group, but only via its group members (cf. also my reply (2021a) to Congdon and Koskinen).

### **Shared Feelings**

In a further strand of her comment, Jones claims that groups cannot have feelings and thus my claim that collective intellectual self-trust has an affective component such as optimism is merely metaphorical (Jones 2021, 5). Instead, optimism is “partly constituted by patterns in the interpretation of what counts as a reason to revise, revisit, defer, or withhold judgement” (5). But I submit that groups can have shared feelings. See, for example, Salmela’s account of shared emotions. He notes that for a shared emotion the group members minimally can have the same type of emotion and be mutually aware of the same emotion. There is a continuum of weakly, moderately or strongly shared emotions, but at root the constituents of the different degrees of shared emotions are the same. Physiological and behavioral components can also contribute to the shared emotions, e.g., via a shared object, via ritualized activities and via “emotional contagion” (Salmela 2012, 41). I do not see any reason why such shared emotions should not be possible in the case of collective intellectual self-trust. Of course, one may find another account of collective emotions more plausible, but the basic possibility of shared emotions is not affected by such decisions.

The patterns that Jones finds in optimism may certainly co-constitute the optimism of agents—individual or collective—who possess intellectual self-trust, but at the same time, optimism is also a shared feeling that constitutes intellectual self-trust. There may be other feelings that constitute intellectual self-trust, e.g., trust, elation, confidence, happiness, pride. They are feelings that come with being able to rely on the intellectual capacities of the members of the collective.

For example, the members of the LoCI Wittenberg Writing Group, in trusting their shared capacities, might feel elation, confidence, happiness, pride. And they would feel it as a group. It is not just individual elation. And groups who may not have collective intellectual self-trust in a strong sense can still have shared emotions, e.g., soccer teams after they have won a tournament, so why should this be impossible for groups with collective intellectual self-

trust? Adding collective intellectual self-trust does not change the affective set-up. And intellectual self-trust itself is not exempt from affective components, rather, as I have suggested, the affective component is constitutive of intellectual self-trust (El Kassar 2020). There is a way that individual and collective intellectual self-trust feel like.

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