

On Virtue, Value, and Epistemic Normativity

by

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B.A., University of Alaska, Anchorage 2006

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Abstract

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Virtue epistemology is epistemological evaluation that gives ‘intellectual virtue’ a primary consideration in its analysis. This thesis is about how two types of virtue epistemology are related to each other, and how when taken broadly as a whole, virtue epistemology has theoretical and practical benefits for epistemic and epistemological evaluation. I begin by way of a quick historical review, and define epistemology as the study of good or bad ways of grasping reality. Part One is then devoted to describing the ‘virtue’ part of virtue epistemology. I posit a broad view of virtue: that human excellences come in the form of cognitive faculties and character traits. What binds them is a meta-epistemological commitment that epistemological analysis should focus on the whole of the person, which includes how the person relates to the environment, other persons, and importantly the *values* of the whole person. In Part Two, I take a closer look of how the various conceptions of intellectual virtue are different, specifically with an examination of epistemic value. In Part Three, I take up an objection levelled by the Epistemic Anti-Realist that is a call for concern for intellectual virtues, and epistemological evaluation on the whole.

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Introduction

There are many questions within contemporary epistemology—all with many widely differing answers. However, the foremost problems that contemporary epistemology has embraced have been concerns regarding the *nature of knowledge* and (what is often thought of as) its crucial component: epistemic justification. Many epistemology papers in the last fifty years have begun with noting this trend. Roderick Chisholm (1966, p. 90) refers to this concern as the problem of *Theaetetus*, “since the question was first clearly formulated by Plato in his dialogue of that name.” As with most, if not all, philosophical questions, it is not straightforward which answers within epistemology are the most promising. In cases of genuine standstills with one side arguing for Theory X and the other side arguing for Theory Anti-X something needs to happen for progress to be made. In this thesis, I will argue that a virtue-theoretic approach to epistemology serves this facilitating role. In other words, what is known as *Virtue Epistemology* widens the scope of evaluation (just enough), and offers a fruitful methodology; it introduces *intellectual virtue* and *value* into the discussion of knowledge and inquiry in general, which comes with practical and theoretical benefits. In short, I will defend virtue epistemology in this project.

I will begin by asking a meta-epistemological question: what is epistemology? I will review some relevant literature, and argue that a broad view of epistemology is needed to account for the philosophical problems that are found within it. After a characterization of epistemology is offered, I will present a summary of the entire project. Enter virtue epistemology and the turn toward epistemic value. I will propose and defend the position that widening the focus of analysis from *belief* to *person*, and from

justification to value, as virtue epistemology does, is necessary for a complete epistemological analysis.

The methodology that I defend in this thesis begins with the following questions: what is epistemology; what are the goals and values of epistemology; or simply, what are we trying to do when we do epistemology? These types of questions should be thought of as meta-epistemological, i.e. concerning the philosophy of epistemology.¹ Coming to a clear understanding of these questions at the beginning (and throughout) will help answer questions *within* epistemology. To answer these questions, two methods are used; the first is historical and the second axiological (or value-motivated). I will end the section with a definition of epistemology that will be used throughout the thesis.

0.0.1 Historical Review

One way to capture what epistemology is is to review the history of philosophy and see what philosophers were talking about when they first started *doing* epistemology. This would be a huge project, and not the current task. After all, philosophical inquiry has been occurring in the Western tradition for more than 2000 years. Further, philosophical inquiries evolve, and accordingly it would be understandable if ancient Greek philosophers were not asking exactly the same epistemological questions as epistemologists today; it may be anachronistic to assume either way. However, while this may be true, I think that not addressing the ancient philosophers, as is common amongst epistemologists today, is a mistake. Philosophical problems, although evolving, move rather slowly. Thus, a brief review of the word ‘epistemology’,² and of the

¹ This is potentially different than the epistemology of epistemology.

² I will use throughout this thesis single quotation marks to indicate a use of a word or phrase, and double quotation marks to indicate a reference.

relevant background will prove helpful. However, the following is not an instance of *doing* history of philosophy, but simply an illustration of how contemporary epistemology has taken shape. Further, the shapes that are presented are not necessarily in chronological order or without any gaps, but merely a rough characterization that is needed to have an understanding of the project at hand.

With that said, ‘epistemology’ is the conjunction of two ancient Greek words: ‘*episteme*’ and ‘*logos*’. ‘Episteme’ is generally translated as <knowledge>. Logos (or ‘ology’) is often translated as <the account of> or <study of>.³ Accordingly, epistemology is often thought of as *The Study of Knowledge*. As we will see, the characterization that I will defend below is more than the study of knowledge, but this account will do for the time being.

The first systematic treatment of knowledge is Plato’s (c. 369BC) *Theaetetus*. In this dialogue, Socrates and Theaetetus attempt to define what knowledge (viz. episteme) is. Though their pursuit ultimately ends in aporia (i.e. confusion or bewilderment, with the result that they do not achieve their goal), they do importantly agree that whatever knowledge is, it is something more than simply having true belief about a matter. That is, a person can have a true belief (e.g. <the defendant is guilty>) accidentally (e.g. the belief is formed upon hearsay), which would decidedly not be knowledge given its similarity to a lucky guess. Call this the *Difference-Constraint*. The difference-constraint illustrates that knowledge (whatever it is) is different than accidental (mere) true belief. Thus, any philosophical account of the nature of knowledge must illustrate how it is different than accidental true belief. Accordingly, much of Plato’s dialogue is spent trying to define

³ Also translated as *reason*, and *word*.

‘logos’ (i.e. epistemic justification), which is thought to be what differentiates knowledge from mere (accidental) true belief, and is what Socrates and Theaetetus ultimately fail to define.

This model of the study of knowledge is called the *Justified True Belief* (JTB) theory of knowledge. In this methodology, for a person to know something the belief has to be true and it has to be justified. A person cannot know something if it is false (e.g. the proposition <the earth is flat> was never an instance of knowledge, because it was never true). A true belief is when a person has a belief and it corresponds to how the world actually is—e.g., I form the belief <the earth is an oblate spheroid [round]> and the earth really is an oblate spheroid, or when one thinks they see a mountain lion in their backyard, and in fact they do. Only then is their belief true.⁴ However, as the difference-constraint points out, my belief (e.g. <the earth is an oblate spheroid>) could yet be accidentally (merely) true. What is needed for my belief to count as an instance of knowledge is there to be a good reason why I formed the belief (and it be true). Accordingly, taking its lead from Plato’s *Theaetetus*, discussion within the JTB theory of knowledge hinges around debates concerning what it means for a *belief* to be epistemically justified. We can ask: what constitutes a good reason to believe something, or when is a belief epistemically justified? Let’s look at the most stringent standards first.⁵

⁴Putting debates about *realist metaphysics* and *correspondence theory of truth* to the side.

⁵ It is important to point out that it is an open question whether Plato was referring to episteme as something in principle unattainable, at least for certain objects. It is often thought that episteme for Plato and Aristotle was demonstrative knowledge: knowledge of an object with an account that could not be otherwise. Pasnau (2010, pp. 26-28) points out that this constraint on knowledge was relaxed because it is important to be talking about things that are attainable for the common people and for the philosopher. This marks what could be thought of as the first value turn in epistemology. In other words, philosophers changed their attention to something that we (qua humans, i.e., commoners and philosophers) care about, by changing the scope of epistemological evaluation to what we value.

The well-known infallibilist René Descartes (c. 1637) sets strict epistemic standards. His view—*infallibilism*—holds that for a belief to be epistemically justified it must be indubitable; the justification has to guarantee the truth of the belief. It is argued, however, that this leads to philosophical skepticism (the view that knowledge is harder to attain than we ordinarily think). Most of our commonsense beliefs (e.g. <I had oatmeal this morning>) would be incapable of being knowledge, because in principle it is possible to doubt their accuracy. For this reason, fallibilism has been the standard view in contemporary epistemology. *Fallibilism* decreases the level of epistemic justification for a belief to be considered as knowledge. With a fallibilist picture, one does not need certainty that their belief is true, but simply have good epistemic justification for their belief. The question then becomes: how strong of epistemic justification is needed for a true belief to be an instance of knowledge?

Edmund Gettier's (1963) "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" spurred an important trend in the study of knowledge. In this short paper, Gettier persuasively argues that a person (who goes by, say, the variable) S can have strong epistemic support for a (true) belief, and yet still fail to satisfy the difference-constraint. For example,⁶ while waiting for the train to arrive S looks at a clock on the wall to check the time. It reads: 5:34, so S forms the corresponding belief <it's 5:34>. Further, imagine this suffices adequate epistemic justification for S's belief. Further again, it is true; it is 5:34 at that time. However, S does not realize that the clock has been broken for two days. The evidence is faulty, and S's belief—although epistemically justified—is still only (luckily) accidentally true. Accordingly, something more than justified true belief (JTB)

⁶ N.B. This is not one of Gettier's original examples, but I have borrowed it from Bertrand Russell, and later Jennifer Nagel.

is needed for a belief to satisfy the difference-constraint. This is known as the *Gettier problem*. I will discuss the Gettier problem more below. Again, it is introduced here merely to indicate the trajectory of the contemporary debate.

In his (1967) “A Causal Theory of Knowing” Alvin Goldman offers an influential response to the Gettier problem, which has been taken as the first clear statement of an external epistemological theory. *Externalism* is the view that S’s epistemic justification for a belief need not be *internal* to S’s rational awareness—it can be *external*. Goldman writes,

[A] necessary condition of S's seeing that there is a vase in front of him is that there be a certain kind of causal connection between the presence of the vase and S's believing that a vase is present. I shall not attempt to describe this causal process in detail. Indeed, to a large extent, a description of this process must be regarded as a problem for the special sciences, not for philosophy. But a certain causal process—viz. that which standardly takes place when we say that so-and-so sees such-and-such—must occur. That our ordinary concept of sight (i.e., knowledge acquired by sight) includes a causal requirement is shown by the fact that if the relevant causal process is absent we would withhold the assertion that so-and-so saw such-and-such (pp. 358-359).

Thus, Goldman adds the following *Reliability-Constraint* to knowledge: for a belief to be epistemically justified, and therefore to be considered as knowledge if true, it needs to be produced by a reliable truth-conducive process. Take the above train example. S’s true belief was not caused by the world being 5:34. A faulty clock caused the belief, and faulty clocks are not reliably conducive methods for forming true beliefs (i.e. not an epistemically good way to believe something). Thus, S’s belief would not be considered knowledge simply because it is not epistemically justified; it does not adhere to the reliability-constraint.

Internalism is the contrary position. It holds that the reliability-constraint is not sufficient for converting a true belief into knowledge. In addition, an *Awareness-*

Constraint must be met. Laurence Bonjour's (1980) well-known clairvoyance thought-experiment against externalism illustrates this point. Bonjour writes,

Norman, under certain conditions that usually obtain, is a completely reliable clairvoyant with respect to certain kinds of subject matter. He possesses no evidence or reasons of any kind for or against the general possibility of such a cognitive power, or for or against the thesis that he possesses it. One day Norman comes to believe that the President is in New York City, though he has no evidence either for or against this belief. In fact the belief is true and results from his clairvoyant power, under circumstances in which it is completely reliable (p. 62).

Bonjour asks whether Norman's belief is epistemically justified (i.e. whether it is epistemically good to believe). Without awareness (or potential awareness) that the belief is likely to be reliable, Norman is said by Bonjour to be irrational, and not epistemically justified. What is needed is awareness (or potential awareness) that the belief is likely to be true.

However, a standard concern with such a requirement on justification is that if a belief needs to adhere to the awareness-constraint, then most commonsense beliefs would not be epistemically justified. Take for instance visual knowledge. Commonsensically, we want to say that we know there is a vase on the table when we see a vase on the table, but what gives us reason to trust our eyesight? Do we know how vision works? Plus, are we always directly aware of such grounds of our beliefs? These are difficult questions, and it is not clear how to respond to any of the disputes or even whether the disputes are decisive. Nevertheless, at first glance, there are good reasons to think that the awareness-constraint is not necessary for knowledge, and good reasons to think that the reliability-constraint is not sufficient for knowledge. Meanwhile, issues regarding fallibility and epistemic luck remain a problem too.

There are many more issues in contemporary epistemology that have not been mentioned, but this provides the rough shape of contemporary epistemology that this thesis interacts with. However, let us try a different method to answer the meta-epistemological questions above.

0.0.2 Axiological Review

As said above, “we want to say that we know there is a vase on the table when we see a vase on the table,” but what do our desires and values have to do with epistemic evaluation? This leads to another important meta-epistemological starting point. To find the goals (and values) of the discipline of epistemology we can also look at the goals and values of epistemic agents. An epistemic agent is any creature that has a cognitive system (i.e. something that needs cognition to move around its environment).

Specifically, I will be discussing humans as agents, but presumably other cognitive creatures have values worth exploring as well. At present (cf. chapter 3), I will take it for granted that we (as humans) desire to have our beliefs be true, desire to have rational beliefs, desire to have our beliefs cohere with other held beliefs, desire to acquire new beliefs and avoid false belief, desire to stay alive, and desire to live happy lives. In short, humans (and other cognitive creatures) have needs and desires that must be met. This is enough to get epistemology turned toward value.

With the consideration of value and desire entering into the discussion, epistemology as a study of knowledge begins to widen. Instead of asking, what is knowledge?, what is epistemic justification?, what is rationality?, what are the limits of knowledge?, and is knowledge possible? (questions concerning the nature of knowledge), the turn toward value in epistemology begins with questions such as: why is knowledge

valuable?, is knowledge valuable?, and is having knowledge more valuable than having a mere true belief?⁷ Jonathan Kvanvig argues that,

[a]n account of the nature of knowledge incompatible with its value would be problematic, as would an explanation of the value of knowledge that assumed an inadequate conception of the nature of knowledge” (2003, p. x).

In sum, the nature and the *value* of knowledge are not entirely separate issues. However, only recently have questions concerning epistemic value been given explicit consideration.

William P. Alston motions toward an explicit analysis of epistemic value in his (1993) “Epistemic Desiderata” and his (2005) *Beyond “Justification” Dimensions of Epistemic Evaluation*. In his 2005, he writes:

All we have is the plurality of features of belief that are of positive value for the cognitive enterprise. They need no validation from a connection with a supposed master epistemic desideratum picked out by ‘justified’ (p. 22).

Given that the “cognitive enterprise” (more on this below) is leading Alston’s pursuit, he recognizes that there are epistemic *values*, and not just one. There are many different epistemic desiderata—i.e., many different features of belief that are valuable “from the standpoint of the aims of cognition” (Ibid.). Accordingly, he sees the pursuit of correctly defining epistemic justification, as if there were only one way to be epistemically valuable, as missing the point.

To answer our meta-epistemological question “what is epistemology?” we can use Linda Zagzebski’s following characterization:

Epistemology is the study of right or good ways to cognitively grasp reality (2009, p. 8).

⁷ That does not exhaust the types of questions that value-driven or the standard model ask, but it is sufficient to see the difference between the two approaches.

As I will argue throughout the thesis, characterizing epistemology this way is fecund with insight. “Cognitively grasp[ing] reality” leaves open whether knowledge, or epistemic justification, or truth, or rationality, or another epistemic value (e.g. understanding or wisdom), is the primary epistemological focus. Furthermore, it illuminates the happenings of epistemic occurrences, i.e. it depicts just what “the epistemic” is. Moreover, it is often thought that possessing knowledge is both an intrinsic and a practical good, so characterizing epistemology as the study of “right or good [...]” has the *normative* force that we are looking for. That is, capturing the ways that cognitively grasping reality is valuable/good is the proper goal of epistemology (and consequently this project). In sum, the above characterization captures what epistemologists have been doing throughout history, and makes room for the possibility of a plurality of epistemic values—including intellectual virtues, which I will evaluate in Part One.

0.0.3 Summary of Project

Epistemology is generally thought to be the study of knowledge, and talk of the epistemic, the epistemological, and the meta-epistemological are often run together. However, to try avoiding confusion I will use ‘epistemic’ (or ‘epistemically’) to refer to the cognitive grasp of reality. I will use ‘epistemology’ (or ‘epistemologically’) to refer to the study of said grasping. Further, I will use ‘meta-epistemology’ (or ‘meta-epistemologically’) to refer to the theoretical study of *epistemology*. Accordingly, both of the latter types of “study” are recursively epistemic. That is, analyzing (i.e. studying) the manner in which we (as humans) cognitively grasp reality—i.e. epistemology—is in itself a way to cognitively grasp reality, and analyzing (i.e. studying) epistemology—i.e., meta-epistemology—is in itself a way to cognitively grasp reality.

The following schematic is how I will refer to the disputes within epistemology as a whole (qua discipline), where p is a belief, x is an epistemological theory, and q is a meta-epistemological theory:

Epistemology:

Epistemic Evaluation — “belief p is true/good.”

Epistemological Evaluation — “ x is a good method to evaluate p .”

Meta-Epistemological Evaluation — “ q is a good method to evaluate x .”

People partake in epistemic evaluation on a daily basis. We desire to know what to believe about certain matters, and we often think that others should or should not believe something. For instance, it is possible to find ourselves on a legal pursuit to find out who is guilty of a crime (thus asking, what should I believe?); or interacting with the (highly valued) scientific method or (less valued) astrology (thus asking why is either one trustful?); there are proselytizing recruiters at your door; there are deceitful politicians; etc. This is in part why the study of epistemic evaluation is important. We not only want to know what is true or what one should believe (forms of *epistemic* evaluation), but also we want to know why it is true and why one should believe (forms of *epistemological* evaluation). Finally we can ask: why is true belief a good thing, and how should we evaluate an answer to this question (*meta-epistemological* questions)? I will often refer to each level respectively for clarity, or sometimes simply as ‘epistemic’, since they all involve the aspect of trying to grasp reality. Further, I will refer to the sum simply as the subject matter of the discipline of epistemology.

The turn toward value is a meta-epistemological movement. This movement maintains that epistemological theories should mirror our values as epistemic agents. Accordingly, the scope of epistemological evaluation is broadened to include persons (not just beliefs) and a plurality of epistemic values. This thesis will argue that virtue epistemology (as an epistemological theory) distinctively endorses this shift, and is fecund with theoretical and practical insight.⁸

In Part One, I introduce two contrasting forms of virtue epistemology: *Virtue Reliabilism* and *Virtue Responsibilism*. Although the two types of virtue epistemology have incongruent conceptions of intellectual virtue, they both shift the focus from belief to encompass the whole of the person. Accordingly, virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism should be considered as compatible in their scope of epistemological evaluation. When taken as a whole, virtue epistemology is unique.

In Part Two, I introduce and evaluate what is known as the value problem; or the *Meno problem*⁹— because it reaches back to another of Plato’s ancient dialogues. This will continue to bear out key differences between virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism, but more importantly it will highlight their fundamental similarities. I will argue that they come together again in the following commitment: that grasping reality is constitutive of living a good life. Furthermore, it will be suggested that if we are taking the whole of the person to be the focus of evaluation, then it is plausible that we need the two differing views for a complete epistemological analysis.

⁸ It has led to research programs in social epistemology, feminist epistemology, applied epistemology, and ameliorative epistemology.

⁹ Not to be confused with Meno’s Paradox, as will become clear.

In Part Three, I show how virtue epistemology can answer anti-realist objections such as those found in Allan Hazlett's (2013) *A Luxury of the Understanding: On the Value of True Belief*. Another of Plato's dialogues, the *Euthyphro*, will pose as a backdrop to the discussion. Contra Hazlett, I will argue that true belief is necessary for human flourishing, and that epistemic normativity is real. I will take virtue epistemology as theoretically and practically valuable if it can account for these anti-realist worries.

Overall, I will argue in defense of the following two general claims: first, epistemology is a normative discipline—at base it is about how humans should live, and second, virtue epistemology is theoretically and practically valuable. To begin, let us get clear on what virtue epistemology is.

Part One – Virtue

Introduction –

Virtue epistemology is epistemological evaluation that gives *intellectual virtue* a primary role in its methodology. In the contemporary literature there are two contrasting views of intellectual virtue: *Virtue Reliabilism* and *Virtue Responsibilism*. However, the apparent disharmony between these views causes *epistemological* dissonance. With this in mind, Alston writes,

What is nowadays called “virtue epistemology” is a sprawling, diverse, even chaotic territory. There is not even a rough commonality as to what counts as an intellectual virtue, much less how it functions in belief formation or how this bears on epistemic status (2005, p. 153).

Call the above sentiment, *Alston’s Worry*. Part One is meant to speak to Alston’s worry, and to conceptualize virtue epistemology in a unified way.

However, before introducing intellectual virtue, it is important to see that epistemology has been borrowing moral concepts more or less implicitly for a while now. After an exposition of how epistemology often borrows from moral theory (§1.1), four theorist’s views of intellectual virtue will be presented (§1.2). Lastly (§1.3), I will argue that even though there are contrasting conceptions of intellectual virtue, virtue epistemology (when taken as whole) is unified in its meta-epistemological commitment that epistemological analysis should focus on the person. Virtue epistemology is an agent-based as opposed to a belief-based approach—and this represents an important difference between it and the more standard approach to epistemological questions.

1.1 Moral Theory and Epistemology

It is common to hold that an action, by a person, can be either wrong or good (or any of the synonyms). For instance, killing people for fun is bad; one should not do it.

Moreover, donating to charity or saving a drowning victim is good. Ethics (or moral theory) is the domain of philosophy that investigates the normative demands of how one should act. In this section, I will review the relevant moral theories, illustrate how epistemology often borrows—either implicitly or explicitly—the terminology and ideas from moral theory, and investigate their established impacts on epistemology.

1.1.1 Consequentialism and Deontology

Consequentialism and deontology have been the two main types of ethical theories in the last fifty years or so. What is of relevance here is that many epistemological theories of knowledge, justification, and other epistemic values (i.e. epistemic normativity) often borrow terminology from ethics (Zagzebski, 1996, p. 3). This happens either implicitly or explicitly. Accordingly, epistemological analysis has predominately borrowed its terminology from the two main theories.

Consequentialism holds that acts should be morally evaluated in terms of their outcomes. For instance, a consequentialist would argue that killing for fun is morally wrong, because doing so does not end with the best possible consequences. In other words, the ends justify the means. However, deontologists argue that acts should be morally evaluated in terms of whether performing them violates moral rules or moral duties. For example, they would argue that killing for fun is morally wrong not because of the (bad) consequences, but rather because there is a duty not to kill for fun. The moral duty is derived from established principles/rules. Put another way, the ends cannot justify the means.

Though it is common to hold that an action, by a person, can be either wrong or good (or any of the synonyms), it is less common to hold that a belief, held by a person, can be either wrong or good. Nonetheless, Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid (c. 1785) writes, “[t]o believe without evidence is a weakness which every [person] is concerned to avoid, and which every [person] wishes to avoid” (II 20; W 328a). Further, “[a]ll good evidence is commonly called reasonable evidence, and very justly, because it ought to govern our belief as reasonable creatures” (Ibid.). The terms “weakness”, “good”, and “ought” are evaluative, and presuppose a normative mandate that governs how one should believe. Further, W.K. Clifford writes, “it is wrong always, everywhere, and for any one, to believe upon insufficient evidence” (1877, p. 295). In this sense, we often hold that one should not believe they saw a ghost—i.e. that it is “wrong” to do so, or that one ought not to do so.¹⁰ Although it is less common than normatively evaluating acts, these textual examples illustrate the established practice of normatively evaluating beliefs. With that said, when epistemological theories appropriate different moral terminology we can expect the usual criticisms of said theory to be imported as well (Cf. Zagzebski, 2006, p. 25).

With traditional (non-virtue theoretic) epistemology and its focus on epistemic justification in mind, internalist theories can be seen as adopting the language of deontology, and externalist theories as adopting the language of consequentialism (Ibid. pp. 7-8). For instance, the traditional internalist could argue that an epistemic agent is not justified in the following belief: <that was a ghost>, because the belief would neglect epistemic rules; the belief would (most likely) not satisfy epistemic obligations, even if

¹⁰ We can ask can, what governs a belief, and why it is wrong to believe in ghosts? We will return to the investigation of the source of these normative claims in Part Three below.

by chance it were true. In other words, the awareness-constraint, which the internalist endorses, can be seen as a duty or obligation that needs to be satisfied if the belief is considered as justified. However, the traditional externalist could argue that an epistemic agent is not justified in the ghost belief, given that the belief forming practices that produced the belief (generally) do not reliably produce a good end, namely a true belief. The reliability-constraint, which is endorsed by the externalist, can be seen as emphasizing epistemological evaluation in terms of consequences. Each theory holds that the ghost belief is unjustified, but the emphasis of epistemological evaluation is put in different places: one wholly on the ends of the belief, and the other on the means for the belief.

Accordingly, deontology (and epistemological internalism) is criticized for putting too much emphasis on the right rules, and not enough on the good ends. For instance if a deontologist holds that lying is morally wrong, and a murderer is at the front door, then under such rules the person is not morally permitted to tell a white lie for the sake of good consequences.¹¹ So too, as we saw above, the epistemological internalist is seen as too demanding; if a belief needs to adhere to the awareness-constraint, then most commonsense beliefs would not be epistemically justified.

On the other hand, consequentialism (and epistemological externalism) is criticized for putting too much of an emphasis on good ends, and not enough on obligations and duties (i.e. personal rules).¹² For example, under a consequentialist ethic it may be morally okay to secretly harvest the organs of an innocent homeless person in order save five children—in the end (it is assumed) one person's rights hardly matters

¹¹ The thought here being that the *Right* outweighs the *Good*.

¹² The thought here being that the *Good* outweighs the *Right*.

when compared to the good of the five. Again, as we saw above, the epistemological externalist (like the consequentialist) is criticized for losing an emphasis on the intention or duties that need to be met by the person. Although the respective moral theories can perhaps account for these worries, we as epistemologists should be concerned not to implicitly appropriate the terminology—with the result of inheriting the potential difficulties.

1.1.2 Virtues

Because it promises to alleviate some of the concerns that the two leading moral theories face, virtue theory (as a moral analysis) has been revitalized. Elizabeth Anscombe (1958) is often credited with bringing discussion of virtue back into the debate. There has been a long tradition of virtue discussion within philosophy, specifically in the ancient and medieval literature, but only since Anscombe was ‘virtue’ explicit in the *contemporary* literature on ethics. Virtue ethics, as the contemporary theory is called, derives its motivation from Aristotle’s discussion of moral virtues. As virtue theorists argue, such an analysis is theoretically and practically beneficial. One of the theoretical benefits of virtue ethics is that virtue concepts, e.g. courage, have normativity built into them. That is, they are descriptive and prescriptive in one term.¹³ Further, they have a practical ameliorative element. That is, they form a platform for becoming virtuous. In this way, talk of virtue attempts to avoid (1) an emphasis on principles/rules that may seem empty, and (2) an emphasis on consequences that disregard the intentions of the person.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* (c. 350 BC), Aristotle argues that everything is done for the sake of *eudaimonia*—that is for the sake of living well. Individuals want

¹³ They are often referred to as “thick” concepts opposed to “thin”.

happiness, wellbeing, or simply eudaimonia not for the sake of anything else, but for itself, viz. it is an end-in-itself. Further, he argues not only that the human soul (or mind) has two parts—the appetitive and the rational—but also that humans are capable of acquiring and possessing two types of virtues (or excellences, from Greek *arete*) with respect to each part of the soul: moral virtues and intellectual virtues. Possessing virtues, it is argued, will help an individual achieve eudaimonia. According to Aristotle, moral virtues belong to the appetitive part of the soul, and are actively acquired states such as justice, courage, temperance, and generosity.¹⁴ To acquire these states takes an active engagement, often learning from an exemplar, such as an already virtuous agent. Aristotle’s moral virtues commonsensically map onto notions of what it is to be *virtuous*. However, Aristotle also presents five *intellectual* virtues, which are less in line with what are usually thought of as virtues, and will need to be differentiated from the contemporary usage.

Aristotle’s intellectual virtues are: intuitive reason (*nous*), scientific knowledge (*episteme*), philosophical wisdom (*sophia*), art (*techne*), and practical wisdom (*phronesis*); they are “states by virtue of which the soul possesses truth by way of affirmation or denial” (1139b16).¹⁵ Note that these virtues for Aristotle are, as noted above, acquired states—he does not include natural faculties such as vision or hearing on his list. There is much to be said about Aristotle’s notion of intellectual virtue (and its connection with his moral virtues), but given the contemporary epistemological

¹⁴ We will have a more thorough explication of Aristotle’s moral virtues below, given their similarity to virtue responsibilists account of *intellectual* virtue.

¹⁵ Aristotle’s intellectual virtues can be broken up into two different types: (i) *Theoretical* (viz. *nous*, *episteme*, and *sophia*), which regard necessary truths such as math and geometry; (ii) *Practical* (viz. *techne* and *phronesis*), which regard contingent truths such as how to make something or how to act (Cf. Heather Battaly’s, 2015, *Virtue*, p. 45).

literature's deviation from Aristotle's conception of intellectual virtues, pursuing such matters is not necessary for the present discussion.

1.1.3 Virtue Epistemology

As noted above, virtue ethics is an attempt to avoid the theoretical concerns that face consequentialism and deontology. Similarly, virtue epistemology gives 'intellectual virtue' (though not Aristotle's conception of the phrase) a primary role in epistemological analysis, and is an attempt to avoid the theoretical challenges that face traditional epistemology. While virtue epistemology often tries to be explicit in appropriating the language and ideas from moral theory, we will see that some theorists are less forthright. Having now provided a sufficient view of the moral terminology found in epistemological analysis, as well as an introduction to virtue, I will begin to explicate virtue reliabilism, given that it was the first to introduce intellectual virtue into the contemporary epistemological literature.

1.2 Virtue Reliabilism

There are two accounts of virtue reliabilism that I will discuss: Ernest Sosa's (§1.2.1), and John Greco's (§1.2.2). I will refer to the virtue reliabilist's conception of 'intellectual virtue' as *faculty virtues*.

1.2.1 Sosa

To alleviate epistemological disputes between foundationalism and coherentism,¹⁶ Ernest Sosa introduces 'intellectual virtue' into the contemporary literature. In "The Raft and the Pyramid", he writes,

¹⁶ Although not necessary for the present concern, the disputes between foundationalism and coherentism roughly regard how a (particular) belief is epistemically justified. Is it justified because the belief rests on top of a secure *foundation* (which seems implausible, since each mental state of the believer is up for

We need to consider more carefully the concept of a virtue and the distinction between moral and intellectual virtues. In epistemology, there is reason to think that the most useful and illuminating notion of intellectual virtue will prove broader than our tradition would suggest and must give due weight not only to the subject and his intrinsic nature but also to his environment and to his epistemic community (1980, p. 23).

Before explicating Sosa's view of intellectual virtues, it is important to highlight the more narrow "tradition" mentioned—he has Aristotle in mind. Whereas Aristotle's intellectual (and moral) virtues are acquired through active and rigorous personal motivation, Sosa formulates his conception of intellectual virtues in terms of innate natural abilities.

Sosa writes, "[l]et us define an intellectual virtue or *faculty* as a competence in virtue of which one would mostly attain the truth and avoid error in a certain field of propositions F, when in certain conditions C" (*emphasis added*. 1991, p. 138). That is, when a person is in a proper environment, say a lighted room, they are able, using their visual faculty, to grasp truths and avoid error relative to propositions about matters in their visual field. So stated, this part of Sosa's virtue epistemology is notably similar to other externalist-reliabilist theories.

Nevertheless, we can ask: is having such a reliable faculty a "virtue" in the relevant sense? Sosa responds,

Not in a narrow Aristotelian sense, of course [...] [b]ut there is a broader sense of "virtue," still Greek, in which anything with a function – natural or artificial – does have virtues. The eye does after all, have its virtues and so does a knife. [He cites Plato's *Republic*, Bk. I, 352] And if we include grasping the truth about one's environment among the proper ends of a human being, then the faculty of sight would seem in a broad sense a virtue in human beings; and if grasping the truth is an intellectual matter then that virtue is also in a straightforward sense an intellectual virtue (1991, p. 271).

debate), or is it justified because the beliefs strong *coherence* to other beliefs (which seems impossible, since the belief could be coherently free-floating while not mapping onto reality) (Cf. Sosa, 1980)?

‘Virtue’ in this broader sense is, as Sosa says, unlike Aristotle’s acquired abilities.

Intellectual virtues for Sosa are reliable cognitive *faculties*, i.e. truth-conducive vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch, memory, introspection, and reason.¹⁷

1.2.2 *Greco*

Greco is also an advocate of this manner of conceiving of virtue. He writes of knowledge as a kind of achievement:

In cases of knowledge, *S* believes the truth because *S* believes from intellectual ability. Because abilities are reliable dispositions, the account is a version of reliabilism. Because abilities are person-level dispositions, the account is a version of agent reliabilism (2010, p. 10).

Abilities are described broadly, but most notably they are natural (non-acquired) abilities.

Further, this approach is virtue-theoretic, he writes,

because it proposes to understand knowledge in terms of ability or virtue. It is important to note, however, that the virtues are not here understood as moral virtues. On the contrary, the notion of “virtue” in play is *person-level excellence*. Moral virtues are only one kind of person-level excellence (2012, p. 2).

Again, there is an emphasis that virtues are much broader than the Aristotelian active engaged type.

1.2.3 *Faculty Virtues*

For Greco, as for Sosa, intellectual virtues are truth-conducive reliable cognitive faculties. Accordingly, I will refer to both Sosa and Greco’s conception of intellectual virtue as faculty virtues. Further, because both theorists have a reliability requirement they will be referred to as virtue reliabilists. However, at least one other epistemological

¹⁷ To be clear, Sosa defines knowledge in two ways. He differentiates between what he calls animal knowledge and human knowledge. He thinks that most of our knowledge is animal knowledge. This is by way of trying to alleviate the dispute between externalism and internalism. There are many interesting questions that can be asked, but his conception of intellectual virtue as cognitive faculty is the important part here.

virtue-theorist, as we will see below, has a reliability requirement on intellectual virtue while *not* endorsing faculty virtues. So what distinguishes Sosa and Greco's virtue reliabilism, qua epistemic virtue theory, is not a commitment to the reliability-constraint but rather the emphasis they place on cognitive faculties.

1.3 Virtue Responsibilism

There are two accounts of virtue responsibilism that I will discuss: Linda Zagzebski's and Jason Baehr's. I will refer to the virtue responsibilist's conception of 'intellectual virtue' as *character virtues*.

1.3.1 Zagzebski

Zagzebski is credited with offering the first complete defense of virtue responsibilism, as it is now known.¹⁸ Unlike Sosa and Greco, her conception of intellectual virtue gets its motivation directly from Aristotle, but not from his discussion of intellectual virtues. Rather, Zagzebski is attracted to the acquired aspect of Aristotle's moral virtues. She writes,

A virtue, then, can be defined as a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end. What I mean by a motivation is a disposition to have a motive; a motive is an action guiding emotion with a certain end, either internal or external (p. 137).

Specifically, she defines intellectual virtue as a "motivation for knowledge and reliability in attaining the aims of these motives" (p. 166).¹⁹ Accordingly, like Sosa and Greco, she too endorses the reliability-constraint: the intellectual virtue needs to produce the desired end with reliable success. However, unlike the virtue reliabilists she does not locate

¹⁸ Cf. Lorraine Code's (1987) *Epistemic Responsibility*.

¹⁹ Later she holds that the motivation in general is for cognitive contact with the reality.

intellectual virtue in natural abilities. What's more, requiring that an intellectual virtue be an "acquired" excellence, and having "motivation" be defined as an action guiding emotion (which requires psychological awareness), makes it clear that internalist motivations are present.

Against virtue reliabilism and the faculty virtues conception, Zagzebski writes,

In the years since Sosa introduced the concept of intellectual virtue into the epistemological literature, the term "virtue epistemology" has become known as another name for reliabilism [...] But as we have seen reliabilism is structurally parallel to consequentialism, not virtue theory (p. 10).

In short, Zagzebski's conception of intellectual virtue is fully and explicitly developed from virtue ethics. She objects to the virtue reliabilist that they are not forthright in their ethical appropriations, and consequently do not achieve the full theoretical and practical benefits from a virtue approach.

1.3.2 *Baehr*

Baehr is a virtue responsibilist who derives his motivation from Aristotle and Zagzebski.

He argues that:

[I]ntellectual virtues can be understood as character traits aimed at epistemic ends... (2011, p.220).

Again, intellectual virtues on this model are not innate cognitive faculties of the mind (viz. sight, hearing, touch, memory, etc.). Baehr's preferred character traits are modeled after Aristotle's moral virtues. Some examples of intellectual character virtues are: open-mindedness, curiosity, attentiveness, intellectual rigor, intellectual courage, intellectual humility, and intellectual justice.

What Baehr has in mind is that there are areas of inquiry in which one has to actively pursue in order to find the truth—for instance, history, philosophy, science, and

detective-work all require an active engagement. To cognitively grasp reality in these domains is demanding. It requires searching, reasoning, judging, self-scrutiny, consistency, reflection, and the openness to be wrong, to name just a few criteria. These criteria, Baehr holds, are related in a significant way with the personal character of the epistemic agent—specifically his or her *intellectual* character. Thus intellectual virtues for virtue responsibilism are *character virtues*.

This raises the following question: how does possessing a character-virtue allow for “cognitive contact with reality”. This is an important part of the picture. Let us take open-mindedness as our example. Baehr writes, “[h]ere an open-minded person characteristically moves beyond or temporarily sets aside his own doxastic commitments in order to give a fair and impartial hearing to the intellectual opposition” (2011 p. 142). In other words, if one is close-minded then they characteristically hold their doxastic commitments close, and do not give opposing intellectual positions an impartial hearing. Being open-minded allows for greater cognitive contact with reality because it does not close off parts of the world.

1.3.3 Character Virtues

For Baehr, as for Zagzebski, intellectual virtues are character traits aimed at epistemic ends. Accordingly, I will refer to both Zagzebski and Baehr’s conception of intellectual virtue as character virtues. Further, because both theorists have an active engagement requirement for character virtues they will be referred to as virtue responsibilists, since it highlights its positive orientation toward the awareness-constraint.

With that in mind, why does having good eyesight, and the other faculty virtues, not contribute to a person’s intellectual worth? More general, what does the

responsibilist conclude about the reliabilists conception of intellectual virtues, and vice versa? Can character-virtues account for faculty virtues, or can faculty virtues account for character virtues? How might they be united?

1.4 Overall Compatibility

Alston's worry is now apparent. Virtue epistemology is committed to two different notions of intellectual virtue. Given this dilemma, how are we to conceptualize virtue epistemology as a coherent whole?

1.4.1 *Virtue Responsibilist Considerations*

Speaking to Alston's worry, Baehr is explicit. He holds that his preferred character virtues cannot account for the immediate knowledge that is delivered by faculty virtues.

He writes,

Note first that a considerable amount of knowledge can be acquired independently of anything like a "search" for truth...Knowledge of this sort is relatively immediate and automatic; it requires little more than brute or default operation of our basic cognitive faculties (p. 18).

He has in mind perceptual knowledge (e.g. that I'm presently seeing *something*), introspective knowledge (e.g. that I feel my leg), and a priori knowledge (e.g. that two is greater than one). In such cases there is no "search" for truth because the belief is involuntary and the truth is immediate.²⁰ However, as emphasized above, there are areas of inquiry that one has to actively pursue in order to find the truth, and this is where Baehr's interest is located.

The beliefs that pre-theoretically should be considered as knowledge, according to Baehr, are produced through our properly functioning cognitive faculties such as good

²⁰ N.B. this does not take global skepticism as an open question.

eyesight, hearing, smell, memory, (and perhaps a priori reasoning) etc. The beliefs produced through such mechanisms, Baehr argues, do not fall under the character virtue umbrella: one cannot praise someone's intellectual character for seeing and forming the true belief that there is a tree in front of them (because they are not active in pursuing the truth of such a belief), but we should as epistemologists count such a true belief as knowledge.²¹ Nonetheless, he also argues that virtue reliabilists should turn their analysis toward character virtues, because "an exercise of character virtues is often manifested in and partly constituted by the operation of certain faculty virtues" (Baehr, p. Section 4.2). That is, in order for a character virtue to be considered as a genuine virtue, it must at least be assumed to be reliable at grasping reality. In short, he thinks that character virtues are uniquely interesting and worthwhile, and that virtue reliabilists, using their own principles, should care about them.

1.4.2 Virtue Reliabilist Apprehensions

Nevertheless, Kristoffer Alstrom-Vij's recent "Against Bifurcation of Virtue" (forthcoming), argues against virtue responsibilism. He argues that there is no need for character virtues, because such active inquiry can be accounted for by the faculty virtues (as Baehr unintentionally hints toward). Furthermore, in Sosa's recent (2015) *Judgment and Agency* he writes,

It has long been received wisdom that there are two quite distinct forms of virtue epistemology. One of these finds in epistemology important correlates of Aristotle's moral virtues. Such responsibilist character epistemology builds its account of epistemic normativity on the subject's responsible manifestation of epistemic character. The other form of virtue epistemology cleaves closer to Aristotelian intellectual virtues, while recognizing a broader set of competences

²¹ Accordingly, Baehr distinguishes four types of virtue-responsibilist research projects. They are: *Strong Conservative*, *Weak Conservative*, *Weak Autonomous*, and *Strong Autonomous*.

still restricted to basic faculties of perception, introspection, and the like. This orthodox dichotomy of our field is deeply misleading [...] (p. 36).

It is important to get clear on this contention, but for the present purposes it is enough to realize that there are different ways of grasping reality, and perhaps different ways of epistemologically fleshing this distinction out.

1.4.3 Changing the Epistemological Focus from Belief to Person

There are yet hopes to unify virtue epistemology. I will here point out that both virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism are (meta-epistemologically) united in their commitment that epistemological evaluation should be focused on the person, not solely focused on the belief. The “person” means first defining what a person is, what a person does, how a person interacts and depends on others, and importantly what a person values.

As we have begun to see, reliabilism, with its focus on faculty virtues, endorses a conception of persons as essentially connected to their environment. If the person is not connected to their environment in the right way, then something is wrong. Being connected to the environment, and to other people, is essentially what a person is/does. Responsibilism, taking motivation from Aristotle, conceives of persons as intricately wrapped up in a concern for eudaimonia. On this conception, a person often has sophisticated character traits that are used to get what they desire, viz. a good life, which involves the grasping of reality. In the cases of either type of virtue theory the emphasis is on the person, and requires a prior conception of what a person is.

In this way, virtue epistemology can be seen as naturalistic. However, I will have to be careful with my words. What I mean by “naturalistic” is that virtue epistemology, as I have been explaining it, does not acknowledge from the start that Cartesian external

world skepticism is a live option.²² That is, both types of virtue epistemology in some sense take for granted that the world that we are presented with is roughly how the world is. Thus, when doing epistemic evaluation the evil genius does not come into the discussion in a significant manner. It is assumed that we are not in the Matrix, or at least that is not the project when doing virtue epistemology. This can be seen by how each theory defines ‘intellectual virtue’. For something to be an intellectual virtue we must assume it to be connected to reality in the right way. If the intellectual virtue were found disconnected to reality in the right way, then both reliabilism and responsibilism would not endorse it as an intellectual virtue. Furthermore, the emphasis is on the person. This puts an emphasis in the right place. A belief does not grasp reality—what grasps reality is the person.

Conclusion –

Doing virtue epistemology is studying the cognitive grasping of reality by focusing on how human excellences (i.e. virtues) help with said graspings. I began by illustrating that epistemology borrows some terminology from ethics. Drawing from ethical theory, virtue epistemology gets its motivation from ancient Greek philosophers. Two contemporary theories of intellectual virtue were then presented. The two types of virtue epistemology, though different, are compatible in their meta-epistemological commitment that epistemological analysis should focus on virtues qua person. Where “person” includes what a person is, the person’s environment, other persons, and values. By way of a discussion on value, Part Two will continue to draw out the ways virtues help with grasping reality.

²² In this sense, virtue epistemology can also be characterized by a commitment to fallibilism.

Part Two – Value

Introduction –

Above, I argued that virtue epistemology—despite being split between faculty and character virtues—is unified by a unique shift of focus from *belief* to *person*.

Accordingly, virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism should be considered as compatible in their scope of epistemological evaluation. In this chapter, I will argue that when one considers virtue epistemology's focus on the values of persons, a plurality of *epistemic* values becomes apparent. The following discussion of epistemic value will go some way in illuminating some differences between virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism, but it will also uncover the following meta-epistemological commitment between the two theories: that grasping reality is constitutive of living a good life. That is, epistemic value (of some type) is necessary to live well.

I will start (§2.1) by introducing what has come to be known as the value problem for knowledge, and illustrate how virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism respond to this ancient problem. I will then (§2.2) show how their responses illustrate the many ways that grasping reality is a good (a value). I will end Part Two (§2.3) by arguing that what the theories have in common is a commitment that epistemic value is vitally important to living well.

2.1 The Value Problem

As noted above, epistemologists have traditionally taken knowledge as the main object of philosophical consideration. While a primary focus on the justification element of knowledge has taken a front seat in that pursuit, it was nonetheless commonly held that

knowledge is valuable. Evidence for this can be seen by Socrates' famous maxim, "The unexamined life is not worth living"; Aristotle's writings, "All men desire to know"; and Francis Bacon's quote, "Knowledge is power". The relevant sentiment is that knowledge is highly valuable. In this section, I will introduce the value problem for knowledge, and illustrate how virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism respond to this ancient problem.

2.1.1 *The Meno*

A discussion about the value of knowledge is first found in Plato's dialogue *The Meno*. The Meno Problem,²³ as it will be called, is about the value of knowledge over and above true belief. In this dialogue, Socrates asks his interlocutor, Meno, why is it better to have a guide that knows the way to the town of Larissa, than it is to have one that only has a true opinion. For instance, why is it better to have a knowledgeable guide that has been from Athens to Larissa and back many times—and thus knows the way to Larissa—to testify as to the correct route to Larissa, compared to the blind man, who has never trekked outside of Athens, yet has a true opinion. We can, if needed, further stipulate that the blind man's true opinion of the way to Larissa is true only because of luck (and thus does not satisfy the difference-constraint). Nonetheless—the guide who has knowledge and the blind man who merely truly believes—both will give us a true belief if asked about the route to Larissa. As travellers, we will end up getting to our destination either way, so (it is asked) why is knowledge prized more than mere true belief? This is the Meno problem.

²³ The Meno problem is distinguished from the more well known Meno's Paradox, which is that a person cannot search for either what they do know, because there would be no need to search for it, or for what they do not know, because they do not know what to look for and wouldn't know if they had found it. Although an interesting paradox, it is presently not the focus.

A natural answer to the problem says that the epistemic justification, which we can stipulate the knowledgeable guide has, gives her epistemic state more value than mere true belief. Indeed, this is Socrates's response to the Meno Problem: true belief that is tethered to the truth by an explanation (as Socrates answers) is better than mere true opinion, because it is less likely to run away, i.e. fail to be a true belief. For example, along the way to Larissa, if we have knowledge of the way then we are less likely to change our correct course, but if our true belief is not tied down with an explanation, then we will be more likely to lose our path.

Nonetheless, Socrates' answer to the problem seems to miss the point. He is weighing the options between knowledge and a true belief that might run away, whereas the original question compares knowledge and true belief, simpliciter. That is, if we assume that the true belief will not run away, then when comparing it to knowledge the practical value of each are equal. What we are looking for when explaining how knowledge is better than true belief is some inherent value of knowledge that does not reduce itself to the practical benefit of true belief, because we acquire that same practical benefit with mere true belief.

Nevertheless, it is recognized that having an account (i.e., epistemic justification)—as the knowledgeable guide has for her true belief—is more valuable than not having one. This is the axiological equivalent of the difference-constraint that was introduced above in discussion of Plato's *Theaetetus*. There it is asked what is the *nature* of the difference between mere true belief and a true belief with an account, and here an explanation of the difference in *value* is asked for. This turns epistemological evaluation toward what we (as humans) value. So, what explains the added value?

2.1.2 *Virtue Reliabilism's Response*

Virtue reliabilism's response to the Meno problem is that the agent in question, i.e., the knowledgeable person, has the true belief for a reason (i.e., has tethered their belief to the truth in some way), as Socrates suggests, but focuses not solely on the instrumental value of true belief, but also on the constitutive value of a successful performance. Greco (2010) writes,

When we say that someone knows something we are making a value judgment. We imply, for example, that his or her judgment is preferable to someone else's mere opinion. But then knowledge attributions and the like have a normative or evaluative dimension. Epistemology is a normative discipline (p. 2).

Greco further holds that knowledge is a kind of *success from ability*. In other words, it is “a kind of achievement, as opposed to a mere lucky success” (p.4). Further, because it is a kind of success, the knower deserves credit, while the mere true believer does not.

The term ‘knowledge’ is then treated as an honorific term that is given to a true belief that has some guarantee of being true in the right way—and is true. Just as in a race, the person who crosses the finishing line first is honored with the term ‘winner’, a true belief that is not a mere lucky guess is honored with the term ‘knowledge’. More importantly, if the person who crosses the finishing line first is found out to have cheated the term winner is revoked—for the value of winning is not there. Likewise, a true belief that involves luck is not honored with the term ‘knowledge’. It has cheated, so to speak. The value of knowledge is absent in such cases.

For another illustration of virtue reliabilists' response to the value problem, Sosa (2002) writes:

The Grasping of the truth central to truth-connected reliabilist epistemology is not just the truth that may be visited upon our beliefs by happenstance or external agency. We desire rather truth gained through our own performances, and this

seems a reflectively defensible desire for a good preferable not just extrinsically but intrinsically. What we prefer is the deed of true believing, where not only the believing but also its truth is attributable to the agent as his or her own doing (p. 23).

Accordingly, knowledge is a kind of creditable act where the agent deserves credit.

Further, Sosa writes, “[b]elief amounts to knowledge when apt: that is to say, when its correctness is attributable to a competence exercised in appropriate conditions” (2007, p. 92). For example, knowledge is like the act of a skilled archer who hits the bull’s eye, whereas mere true belief is like an unskilled “archer” who hits the bull’s eye without skill, but by mere luck. This explains the added value that we place on knowledge over and above true belief: we admire the *skill* of the trained archer. It is *their* doing that helped them attain their goal. That is, even though the end result in both cases ends in a bull’s eye shot, the skilled archer’s bull’s eye is perceived as more valuable because it was a competent performance, not just a lucky success.

However, an objection to virtue reliabilism’s response to the Meno problem is the *Problem of Easy Credit*. Jennifer Lackey (2009) argues that both immediate knowledge (which virtue reliabilism quintessentially focuses on) and testimonial knowledge are too easy to acquire for it to be plausible that the knower deserves credit for the true belief. She gives an example of a Chicago visitor who receives testimony of the whereabouts of the Sears Tower. After receiving the testimony, it is stipulated that the visitor has knowledge of the whereabouts of the Sears Tower, but it is argued does not deserve credit for the true belief. This can be extended to the earlier mentioned belief about the shape of the earth. It hardly seems evident that I *deserve credit* for my true belief: <the earth is an oblate spheroid>. If Lackey is correct, the value of knowledge over and above true

belief is not explained by the credit due to a competent performance or to the success from ability.

In response to this type of objection to answers to the Meno problem, Wayne Riggs (2009) argues for a distinction between credit as “praiseworthiness” and credit as “attributability”. That is, the agent who has acquired testimonial knowledge can be credited with the success, because (Riggs writes):

a variety of cognitive abilities, mechanisms, and so forth are implicated in sound testimonial judgment [...] The fact that the possession and exercise of these abilities are required for sound testimonial judgment, I claim, makes it reasonable to say that success by way of those abilities is *attributable* to the believer as cognitive agent (*emphasis added*, p. 214).

Not to get into the details of testimonial knowledge, the dispute is mentioned here to illustrate that the problem of easy credit, though noteworthy, is possibly not as detrimental to virtue reliabilism as first appears.

2.1.3 Virtue Responsibilism's Response

Virtue responsibilism's response to the value problem is similar to virtue reliabilism's in that it involves credit to the agent when the true belief is possessed because virtuously formed, but also places additional value on the motivational aspect that is required of character virtues. That is, a *desire* for knowledge (or relevant epistemic good) is something that faculty virtues do not require. The added active-agency requirement of character virtues serves as a truth-independent value. For instance, Baehr writes,

An intellectual virtue is a character trait that contributes to its possessor's personal intellectual worth on account of its involving a positive psychological orientation toward epistemic goods (p. 102).

We can ask: why does having a positive psychological orientation toward the epistemic good contribute to personal intellectual worth of a person? In response, it might be said

the strong motivation for the truth helps one to acquire more truths. For example, part of the value of scientific research is not only the instrumental value that is derived from the reality that is grasped, but is also the *pursuit* of said grasping. Furthermore, the *motivation* (or motive) is not only separate from the truth, but helps acquire more truths.

If we stipulate in the Meno Problem that the knowledgeable guide loves the truth of her belief, or cares deeply to maintain her true belief, then that love is added value to her success from ability. Baehr writes,

A subject S is intellectually good or better qua person to the extent that S is positively oriented toward or “loves” what is intellectually good and is negatively oriented toward or “hates” what is intellectually bad (p. 101).

And further, “I maintain that if a person’s positive orientation toward truth or related ends fails to contribute to her personal intellectual worth, then it fails to make her intellectual[ly] virtuous” (p. 114). The active agency requirement for character virtues improves the personal intellectual worth of the agent for the following two reasons: (a) it allows the agent to possess more truths (take for example intellectual curiosity), and (b) it ensures that the agent’s competent performance (or success from ability) manifests from the person in such a manner that it is arguably easier to attribute credit to such a belief.

With that said, we will now further examine some common themes that come from each virtue theoretic theory.

2.2 Epistemic Values: Desirability vs. Admirability

As mentioned above (§1.3.1), the person who has either excellent eyesight or is blind cannot be praised or blamed for their epistemic fortune or misfortune. Further, as Lackey argues, a person who has testimonial knowledge cannot deserve credit for their true belief. This poses a *prima facie* problem for virtue reliabilism. Meanwhile, the love of

epistemic goods that is required by character virtues, it is argued, will help a person attain truths in the relevant domain more than if they did not have the related motive, and thus possessing such a character virtue will increase their personal intellectual worth. But, is possessing character virtues required for knowledge? This poses a *prima facie* problem for virtue responsibilism.

Such disputes represent the fundamental discrepancies between virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism. Indeed, to navigate these challenges epistemologists have postulated numerous epistemic values that specifically have to do with *knowledge*. For example, Sosa has a distinction between “animal knowledge” and “human knowledge”, where animal knowledge maps onto immediate truths, and human knowledge maps onto truths that require sophisticated reflection. Equivalently, Zagzebski (1996) has what she calls “high end” knowledge and “low end” knowledge (cf. p. 277). Moreover, Philip Olson (2012) argues that what the more externalist minded virtue reliabilist have been trying to grasp is the epistemic value of *knowledge*, whereas the more internalist minded virtue responsibilists have been trying to capture the epistemic value of *understanding* (Cf. Kvanvig, 2003). Though these disputes are important to engage with, for the present purposes it is enough to see that there is a plurality of epistemic values.

In this section, I will show how virtue theoretic accounts of the Meno problem, i.e., comparing epistemic states, help illustrate the many ways that grasping reality is a good, i.e., a value. Focusing not on knowledge, but only on the person, we can see that there is a plurality of epistemic values. Put another way, when focusing on the person—and consequently on the *values* of the person—it will be possible to illustrate the many

ways that grasping reality can occur. In short, the values of persons illustrate numerous *epistemic* values.

2.2.1 *The Person: True belief and the Anti-Luck Clause*

When we as epistemologists cast our theoretical assumptions aside, and strictly examine the person, a multitude of epistemic values are apparent. Taking the Meno Problem as an example illustrates a couple of epistemic values. It is a platitude that the “knowledgeable” guide possesses one epistemic value: that of knowledge—or a true belief that does not involve luck—and the blind man illustrates the second: that of mere true belief. Both epistemic states are desirable, but only knowledge, as the responses to the problem suggest, is *admirable* (Cf. Zagzebski, 2003). However, labeling the epistemic state of the guide as “knowledge” may add confusion, since it is generally taken as the aim of epistemology to capture what knowledge is, and given the contention here, I would like to put off defining what knowledge is. Nonetheless, we can generally say that the guide has a true belief that does not involve luck, whereas the blind man has true belief that does. Therefore, two epistemic states are illustrated: (1) true belief, and (2) true belief that does not involve luck (i.e., true *because virtuously* formed).

2.2.2 *Gettier and Clairvoyance*

The Gettier case illustrated in Part One shows another epistemic value. For a quick reminder, the above Gettier case involves a faulty clock at the train station: S, while waiting for a train, looks at a clock on the wall to check the time. It reads: 5:34, S forms the corresponding belief <it’s 5:34>, it is true—it is 5:34, however because the clock has been broken for two days the evidence is faulty, and S’s belief—although epistemically justified—is luckily true. This illustrates the epistemic value of having a good reason for

the belief, having a true belief, being somewhat admirable for the formation of the (true) belief, but nonetheless still not be as admirable as that anti-luck case. This is similar to an archer who shoots an arrow under good conditions, but while the arrow is in mid air a large gust of wind blows the arrow off target, and then miraculously the arrow gets blown back on target for a bull's eye. Just as the arrow, the true belief in Gettier cases is due somewhat to the agent, but also involves luck.

Greco (2009) argues that in these types of cases the agent in question, although having a virtuous true belief, does not have a belief that is true because virtuously formed. The truth is still accidental or lucky. Thus there is a need to distinguish between (a) a belief that is true and virtuous, and (b) a belief that is true *because* virtuously formed (p. 320). Moreover, Zagzebski (1996) makes a distinction between virtuous acts and acts of virtue. A virtuous act need not be successful in achieving its end, but an act of virtue does (pp. 296-98).

Along with this we can see another epistemic value with BonJour's clairvoyance case. The clairvoyant—who forms the true belief <the President is in New York> every time the President is in New York—illustrates the positive epistemic status of a true belief that is hooked up to the world in a truth-conducive manner, but does not satisfy the awareness-constraint. That is, the belief is somewhat admirable, but it does not illustrate the level of agency that is involved with a skilled and virtuous archer's shot. It is similar to an archer who shoots off random arrows over a fence, and coincidentally and unbeknownst to the archer the arrows always hit the mark. The "person" does not deserve the credit, but the clairvoyant cognitive faculties that are in a propitious relation to the environment do. Nonetheless, this thought experiment might bend the definition of

“person” to include something that does not fit a naturalistic picture. Nonetheless, the two epistemic states illustrated here are (3) a belief that is true and virtuously formed, and (4) a true belief that is propitiously formed, yet unbeknownst of the agent.

2.2.3 *Doppelgänger*

Another distinct epistemic value that is illustrated by a thought experiment is (5) a false belief that is nonetheless virtuously formed. Take for example your “twin” that is internally/phenomenally identical to you, but is actually being tricked by an evil genius. Your twin is actually a brain in a vat, yet by sheer determination of the evil genius, is always internally/phenomenally identical to you. They are your phenomenal doppelgänger, but have all false beliefs. We as epistemologists are then asked if this twin is epistemically justified in his or her beliefs.

Given that virtue reliabilism is an externalist account of intellectual virtue, a trait is an intellectual virtue if and only if it systematically produces more true beliefs than not. Accordingly, virtue reliabilist are committed to holding the twin is not intellectually virtuous. However, under a virtue responsibilist account of intellectual virtues, if an agent is oriented toward the epistemic value for its own sake, is intellectually careful, fair, honest and thorough, then the agent should be correctly described as intellectually virtuous. Accordingly, despite the systematic gap between the twin-agent’s internal world and the reality of the wicked demon, the virtue responsibilist will hold that the twin is an intellectually virtuous person even in the face of their cognitive unsuccessfulness.

Consequently, there is an epistemic value that does not involve truth. In other words, belief formation or the aim of belief is not strictly to form true belief. If truth were our only epistemic goal then we would want simply to inject school students with

the truth to answers (Cf. Harvey Siegel 2013). But we do not want to do that. There is something to be said (i.e., there is some value) for students to *try* to get the answers—to struggle, and to persevere. Otherwise we would, if we could, inject students with truth. However, the *motivation* (or process) and pursuit of inquiry, truth, understanding, and knowledge (i.e., epistemic values) is what matters in education. This brings us to another unique epistemic value: (6) motivation for epistemic goods.

In sum, pluralistic virtue epistemology—i.e., virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism taken as a whole—helps to illuminate a plurality of epistemic values.

2.3 Living Well: The Epistemic and The Moral

Pluralistic virtue epistemology is unified in its pursuit to capture valuable epistemic states (but is seemingly divided in their labour). Furthermore, each theory has indispensable epistemological insight: grasping the world is valuable. Which epistemic value is most important? That may not be an important question. Or at least for the time being, it will prove helpful not to try to answer that question. It is enough to get clear on the way that grasping reality can be valuable. In the following, I will argue that cognitive faculties (captured by virtue reliabilist commitments) and active inquiry (captured by virtue responsibilist commitments) are both constitutive of living well. Therefore, they are needed together for a complete epistemological evaluation. In short, both virtue theories agree that possessing some sort of epistemic value is necessary for leading a life worth having.

2.3.1 *The Value of Faculty Virtues*

In *The Metaphysics*, Aristotle writes, “[a]ll men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are

loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight” [980a]. In sum, the value of our cognitive faculties, and their proper function, is intrinsically valuable to us. Further, his thoughts point out that we *learn* through our eyesight (and other faculties). Evidence of the value of this is when we travel to new places we delight in the new views. One way to explain this is that we have learned something about the world; we have grasped reality, and we find this vitally important. This is an illustration of how cognitive faculties and grasping reality is important to living a good life.

Epistemology is about hashing out the value of the types of ways we learn about the world. The value of learning about the world through the use of vision is high. When one imagines what it would be like to lose their vision one’s aspirations about life often shrink. Nonetheless, it is important not to overstress the utility and delight of just one faculty. People who have lost their vision or have never had vision arguably derive more (epistemic) value from other faculties. A non-sighted person will grasp parts of the world that a sighted person would take for granted. A newborn delights in the use of the olfactory system; this is one of the easiest ways for them to learn about the world. The newborn learns that something tastes good; that something taste bad; that *that* tastes good and that *that* tastes bad.

It is indisputable that we learn through an admixture of our cognitive facilities. However, the “higher learning” of (say) graduate school requires techniques other than just those used by the olfactory system. Accordingly, some epistemologists have described that these types of true beliefs require *character virtues*.

2.3.2 *The Value of Character Virtues*

Baehr makes clear the distinction between the “personal worth” conception of intellectual excellences and the worth of *being a human*. That is, there is a sense in which all human beings are equal and should be given the same amount of dignity, but then he wants to make clear that this does not rule out another type of value—that of intellectual worth.

The motivation for epistemic goods is as natural as Aristotle points out. Further, as humans, we have activities that demand active intellectual engagement, as virtue responsibilists often point out. For instance, we can say that S is a very good poet and musician, but a terrible person—indicating that there are other aspects beside S’s artistic talents that structure his *personal worth*. Likewise, there are intellectual aspects that structure S’s intellectual worth.

If we return to the Socratic maxim, “the unexamined life is not worth living” and to add the following thoughts from Thomas Hurka (2003): “it is apparently good in itself to love what is good in itself” (taken from Baehr, p. 173), then, because character virtues require a love of epistemic goods, it is a good in itself, and it is needed for the good life. That is, if it is a good in itself to grasp reality, then loving grasping reality is a good in itself, as well. Further, the epistemic values that character virtues map onto are constitutive of living a well-lived life.

2.3.3 *Living Well*

On either way of fleshing out epistemic value, i.e., the virtue reliabilist way or the virtue responsibilist manner, it is vitally important that the value occurs if one will lead a good life. I will speculate here. The reason virtue reliabilists focus on faculties is that they place a high value on immediate truths that are delivered by the faculty virtues. Further, the reason that virtue responsibilists focus on character virtues is that they place a high

value on higher learning type epistemic grasping. Each is part of living a good life, and is needed to lead the best possible human lives. Virtue epistemology, although seemingly split between reliabilism and responsibilism—is unified by a unique shift of focus from *belief to person*, and should be considered as compatible in their scope of epistemological evaluation. With a focus on the values of persons, a plurality of *epistemic* values becomes apparent. The meta-epistemological commitment between the two theories is that grasping reality is constitutive of living a good life.

Conclusion –

I will now refer to both virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism simply as virtue epistemology, unless otherwise noting an important distinction. This contemporary appropriation of ‘intellectual virtues’ participates in widening the scope of epistemological evaluation. The turn toward value is a meta-epistemological movement. This movement maintains that epistemological theories should mirror our values as epistemic agents. Accordingly, the scope of epistemological evaluation is broadened to include persons (not just beliefs) and a plurality of epistemic values. The preceding argues that virtue epistemology (as an epistemological theory) distinctively endorses this shift.

To return to Greco’s thoughts,

When we say that someone knows something we are making a value judgment. We imply, for example, that his or her judgment is preferable to someone else's mere opinion. But then knowledge attributions and the like have a normative or evaluative dimension. Epistemology is a normative discipline (p. 2).

We are now in the position to ask about the source of epistemic normativity. Part Three will examine the foundations of these judgments.

Part Three – Epistemic Normativity

Introduction –

So far we have been assuming that whatever knowledge is, it is valuable. Anti-realism about epistemic normativity is a form of skepticism; it holds that knowledge is not as valuable as we have been supposing, because epistemic value and epistemic reasons do not “really” exist. This chapter will examine and respond to the anti-realism found in Allan Hazlett’s (2013) *A Luxury of the Understanding*. Hazlett argues that there is nothing in the nature or essence of human beings, or in the nature or essence of our beliefs, that makes us, or our beliefs, directed at truth (p. 1). Further, he argues that there are systematic cases where the value of holding a false belief trumps holding the corresponding true belief. Accordingly, epistemic (and epistemological) evaluation such as we have been discussing, is merely one arbitrary way to evaluate belief. This position is contrary to virtue epistemology, since it implies that beliefs formed out of intellectual virtue are not “really” intellectually virtuous, and is an objection to all epistemic evaluation. This deserves an examination.

We have not spent much time with the skeptical challenge (viz. the claim that knowledge, or simply cognitively grasping reality, is harder to achieve than we ordinarily expect). Epistemic anti-realism is importantly a meta-epistemological position with a metaphysical thesis. It is a theory about the non-existence of something—namely epistemic normativity. Nonetheless, if correct, this metaphysical thesis has epistemic consequences.

Although skeptical challenges come in a variety of forms, they generally share a focus on difference. For example, Descartes, who is generally considered as a quintessential skeptic, writes:

If that is right, then the wax was not the sweetness of the honey, the scent of the flowers, the whiteness, the shape, or the sound, but was rather a body that recently presented itself to me in those ways but now appears differently (*Meditation II*).

Here Descartes is focused on the constant flux and change of material bodies, and throughout his *Meditations* is focused on the difference between mind and body. As for a more recent but very different example, skeptical-esque experimental philosophers have said the following: “If these results are robust, then it seems that what counts as knowledge on the banks of the Ganges does not count as knowledge on the banks of the Mississippi!” (Weinberg, Nichols, and Stich, p. 444). This interpretation of empirical results focuses on different uses of ‘really knows’ across cultures, and makes a skeptical-esque claim against epistemic evaluations.²⁴ Hazlett too likes to focus on differences. He writes:

Individual differences in human social cognition deserve the attention of epistemologists. The reason for this is that naturalistic philosophers must be open to the possibility—indeed they should expect—that we may be able to say nothing absolute when it comes to the eudaimonic and epistemic value of true belief... (p. 204).

Highlighting the common habit of biased belief forming practices and the pluralism of personal values is Hazlett’s way of attempting to draw this difference out.

I will begin (§3.1) by explicating Hazlett’s argument that true belief is not always valuable for the wellbeing of the individual—what he calls a critique of the “eudaimonic value” of true belief. He holds that there are systematic cases of false belief that are more

²⁴ I say ‘skeptical-esque’ because this form of skepticism is much different than that of Descartes. Whereas Descartes’ skepticism is often interpreted as *global*, questioning the nature of everything, these soi-disant experimental philosophers are probing the nature of *epistemological* evaluations—a more *local* skepticism.

valuable than the corresponding true belief. I will argue that his identified systematic case of false belief—i.e., self-enhancement bias—does not constitute a well-structured account of the value of false belief.

I will then (§3.2) turn to Hazlett’s argument that all epistemic evaluation according to whether a belief is true or false is arbitrary—what he calls a critique of the “epistemic value” of true belief. Hazlett claims that not all beliefs are aimed at truth. If he is right, then it is arbitrary to evaluate beliefs according to epistemic reasons and epistemic value that appeal to truth as an epistemic standard. Further, there would be no universally correct way to evaluate all beliefs; thus epistemic normativity is not “really” real. Against this, I will argue that there is something in the nature or essence of human beings that is directed at truth. This will appeal to and strengthen Part Two’s conclusion: grasping the world—i.e. possessing some sort of epistemic value—is requisite for living well. Accordingly, the normative demands of epistemic evaluation are more than arbitrary rules of a social club.

3.1 Eudaimonic False Belief?

Hazlett’s argument for epistemic anti-realism begins with highlighting the belief forming practice of self-enhancement bias. He claims that self-enhancement bias is a systematic occurrence of false belief that illustrates a well-structured account of the value of false belief. The instances of false belief, it is said, are more valuable than the corresponding true belief. There are two things I will argue in this section. First, such belief forming practices are arguably not good for the wellbeing of the person; i.e., virtuous character traits would be better to possess. Second, close examination of self-enhancement bias illustrates that such beliefs do not instantiate a systematic set of valuable false belief.

Rather, they show a specialized instance where the truth-value of the biased belief is indeterminate at best. This does not pose a particular problem for virtue epistemology, because the eudaimonic value that is present with the “bias” belief is not from intellectual vice, but rather from its tether to the truth.

3.1.1 Eudaimonic Value and Self-Enhancement Bias

Before explicating Hazlett’s account of self-enhancement bias, it is first necessary to define eudaimonic value. Hazlett posits that eudaimonic value for a person concerns what is good or bad for that person, i.e. her wellbeing (p. 4). Further, wellbeing concerns the good life, or welfare, of the person. ‘Wellbeing’ is intentionally used here very broadly—it is meant to regard whatever it is that makes a life go well for a given person. Hazlett takes eudaimonic value as something different than moral value. He holds that something can be eudaimonically good while being morally bad for a person, and vice versa (p. 5). For example, it might be morally good for a person to jump into a frozen river to save someone, but eudaimonically bad (i.e. it will give them a brain freeze, and given that they hate other people they will not acquire any satisfaction from such an act). Likewise, it may make someone’s life go well to overlook the mishap at the cash register and be grossly overpaid in change, all the while being morally bad for the person (if intentionally “overlooked”). Although moral virtue may be a partial constituent of wellbeing (i.e., a legitimate correlation between moral value and eudaimonic value), Hazlett writes, “I will assume that falling short of moral virtue is sometimes better for a person than not...” (Ibid.). Put another way, eudaimonic value can be distinct from moral

value. Hazlett argues that self-enhancement bias²⁵ is a well-structured occurrence of the eudaimonic value of false belief.

Self-enhancement bias as a species is claimed to be an unreliable belief forming practices.²⁶ By “unreliable” it is meant that the belief forming practice produces more false beliefs than true beliefs. Hazlett writes,

Social psychologists argue that most people’s beliefs about themselves—their self-conceptions—manifest bias in favor of a positive self-conception... So social psychologists argue that most people’s beliefs manifest self-enhancement bias, i.e. that self-enhancement bias is ubiquitous (p. 42).

And further,

Let’s take self-evaluation to consist in the formation of beliefs about oneself in terms of properties (traits, abilities) that have a positive or negative valence (e.g. physical attractiveness, intelligence, athletic ability, leadership ability, social competence, as well as more specific personality traits such as being sincere, being considerate, being rude, being superficial, etc.), as opposed to mere description of oneself in terms of more-or-less evaluatively neutral properties (e.g. hair color, city of birth) [...] Studies found that most people consider themselves “above average” or “better than most other people” when it comes to positive traits and abilities (Larwood and Whittaker 1977, Alicke 1985, Brown 1986, Dunning et al. 1989, Brown and Gallagher 1992, Helgeson and Taylor 1993, Sedikides 1993, Krueger 1998, Krueger and Dunning 1999, Trafimow et al. 2004). Others found that most people’s self-evaluations did not correspond with the evaluations of others (Lewinsohn et al. 1980, Gosling et al. 1998), with the evaluations of experts (Helgeson and Taylor 1993), or with objective measures (Borkenau and Liebler 1993, Krueger and Dunning 1999, Vazire 2010). For example, Jonathon Brown (1986) compared people’s self-evaluations with their evaluations of their friends and their evaluations of “most other people,” in terms of a list of obviously positive (e.g. “dependable,” “considerate”) and obviously negative (e.g. “spiteful,” “superficial”) trait adjectives. To a significant degree, subjects rated themselves more positively, and less negatively, than they rated both their friends and “most other people.” Other studies made similar findings (Alicke 1985, Campbell 1986, Frey and Stahlberg 1986, Ingram 1989, Dunning 1995, Krueger 1998, Trafimow et al. 2004) (p. 44).

²⁵ And other doxastic biases.

²⁶ Hazlett argues that two other doxastic biases are further illustration for systematic cases of eudaimonic false belief: *partiality* and *charity*. However, for the sake of space I will confine myself to self-enhancement.

One conclusion that Hazlett draws from this empirical research is that most people are overly positive in their self-evaluations, i.e. their self-conceptions manifest self-enhancement bias. Nonetheless, that people often have overly positive self-conceptions is not breaking news.

Hazlett is a disciple of 18th century David Hume. In the following Hazlett quotes him at length, he writes:

In the *Treatise of Human Nature* (III.iii.2), Hume writes that “[w]e have, all of us, a wonderful partiality for ourselves,” but that this tendency is not a bad thing:

[N]othing is more useful to us in the conduct of life, than a due degree of pride, which makes us sensible of our own merit, and gives us a confidence and assurance in all our projects and enterprizes. [...] Fortune commonly favours the bold and enterprising; and nothing inspires us with more boldness than a good opinion of ourselves. Add to this, that tho’ pride, or self-applause, be sometimes disagreeable to others, ‘tis always agreeable to ourselves [.] Thus self-satisfaction and vanity may not only be allowable, but requisite in a character. (1978, pp. 596-7) (Hazlett, pp. 40-1).

Hazlett argues that Hume is right about the place of pride in the good life, and further claims that one need not be correct in their prideful self-judgment, i.e. accuracy is not needed. That is, having false beliefs about one’s self can be eudaimonically good.

Further Hazlett writes,

It’s worth distinguishing between two ways in which a belief might have eudaimonic value. On the one hand, it might be the case that having that belief makes the believer feel good, or comfortable, or happy, or satisfied. On the other hand, it might be the case that the believer is better off with the belief than she would be were she to lack it. A belief might be both of these things at once, but the two concepts are distinct. What I have argued is that there is a clearly identifiable pattern of cases in which people are better off with false beliefs than they would be with the corresponding true beliefs (p. 79).

Although having a positive self-conception is empirically correlated with nondepression (and being nondepressed is an obvious eudaimonic good), I will argue that Hazlett is

wrong to conceive of self-enhancement bias as a systematic occurrence of eudaimonically valuable false belief for two reasons. I will argue (A) that self-enhancement bias is all things considered plausibly bad for a person, and (B) that even if not (A), it is unclear that false belief (qua false belief) is valuable, given the special constraints that self-enhancement bias needs to have to occur.

3.1.2 Self-Enhancement Bias vs. Intellectual Virtue

Hazlett does a good job making it seem that we, as humans, often have to weigh the options between the value of epistemic accuracy and the value of wellbeing. Hazlett writes,

In my view, this possibility is the result of the fact that “epistemic” and eudaimonic value can come into conflict: something “epistemically” bad, like biased belief, can be eudaimonically good, in virtue of its constitutive relationship with wellbeing (p.107).

However, I will argue that manifestations of self-enhancement bias are not as eudaimonically valuable as manifestations of virtuous belief. This will in effect be to deny that eudaimonic value and moral value are as loosely related as Hazlett assumes.

Call the following *The Argument from Self-Improvement*. Let’s take for example manifestations of self-enhancement bias that leads one to think (1) one is more intelligent than others and (2) nicer than others. Although such beliefs can plausibly result in eudaimonic value for the believer, it is plausible that an epistemic agent, say S, could change his self-enhanced beliefs—i.e., (1) and (2)—to the corresponding true beliefs: <not more intelligent and not nicer than others> and be more eudaimonically benefitted as a result. For instance, it may initially hurt for S to hold the belief that he is not as smart as he thought he was, but arguably it could be best for S in the long term not to hold (1). If S is convinced that he is more intelligent than the average person, and it is in

fact not the case, then presumably S will not try as hard to improve himself. That is, he will be less motivated to become more intelligent. With a whole culture similar to S it is not obvious that he is better off with a false but self-enhanced belief, given that S and others around S will not self-improve.

This is even clearer in the “niceness” case. It may be a blow to S’s ego to hear that he is not as nice of a person as he generally thinks he is, but on the whole presumably S is better off having his ego hurt. That is, instead of having the self-evaluative (and self-enhanced) belief conform to a positive self-image (positively influencing S’s present eudaimonic value), S can change his person (actions and personal character) to conform to being a nicer individual. Becoming a nicer individual (instead of just merely holding the belief) will arguably improve his eudaimonic value of those around him, which can in turn impart more eudaimonic value onto S. This “straightforward” (nonbiased) route to self-improvement involves greater intellectual virtue, and is arguably better eudaimonically and morally (Hazlett, p. 76). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully argue here, but if Aristotle is right then living a good life (i.e. the best life) is intimately entangled with living a moral life. Furthermore, Hazlett arguably does not take this argument from self-improvement view seriously enough.

Nonetheless, Hazlett will respond that the same type of self-improvement does often occur with people that manifest self-enhancement bias. That is, self-improvement (and cultural improvement) is not ruled out within his view: people can acquire the eudaimonic value that comes with the self-improvement while still manifesting bias. This is because:

Self-enhancement bias manifests itself to a greater degree in beliefs about subject matter that are “subjective,” in the sense of not admitting of easy verification or falsification (cf. McKay and Dennett 2009, p. 508) (Hazlett, p. 62).

Further, self-enhancement bias manifests itself in “implemental mindsets” and not in “deliberative mindsets” (p. 63). That is, when one is planning or setting a goal (viz. implemental) one is more likely to manifest self-enhancement bias, but when one is deliberating they are less likely to do so. Accordingly, self-enhancement bias does not regard verifiable or falsifiable objective qualities of the world that others can perceive. Accordingly, it is not the case that people who manifest self-enhancement bias cannot improve their character, because their bias is “sensitive to the facts” and maintains an “optimal margin of illusion” (p. 56). This allows their false beliefs not to spill over to all elements of their life, and for accuracy in their deliberations to facilitate improving themselves. In short, Hazlett argues that people compartmentalize their self-enhancement bias (p. 113).

3.1.3 Value of False Belief?

However, in response I want to argue that in such cases of self-enhancement bias it is unclear what is doing the work. First, it is unclear that the self-enhancing “biased” belief—as a product of a doxastic practice—violates any truth-tracking (i.e. epistemic) norms, given the extent of subjectivity and insensitivity toward the evidence involved. “Bias” is defined as an “unreliable doxastic practice”—one that produces more false beliefs over true beliefs. However, take for example the case about attractiveness. First, it makes sense that people are often subjectively partial to how they look. Accordingly, while judging themselves they may hone in on specific features about themselves that they subjectively find attractive. Second, if “[s]elf-enhancement bias manifests itself to a

greater degree in beliefs about subject matters that are “subjective,” in the sense of not admitting of easy verification or falsification” (p. 62), then the relevant “bias” disappears as an unreliable doxastic practice. The person judging their attractiveness in the mirror has a subjective set of criteria that the belief is based on, and accordingly the belief forming practice produces a true belief, not strictly a false belief.

Hazlett could respond that careful interpretation of the importance of different traits is properly described as a bias, because it is not driven by accuracy but by “motivated reasoning” (p. 83). In other words, even though it is the proper response to the evidence that one possesses, subjectively understood, it does not mean that it is a reliable doxastic practice. Selectively choosing which evidence to give importance (say a cute chin), where the sole motivating reason for doing so is to feel good about oneself, is not a virtuous method to derive truths; i.e. it is bias.

However, in response to this I hold that the eudaimonic value derived from said “bias” is motivating only if the belief is sensitive to the truth of the belief. As said above, the truth-value of the belief is indeterminate. It is in some sense determined by the individual. In such cases, given its “tether to reality” the belief is not valuable qua false belief, but valuable only because it is considered true (p. 55). Furthermore, “bias” in the manner that this response appeals to is more akin to viciously formed, or not in accordance with specific non-truth related character virtues. Accordingly, admitting to the disvalue (i.e. the “bias”) of such beliefs would then be conceding some genuine epistemic value that is (1) not truth related, and (2) missing from such belief forming practices. We will come back to this objection below with the argument from self-defeat.

For another example of the indeterminate truth-value of beliefs involved in self-enhancement bias, let's take Hazlett's ancestors example.

Ancestors Example—he writes:

Two groups of our ancestors (with equally reliable perceptual faculties) leave their caves, on the hunt for mammoth. One group, as a matter of genetics, enjoy a disposition towards self-enhancement bias. The self-enhancing group leave their cave with confidence, and pursue the mammoth relentlessly; an initial setback (the mammoth's flight into the forest) is met with renewed motivation in pursuit. They catch the mammoth, bring the meat back to the cave, etc. Compare the non-self-enhancing group, who leave their cave with a depressive pessimism at their chances; after an initial setback (the mammoth's flight into the forest) they decide to give up the hunt as hopeless, and return to the cave empty handed, they starve and die, etc (p. 198).

What this suggests is not a doxastic bias on part of the first group. The group did not eudaimonically benefit from the following belief <maybe we can catch the mammoth if we try harder> because it was false, but rather benefited from the belief given its truth. The moment they leave the cave the belief is sensitive to the evidence and true whether they catch the mammoth or not.

Self-enhancement bias leads to motivation, as Hazlett wants to emphasize, but it often leads to true beliefs as well. With most manifestations of self-enhancement bias the agent believes the belief is true. In fact, for it to work they need to be "committed" (cf. fn. 3, p. 209) to p (where p is the relevant belief) as true. If they were committed to it being false the enhancement would not work. They would be pessimistic in a sense, and would not manifest self-enhancement bias. But if p turns out true, then we cannot say that a false belief is eudaimonically valuable, because it is not a false belief.

I began with the argument that it is eudaimonically better to believe virtuously than out of vice, but even if that does not hold, I contend that Hazlett has not illustrated a

clearly identifiable pattern of cases in which false belief is better than true belief. The following is one such case:

The Scary Leprechaun: Josh is walking across the street to go to yoga, and suddenly “feels” something following him. He looks back and sees what he believes is a scary leprechaun two feet behind him. He jumps in fright, and rushes away to the curb. On Josh’s way to the curb, a runaway car barrels through the space he would have been walking if not for the false scary leprechaun belief.

Josh’s false belief is better than the corresponding true belief (that he sees his shadow), but such cases (eudaimonically false belief) do not manifest robust patterns.

I agree with Hazlett that self-enhancement bias is ubiquitous. Further, although it is not praiseworthy, it does not violate epistemic (i.e. truth-tracking) norms. It is “tethered to reality”, and its value, if it has any, is not from it being false. Nonetheless, Hazlett also uses non-empirical methods to claim that not all true beliefs are valuable. We will evaluate this next.

3.2 The Source of Epistemic Normativity

Hazlett is anti-realist about epistemic reason and epistemic value—i.e. he does not think that epistemic normativity is real. He claims that there is nothing in the nature of humans, or in the nature of beliefs, that is directed toward truth. Accordingly, epistemic evaluation is arbitrarily focusing on truth as a criterion of rightness of belief. His anti-realism asks a similar question as one found in Plato’s *Euthyphro*. He writes:

[A]nti-realism about epistemic value could take the form of the claim that there is nothing more to “the existence of epistemic value” than the fact that people value true belief, knowledge, understanding, and the like—e.g. that epistemic value and epistemic reasons are not “real,” but “subjective” or “constructed”” (p. 243).

What is known as the Euthyphro Problem can be illustrated by the following question: Is X (viz. true belief) inherently good or is X only good because we happen to think it to be

good? Hazlett writes, “Anti-realism denies that true belief (etc.) “really” matters; it doesn’t deny that they matter to many, or most, or even all people” (p. 245). Regardless, his position commits him to the view that there are no “real” reasons to believe any proposition. This deserves some attention.

In this section, I will argue that Hazlett is mistaken for three reasons. First, I will argue that his position is self-defeating. Second, I will argue that because Hazlett is committed to realism about practical normativity, his anti-realism about epistemic normativity fails. Third, I will argue that whatever one’s goals are, true belief is needed; this provides a general and objective benchmark to evaluate beliefs. In short, I will argue that there is something in the nature or essence of human beings that is directed at truth.

3.2.1 Hazlett’s Argument

It is widely held that false belief, even though eudaimonically good in some cases (as in the Scary Leprechaun case above), is in every case epistemically bad. Hazlett writes,

In epistemic evaluation, beliefs are evaluated as true (good) or false (bad), as “epistemically” justified (good) or “epistemically” unjustified (bad), as “epistemically” rational (good) or “epistemically” irrational (bad), and as amounting to knowledge (good) or not (bad) (p.133).

This is really what Hazlett wants to reconsider; he questions the nature of the epistemic; he wants to ask: why care about the “epistemic”? In other words, why and how is something epistemically bad, bad at all? Hazlett claims that we should not prescribe that false beliefs are necessarily bad, because (i) the systematic cases of eudaimonic value of false belief, and (ii) epistemic reasons and epistemic value do not exist. Having already addressed the former argument (§§3.1.1—3.1.2), I will focus on the latter in this section.

Following Hazlett, I will take for granted that all epistemic evaluation (at least implicitly) adheres to the following principle:

The Truth Principle: For any subject S and proposition p, S's belief that p is (in one respect) good if it is true that p, and (in one respect) bad otherwise (p. 136.).

This prescription is the norm that Hazlett argues is mere convention. Also, it can be stated without explicit use of evaluative terms as follows:

Evidence Norm: For any subject S and proposition that p, if S has evidence that p, then S has pro tanto reason to believe that p (Ibid.).

These norms are essential to “epistemic” evaluations, and one who holds them can be called an Epistemic Essentialist (or an adherent to Epistemic Essentialism). An epistemic essentialist claims that there is something essentially epistemic about humans.

Realism about epistemic normativity is the metaphysical view that what explains the appropriateness of epistemic evaluation is the existence of epistemic value and existence of epistemic reasons—in accordance with the truth principle and the evidence norm (p. 138). Epistemic Realism can be thought of as the metaphysical correlate of epistemic essentialism. Hazlett is an anti-realist about epistemic normativity; he does not think that it is possible to appropriately explain epistemic value and epistemic reasons, because they do not really exist.

Hazlett asks: what is appropriate about the truth principle and the evidence norm; why do they have a “special sort of status” that epistemologists give them (p. 135)?

Furthermore, Hazlett demands that suitable answers to these questions be constrained by philosophical naturalism. To explain this, he cites Jaegwon Kim,

Kim (1993b) explains this idea by saying that “the ontology of any acceptable discourse must be rendered naturalistically appropriate—that is, it must not posit entities and properties that cannot in principle be investigated by science” (p. 206) (Hazlett, p. 154).

Hazlett shares this reasoning for the sake of simplicity, and further writes, “[m]y argument assumes naturalism and argues against normative properties that are not

reducible to non-normative properties” (Hazlett, p. 151). That is, all facts about the world must be able to be explained by natural facts; positing supernatural things to explain natural things would not be abiding by the constraints, i.e. would not explain how it is a fact.

Hazlett claims that the epistemic essentialist cannot adequately address the above-mentioned questions naturalistically, and that this creates a problem for a non-arbitrary and universally applicable standard of epistemic evaluation. Put another way, because there are cases of systematically false beliefs that are eudaimonically valuable (as we are supposed to be lead to believe given self-enhancement bias), and because not all beliefs aim at truth (given pluralism about personal values and the function of belief), it is therefore not appropriate to evaluate beliefs in accordance to the truth principal and the evidence norm. So, why do people generally evaluate beliefs in accordance with epistemic essentialism?

Hazlett likens epistemic standards to the rules of a clubhouse:

Suppose that Plantation Club rules strictly forbid eating peas with a spoon. The avoidance of eating peas with a spoon, we could then say, is among the fundamental standards of a critical domain, the domain of evaluating things relative to the fundamental standards determined by the rules of the Plantation Club. “Club-rule evaluation” evaluates things relative to these fundamental “club-rule standards.” To think or say that something is “club-rule good” is just to think or say that it does well relative to club-rule standards. It is true, then, that eating peas with a spoon is not club-rule good, and eating peas with anything else is (other things being equal) club-rule good. These truths are determined by the conventional rules of the Plantation Club (p. 258).

So just as eating peas with a spoon would be club-rule bad, we can ask whether doing so is bad in itself everywhere and all the time. That is, what if we were not in the same club or care to partake in club rules? Hazlett thinks that the Plantation Club rules are comparable to epistemic evaluation, because we as epistemologists get to make up the

rules, and not following the rules is not necessarily eudaimonically harmful.

Furthermore, some beliefs are not aimed at truth and some people do not desire for the beliefs to be true.

For example, say we have a person who has a false belief or wants to believe a falsehood. Take for instance, the false proposition <the human body is indestructible and does not ever feel pain>. The believer of this proposition (if he or she believes it, which is to say takes it as true) will be motivated to do many things, including the relatively simple acts of getting out of bed in the morning and attempting to lead a happy day. Though there is plenty of motivational value in believing this proposition, there is something wrong about believing it. First, it is false. But why is believing a falsehood wrong? One answer could be that it has negative social consequences: one's false belief will impact others negatively. A person with such a belief could be motivated to step into the middle of a busy street and cause an accident, or simply injure him or herself. However, what if the person who held the false proposition did not ever endanger anyone, but secretly held the belief being sure never to allow others to perceive the impacts of the belief?²⁷ That is, would the compartmentalized false belief still be wrong to believe?

An epistemic essentialist and realist can answer this question in the affirmative. Although it may not be morally wrong, or eudaimonically bad, it would always be epistemically bad. Furthermore, we should care about having our beliefs be true, even if they are inconsequential and useless—but why?

²⁷ One response is that it is not clear that the person believes the proposition if they do not act on it. If they are not willing to act on it (and say jump off a cliff head first) then it shows that they do not really believe it to be true—or simply they do not believe it.

Hazlett is a *Convention-Relativist*. As an anti-realist, he explains the common practice of epistemic evaluation in terms of convention. He states, “[f]or the epistemic essentialist, the epistemic value of true belief is a consequence of the nature of belief; for the convention-relativist, the epistemic value of true belief is a consequence of the nature of the epistemic” (p. 268). Again, Hazlett claims that the ‘epistemic’ is constructed, and thus metaphysically empty. The next section will argue against this meta-epistemological position.

3.2.2 *Peritrope: Argument from Self-Defeat*

I will start with the objection from self-defeat, because it illustrates the complexity and reflexivity of anti-realism about epistemic normativity. The argument from self-defeat is the following: epistemic anti-realism is self-defeating (i.e. incoherent) because if there are no epistemic reasons to believe anything, then there are no epistemic reasons to believe epistemic anti-realism. This is seemingly to reject the principle of non-contradiction; which is an axiom of all rationality. The principle of non-contradiction says that it is impossible for one and the same thing to be one way, and at the same time, not to be that way. For instance, if one were to insist that an object is really an apple and is not really an apple (in the very same sense of the words), then they would be contradicting themselves. Furthermore, in order for meaningful discussion to occur the principle of non-contradiction has to be abided by. Hazlett’s epistemic anti-realism is incoherent because, in presenting it, his reasoning appears to have the following form, “here are a number of reasons to believe that theory q [where q is a meta-epistemological theory] is true—all the while they are not really reasons to believe that theory q is true.”

In response to this objection, Hazlett writes the following, “my reply is that the view the anti-realist defends is that anti-realism is true, not the view that there are reasons to believe that it is true” (p. 251). His view is that there exists no “real” reason to believe anything. He is not arguing that truth does not exist, but rather that beliefs are only subject to the desire or value of the agent—one does not need to believe in accordance to any established norm. Nonetheless, it seems that what Hazlett is doing by writing a book in defense of anti-realism about epistemic normativity is presenting us with reasons to think what he says is true. Otherwise what is the reason for the book? For now it is enough to see that contradiction is worrisome for Hazlett’s view.

3.2.3 *Argument from Practical Normativity*

We can then ask: do there exist any “real” reasons for anything? Indeed, Hazlett seems committed to the existence of practical reasons. That is, he is not (here) willing to go so far to claim that there are not “real” reasons for action. That would be anti-realism about practical normativity. Whereas, he claims that his anti-realism about the non-existence of “real” reasons for belief does not imply the non-existence of “real” reasons for action. However, as I will argue, his commitment to anti-realism about epistemic normativity (i.e. the non-existence of “real” reasons for belief) further commits him to anti-realism about practical normativity (i.e. the non-existence of “real” reasons for action). Again, I will point out that this leads to contradiction and absurdity.

Hazlett writes,

Even if the fate of normative reasons for action is thus tied to that of epistemic reasons, anti-realism about epistemic normativity does not commit us to anti-realism about normative reasons for action. Suppose that, although we have pro tanto reasons to avoid positing irreducible normative properties [...] anti-realism about normative reasons for action proves indefensible. The naturalist might then find her pro tanto reasons overridden, and be forced to admit (irreducible [i.e.

non-naturalistic]) normative reasons for action. But this would not force her to admit normative reasons for belief, so long as anti-realism about epistemic normativity is defensible (p. 244).

Indeed, Hazlett is willing to abandon his naturalistic constraint to maintain realism about practical normativity. However, given that his defense of anti-realism about epistemic normativity depends on the non-irreducibility of epistemic normativity (i.e. the naturalistic constraint), then his original argument would not get off the ground if irreducibility in general was a live option. In other words, if Hazlett does not give a separate argument against epistemic normativity that does not depend on the naturalist constraint (which he has not), then he has not shown how practical normativity can be real, while epistemic normativity is not. Accordingly, Hazlett's anti-realism, as it stands, seems to be committed to nihilism.

Nevertheless, Hazlett seems not willing to adopt nihilism. The nihilist—one who is an anti-realist about the epistemic, the moral, and (the present concern) the practical—is committed to the view that there are no “real” reasons for anything. It seems that the reason that Hazlett is not willing to accept nihilism is because he recognizes that it would be self-defeating (there would be no real reasons for anything). For example, there would be no “real” reason to dodge a punch in face, to drink water, or to write a book. But we, as humans, often feel the need/desire to do all of those actions. Further, there seems to exist some type of reason—i.e. the need/desire—to do said actions. And to hold that they are not “real” reasons would be to equivocate or to admit contradiction.

If there are not any "real" reasons to believe anything (as humans), then there cannot be any "real" reasons to do anything (as humans), because “real” reasons for action would have to stand up to the same rigorous constraint Hazlett holds for belief.

However, to hold that the practical and the epistemic are as distinct as Hazlett makes them out to be is wrong. To hold fast and deduce the conclusion that <there is no “real” reason to do anything> is to evaluate reasons with a maximally wide scope. With this wide scope nothing really matters. In the face of such a view, ridicule may be the best response. Further, with this wide scope of evaluation, we as examiners would not be isolating the phenomenon under consideration any longer. I will return to the appeal to scope below.

3.2.4 Argument from the Need for True Belief

In so far as one desires anything they must also care about true belief. Having a desire will motivate a secondary desire: <to care about satisfying the primary desire>.²⁸ Let us take for instance the desire to satiate hunger, which Hazlett has already hinted toward in his Ancestors Example mentioned above. When hunting for mammoth, or say foraging for mushrooms, our ancestors (and even ourselves) will care to have a cognitive system that reliably produces true belief. For instance, when one believes that a given mushroom will satiate their hunger, and eats it, they have established an interest that their belief is true (so long as they have any interest at all). Or more accurately, let us say that a cognitive agent (i.e. human) has (a) a desire to satiate hunger, (b) a foraged mushroom, and (c) the belief that <this mushroom will satiate said hunger>. Having (a), (b), and (c) sets forth having (d) <the desire/need for (c) to be true>. This last desire does not need to be explicit; it does not need to be accessible to the agent. However, if (a) through (c)

²⁸ There is a worry here about infinite regress of desires. For example, if a desire motivates a second desire, then does the second desire also motivate another, and so forth and so on? Answering questions about infinite regress is beyond the scope of this project, but for now I will point out that it suffices to say that a desire for food illustrates the need for at least (1) food, and (2) a cognitive system that reliable gets the food.

occur, then (d) will occur. If (c) is not true, then danger looms for the forager. In short, true belief is a requisite for a safe and reproductive life.

In response, Hazlett compares the value of true belief to clean air:

Living well, for humans, requires clean air; no one lives well unless she has access to clean air. But clean air, you might think, is of no great eudaimonic value—it's merely a precondition of living well, a requirement for a human to even survive long enough to be in the business of living well. The fact that all those who live well have access to clean air doesn't tell us anything substantial about the good life: their access to clean air does not explain the goodness of their lives, since those who live badly have access to clean air, too" (p.125).

This might be a good point. Some really bad lives involve true belief. Accordingly, true belief (*per se*) may not be a good in itself. I am only arguing here that true belief is an instrumental good; it is good for what it gives us as humans, *viz.* the *possibility* of a good life.

In response, Hazlett questions whether it is plausible that a “magnificent athlete or benevolent saint, who has neither the time nor inclination for reflection on questions of significance [...]”, can lead one of the best lives without having some true beliefs with constitutive value (p. 126). He wants to argue that it is plausible that such a person can exist. He writes,

There is no plausible sense in which true belief is necessary for living well, apart from the sense provided by the claim that significant true belief has *pro tanto* constitutive value. Think of the things that can make a life good, even great: athletic excellence, devotion to others, bravery in combat, engaging with good music, commitment to a cause, raising a family, artistic excellence. Among these, I am sure, is knowledge of significant truths—if it can be had by creatures like us. But are any of these things plausibly such that everyone who lives well, or who lives one of the best lives, necessarily has it? The grounds for saying that truth [sic] belief is necessary for living well, in virtue of its constitutive value, seems no stronger than the grounds for saying that athletic excellence is necessary for living well, in virtue of its constitutive value, or that artistic excellence is necessary for living well, in virtue of its constitutive value. If we say that the naïve athlete is not living one of the best human lives, in virtue of not believing any significant truths, then we should also say that the clumsy sage is not living one of the best human

lives, in virtue of her lack of athletic ability. What is more plausible is that there is nothing that is necessary for living well: the good life comes in a plurality of forms, each rich in constitutive goods. But there are no constitutive goods such that possession of them is required for the good life (ibid.).

I hold that Hazlett's comparisons are off. He wants to claim that the epistemic value of true belief is not necessary for the good life, but his justification for that thesis is that one need not *explicitly* value true belief in order to live well.

The value of true belief is categorically different than other goods within a system. It is as real as the value of drinking water. If we are to exist and do anything, then we need reliable cognitive faculties (i.e. true beliefs) just as we need drinking water. All people need to drink water to survive. Most people do not drink enough water; they are often dehydrated. Further, it is hard to drink too much water, but it is possible. Why is water valuable? It is constitutive of living in general. It is part of the framework for living. The same too can be said of true belief, and especially true beliefs that are delivered from the immediate senses (i.e. faculty-based truths). Like drinking too much water, trying to believe true beliefs by counting the leaves on every tree can be detrimental to one's eudaimonic value. Nonetheless, true belief is part of the framework for living. This gives epistemic value a pride of place.

In so far as we care about anything, we have a reason to care about true belief. In other words, caring about things puts epistemic demands on us. Furthermore, we as humans occasionally want an adequate theory of what they are, and this is where a lot of confusion lies. As argued above (§§2.0-2.3), there is a difference between immediate truths and inquiry based truths. As humans, we care about being taken as a source of information; we care about trusting others, we care about trusting our cognitive faculties; we care about knowledge, understanding and wisdom. This higher-order

care/desire/value for theoretical pursuits such as knowledge, rationality, understanding and wisdom is often in terms cashed out in traditional internalist terms—i.e. in terms of things accessible to the agent. These inquiry-based pursuits, if we care for these things, put greater epistemic demands on us. As we have seen, these greater epistemic demands are not necessary for some types of cognitive contact with reality (i.e. faculty-based truths). Nevertheless, obtaining a minimal amount of epistemic value is necessary for a well-lived life, and accordingly epistemic evaluation can universally apply to humans.

Again, this is similar to the Plato's Euthyphro, and to the value of water: there is difference between 'valuing X' and 'the value of X'; not all people have to explicitly value water, but regardless, water—as a type opposed to as a token—is valuable for any kind of life. In the same way, not everyone values true belief, or needs to explicitly value it, but it—as a type—is valuable for us. Is water valuable in itself? No. It is valuable for the type of creatures that we are. This gives us reason to hold water as important, and gives it a pride of place in our lives. As I have been arguing, true belief is also like water.

Conclusion –

When we isolate belief, as Hazlett does, and evaluate belief qua belief, then it easy to be lead astray. With the virtue and value turn in epistemology, the scope allows for evaluation of the whole person: their cognitive systems, their character, their values, and their social nature. Hazlett however still focuses on belief, but does not accept the meta-epistemological constraint on evaluation of the whole person. Further he is isolating belief, and evaluating it on the cosmological scale. He asks if the value of a given (let's say useless) true belief can be found in the cosmos, and restricts the common sense answer that the value is epistemological, for the reason that it is not eudaimonically

useful for the agent and it cannot be found in nature. In response, I have argued that true belief stands as a universal benchmark for evaluation, because people need a proper amount of true belief for the possibility of living well.

Our epistemology should evaluate what we value. Hazlett accepts this meta-epistemological constraint, but fails to appreciate that true belief is valuable for living well. As I have argued, he does not give enough consideration to the connection between the moral, the eudaimonic, the practical, the epistemic, and has missed (or rather overstepped) a few key points. He thinks that the value of true belief is contingent on the type of person or the type of belief under consideration. This is wrong, because all people, qua epistemic agents, have reason to value true belief.

We have been discussing knowledge and understanding because people value them, and we find them to be valuable. However, some people do not value understanding, knowledge and inquiry. There are people in the world who hold the maxim: ignorance is bliss; and some that are apathetic to learning. Maybe this is true, but we cannot say that some people do not need the value that true belief provides, because true belief is part of the fabric of their continued existence. It is necessarily valuable, given the type of thing we are.

Hazlett seems to acknowledge that there is a difference between the norm of belief and the norm of inquiry. He writes,

The assertion of antirealism, like any assertion, may commit you to truth as the norm of assertion. And inquiry about whether anti-realism is true, like any inquiry, may commit you to truth as a norm of inquiry. But neither of these things commits you to truth as a norm of belief, nor in general to the falsity of anti-realism about epistemic normativity (p. 252).

Here it seems that Hazlett is confusing the types of true belief. The confusion begins with the fact that there are many different ways that grasping reality is valuable, as we have seen in Part Two. The epistemic essentialist (or realist) holds not that one ought to care about truth explicitly, but rather that true belief provides a universal basis for epistemic and epistemological evaluation. Why care about epistemic evaluation, as Hazlett asks? Because epistemic value—i.e. grasping reality in some way—is vitally important to living well.

Final Remarks

In Part One, I showed that virtue epistemology is an agent-based as opposed to a belief-based approach to epistemological evaluation. The two types of virtue epistemology, though different, are compatible in their meta-epistemological commitment that epistemological analysis should focus on virtues qua person—where “person” includes what a person is, the person’s environment, other persons, and values. In Part Two, I argued that when one considers virtue epistemology’s focus on the values of persons, a plurality of *epistemic* values becomes apparent. Further, it showed that what each virtue theory has in common is a commitment that epistemic value is vitally important to living well. In Part Three, I argued in favour of epistemic essentialism—the source of epistemic normativity is found in the person. People need some sort of minimal epistemic value to lead a life of any kind, and accordingly, the normative demands of epistemic (and epistemological) evaluation are more than arbitrary rules of a social club.

Epistemological virtue pluralism is concerned with having the seat of epistemic normativity reside in the person. This motivates many other philosophical questions, such as: what is a person, how do persons relate to others, do we (qua persons) have unintentional epistemic bias, and how is normativity grounded in nature? Virtue epistemology has been inspiring to social epistemology, feminist epistemology, applied epistemology, the philosophy of education, value theory, social philosophy, philosophy of mind, cognitive science, psychology, and political philosophy. Virtue epistemology is not only theoretically beneficial, but also practically beneficial. In other words, it not only gives us many research programs to explore, but also offers advice on how to grasp reality better.

Though I have argued that virtue epistemology (as a unified whole) is theoretically and practically valuable, there remains a real rift between the two theories' conception of intellectual virtue. Can the innate faculty virtues account for what the actively acquired character virtues attempt to examine? Can the innate faculty virtues accurately be described as "virtues"? These are interesting and difficult questions to answer. Nonetheless, I take the above work to have shown how virtue epistemology as a whole can be broadly conceived as a unified whole. Further, I hope to have inspired more research in this fruitful and important field.

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