

Institutional Epistemology and Extreme Inequality

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Both democrats and liberals in institutional epistemology are committed to the fundamental insight of the field - namely, that diversity is the minimal condition of epistemic reliability in cases of complex and difficult problems. They differ, however, in their model of the complex and difficult problem, and the attendant prescriptions in institutional designs that best protect and utilize diversity. However, an epistemically critically relevant institutional device has been largely absent from both democratic and liberal accounts - namely, protection against extreme inequalities (or, specifically, freedom from poverty and limit to private wealth). I argue that both liberals and democrats are committed *by virtue of their fundamental epistemological commitments* to protection against extreme inequalities as one of fundamental conditions of epistemic reliability of institutional systems. I overview the key role of protection against extreme inequalities in protecting and utilizing relevant diversity for both democrats and liberals, arguing that neither democratic nor liberal designs can deliver their proposed epistemic reliability unless they are embedded in the system that protects against extreme inequalities.