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Abstract

The internet has considerably changed epistemic practices in science as well as in everyday life. Apparently, this technology allows more and more people to get access to a huge amount of information. Some people even claim that the internet leads to a democratization of knowledge. In the following text, we will analyze this statement. In particular, we will focus on a potential change in epistemic structure. Does the internet change our common epistemic practice to rely on expert opinions? Does it alter or even undermine the division of epistemic labor? The epistemological framework of our investigation is a naturalist-pragmatist approach to knowledge. We take it that the internet generates a new environment to which people seeking information must adapt. How can they, and how should they, expand their repertory of social markers to continue the venture of filtering, and so make use of the possibilities the internet apparently provides? To find answers to these questions we will take a closer look at two case studies. The first example is about the internet platform WikiLeaks that allows so-called whistle-blowers to anonymously distribute their information. The second case study is about the search engine Google and the problem of personalized searches. Both

08.2.2026

instances confront a knowledge-seeking individual with particular difficulties which are based on the apparent anonymity of the information distributor. Are there ways for the individual to cope with this problem and to make use of her social markers in this context nonetheless? (HRK / Abstract übernommen)