**Inverting the Value Problem**

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**ABSTRACT.** This paper identifies a problem for any view that overcomes or “solves” the so-called value problem in epistemology.

On the standard view of value problem, any plausible account of knowledge must satisfy a certain constraint: it must entail that knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief. This amounts to the claim that, for any plausible set of conditions for knowledge, a belief which satisfies all of these conditions must be valuable in a way that it would not be if it had satisfied only the true belief condition for knowledge.

Many epistemologists accept the further claim that not all true beliefs are valuable, and more specifically, that relative to certain matters (e.g. the number of names in the phone book, blades of grass on one’s lawn, etc.), the possession of true beliefs is cognitively worthless.

It is plausible to think that if having a true belief that p is cognitively worthless, then knowing that p will not amount to a more valuable cognitive state. (And if having a true belief that p were cognitively disvaluable, then knowing that p might even be a less valuable cognitive state.)

This presents a problem for any account of knowledge that satisfies the constraint noted above. For, on any such account, knowing that p is always more valuable than having a mere true belief that p.

It appears, then, that any account of knowledge which “overcomes” the so-called value problem is immediately confronted with a different problem: namely, that it entails, in cases of the sort just mentioned, that knowledge has a certain value which in fact it lacks.

In addition to developing the foregoing line of reasoning in considerably more detail, I shall examine whether an account of knowledge can overcome this problem while still “solving” or overcoming the value problem.

**Two Problems for Pragmatic Encroachment in Epistemology (and a Solution)**

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**Abstract.** According to “orthodox” epistemology, it has recently been said, whether or not a true belief amounts to knowledge depends exclusively on truth-related factors: for example, on whether the true belief was formed in a reliable way, or was supported by good evidence, and so on. [19] Jason Stanley (2005) refers to this as the “intellectualist” component of orthodox epistemology, and Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath (2007; cf. 2002) describe it as orthodox epistemology’s commitment to a “purely epistemic” account of knowledge—that is, an account of knowledge where only truth-related factors figure in whether or not a person knows. [20]

If Stanley, Fantl, and McGrath are correct, however, this “intellectualist” component of orthodox epistemology can no longer be sustained; indeed, given its apparent centrality to orthodox epistemology, it seems unlikely that orthodox or traditional epistemology as a whole can be sustained. Why? Because on their view whether or not a true belief amounts to knowledge essentially depends on certain non-truth related factors. In particular, on their view whether or not a given true belief amounts to knowledge depends on the practical cost of being wrong about the subject at issue, where (in Stanley’s words) “Someone’s practical investment in the truth or falsity of her belief is completely irrelevant to truth-conduciveness in any sense” (Stanley 2005, p. 2).
Borrowing Stanley’s label and basic idea, and in keeping with similar thoughts by Fantl and McGrath, we can think of intellectualism in the following terms:

**Intellectualism:** whether a true belief amounts to knowledge depends exclusively on truth-related factors.[21]

If intellectualism is an acceptable name for the thesis they are criticizing, for convenience I will refer to the position that they want to defend under the name practicalism.[22] So understood, practicalism is the view that whether a given true belief amounts to knowledge depends on the satisfaction of certain non-truth related factors—in particular (it seems), it depends on whether or not the belief is appropriately responsive to the practical costs of being wrong.

After looking at some evidence in favor of the view, in this paper I will argue that practicalism faces two main challenges. First: if we reject Intellectualism and suppose instead that whether a true belief amounts to knowledge depends, at least in part, on our practical goals and concerns, then it seems like knowledge might come and go quite easily—in particular, that it might come and go along with our variable practical interests. But knowledge does not seem to come and go in this way. Instead, the thresholds relevant to knowledge seem remarkably stable and robust; even with respect to questions that we could care less about, knowledge still requires a high degree of reliability, etc. In short, and as several people have recently pointed out, it decidedly does not seem to be the case that one can know more by caring less. And yet this is what the idea that knowledge is tied to practical interests seems to predict.[23]

Second: there seems to be no fully satisfying way of explaining whose practical interests matter. To say, in a vague way, that knowledge is tied to “our” practical concerns and interests is one thing, but recent attempts to be more precise about the extent of this “our” have all met with serious problems.[24] Thus Hawthorne and Stanley, for example, are quite clear that their “subject-sensitive” view needs to adopt an error-theoretic explanation of at least some of the recalcitrant cases, and they are quick to say that “attributor-sensitive” views are in the same boat.[25] But if all of the familiar ways of sharpening the basic practicalist idea are forced to turn error-theoretic at some point, why not turn error-theoretic at the beginning and deny that practical stakes can affect the thresholds relevant to knowledge?

We can think of the first of these problems associated with rejecting Intellectualism, and more particularly with accepting some form of practicalism, as the stability problem and the second as the whose stakes? problem. In my paper I will argue that in fact both problems can be addressed in roughly the same terms. More exactly, I will suggest that by first clarifying the whose stakes? problem an answer to the stability problem naturally falls out.

In a nutshell, what I will argue is that neither of the usual ways of sharpening the basic practicalist idea is quite right: in particular, that neither the subject’s practical interests and concerns nor the attributor’s uniquely determine the thresholds relevant to knowledge. Instead, what I will argue is that the thresholds relevant to knowledge are sensitive both to the interests of the subject as well as to the interests of the attributor. What’s more, I will argue that the thresholds are sensitive to the practical stakes of relevant third parties as well: in particular, they are relevant to third parties who, by our lights, might be in need of information about the topic in question.[26] With some qualifications to be introduced later, I will therefore defend what I will call a rising tide account of the sorts of practical costs that matter to knowledge: that is, an account on which identified rising costs either for the subject or for the attributor or for some relevant third party has a legitimate tendency to raise the thresholds for all parties. Whatever one might think of “rising tide” views as accounts of economic welfare, as a view about the sorts of practical factors that help to determine the various thresholds relevant to knowledge, it seems just right.
Evidentialism, Epistemic Encroachment, and Epistemic Goodness

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ABSTRACT. It is wrong everywhere, always, and for anyone to believe anything on insufficient evidence. Let’s just take that as given. Is it wrong anywhere, ever, for anyone to believe anything on sufficient evidence? Not if the evidentialists are right. Are they right? I shall argue that they are not.

The discussion focuses on an argument for an evidentialist account of epistemic justification and permissibility. In order to explain why it is right everywhere, always, and for anyone to believe on sufficient evidence, the evidentialist can argue that the evidentialist account of the epistemic ‘ought’ follows from some independent observations about epistemic value or goodness. Feldman pursues this strategy saying that it cannot be wrong to follow our evidence even if the result is a false belief because following the evidence is the proper way to promote something of epistemic value.

It seems we ought to concede two things to the evidentialist. The first is that in the absence of the sort of value distinctive or rationally held belief it is improper to believe. In other words, whatever other value attaches to the unreasonably held belief, such a belief oughtn’t be held. The second is that there is a kind of epistemic value that attaches to an individual’s rationally believing a claim. Regardless of whether the rationally held belief is true, constitutes knowledge, or what have you, there is something epistemically good about such beliefs. I don’t think these points can establish what they must to establish the evidentialist view that there is nothing more to believing what you ought than following the evidence to your beliefs. The promotion of the value the evidentialist tells us to promote does not ensure that there is a permission to believe the relevant proposition. The kind of value they focus on is not the mark of justification.

The paper will begin with a discussion of the problem of epistemic encroachment in §1. The problem of epistemic encroachment is that of keeping epistemic matters from encroaching into practical matters in ways they should not (e.g., by preventing us from drawing distinctions in morality it seems we have good reason to draw or by forcing us to revise our moral judgments in ways it seems we have good reason not to). The problem can be generated by means of two following assumptions. The first is that it is possible for two subjects with the same subjective motivational set (e.g., beliefs, desires, experiences, etc…) to judge that they ought to Φ and act accordingly where one but only one subject acts permissibly. The second is that there is a necessary, albeit defeasible, connection between judgment and motivation. If someone judges that they should Φ, they will either be motivated to Φ or suffer from a kind of practical irrationality that prevents them from conforming to the demands of normative reasons. It turns out that these two assumptions cannot be squared with the evidentialist claim that the kind of value that attaches to the rationally held belief justifies believing the relevant proposition.

If the evidentialists are right, the value that ‘calls for’ believing and justifies belief supervenes on (a subset of) the subject’s subjective motivational states. If that value called for this response, given our assumptions above, this value would have to, inter alia, justify acting on the relevant belief. This follows from our second assumption. But, the action that follows in the wake of the judgment cannot be justified. This follows from our first assumption. Hence, the evidentialist faces the problem of epistemic encroachment. They are committed to denying independently plausible claims about non-epistemic matters.

In §2, I shall consider some possible evidentialist solutions. The first response relies on what I’ll call the ‘factoring strategy’. It denies that there’s any logical connection between epistemic and moral permissibility. It asserts that it is sometimes right to act against your own judgment. It is morally right to act against the judgments that epistemically you ought to be making. I shall argue that the factoring strategy is hopeless.
The second is an attempt to live with epistemic encroachment. Rather than say that it is possible for two individuals with the same subjective mental states to perform actions that differ in deontic status, we say instead that the deontic status of our actions is determined wholly by facts about our subjective mental states. The resulting view is not dissimilar from Kant’s view insofar as it denies the possibility of wrongdoing that cannot be attributed to a defect in an agent’s will. I shall explain why this response is inadequate. We should distinguish moral goodness and moral permissibility as Kant did, but we must go further than Kant would and admit that it is possible for S’s Φ-ing to be both morally good and impermissible. This possibility rules out the second response and also explains the mistake underlying the argument for evidentialism. There is a value that attaches to certain kinds of moral failures, but the value that attaches to those failures does not merit the sort of response Feldman suggests.

It may well be that every value calls for or merits a kind of response. However, not every value calls for or merits promotion. Some values call for a different mode of response, such as honoring or respecting. Epistemic goodness, like moral goodness, merits a response, but it does not call for promotion. This is why epistemic goodness is not going to be what justifies belief. The evidentialist view must be mistaken because it cannot deal with the problem of epistemic encroachment. We know why someone might adopt the mistaken view. They are right about what epistemic goodness amounts to, but wrong to think that it merits the kind of response it must to justify the evidentialist’s account of the epistemic ‘ought’.

An Examination of an Argument Against the Autonomy of Epistemic Evaluation

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Abstract. Much epistemological theorizing in the 20th century assumed that there is something distinctive to epistemic evaluation of beliefs and agents that distinguishes it from other forms in which beliefs and agents may be evaluated. It is usual to express the distinctiveness of epistemic evaluation in terms of the ultimate cognitive goal of getting the truth. This is understood as imposing some constraints on the features of believers and beliefs that are relevant for their epistemic assessment; traditionally, such constraints exclude, among many other things, moral aspects of believers. The distinctiveness of epistemic evaluation makes it autonomous from moral values and motivations that cognizers may have.

In recent years, however, the autonomy of epistemic evaluation has been challenged in various ways; this paper examines one argument against the autonomy of epistemic evaluation, it is due to Linda Zagzebski.

Zagzebski argues that the moral motives of an agent can affect the epistemic value of the agent’s states of belief. Her argument has two parts. The first part of her argument notes a crucial difference between the basic metaphysical structure that underlies moral evaluation and the structure that underlies epistemic evaluation. Both structures can sensibly be represented as consisting of three nodes:

Basic Structure of Moral Evaluation (BSME)

Agent - Act - Intended outcome
(motives) (act of compassion) (Relief of suffering)

Basic Structure of Epistemic Evaluation (BSEE)
Agent - Cognitive act - Intended outcome
(motives) (act of belief) (State of true belief)

With respect to BSME Zagzebski holds that when the agent acts on good motives, for example the motive of compassion, her act is better, has more value, than if it had different motivational origins. So the value of the agent’s motives affect the value of the agent’s acts. But she points out that the goodness of the intended outcome of the good act, for example the relief of someone’s suffering, is not affected by the goodness of the agent’s motives; if the intended outcome of the agent’s act is good, it is good independently of the goodness of the agent’s motives.

Zagzebski holds that things are different with respect to BSEE, for not only the value of a cognitive act is affect by the value of the agent’s motives, the value of the intended outcome of the act, i.e. a state of true belief, is affected by the value of the agent’s motives too. She argues that this normative difference between BSME and BSEE is a consequence of a metaphysical difference between the structures: whereas the intended outcome of an act in BSME is a mere ‘external’ or ‘separate’ consequence of the act, the intended outcome of an act in BSEE is a property of the act.

It’s true that a good outcome such as relief of suffering cannot be made better by the act that produced it, much less by the motive of the act that produced it, but that’s because the outcome is a state of affairs separate from the act. In the case of acts of belief the intended outcome is a property of the act itself.[18]

The second part of her argument against the autonomy of epistemic evaluation consist in trying to show that specifically moral motives, that are constitutive of a good life, figure prominently among the agent’s motives that can affect the goodness of his states of belief.

In the paper I criticize the two parts of Zagzebski’s argument, beginning with the second. First, I argue that her theory makes wrong predictions concerning standard evaluative practice, it predicts that one would assign different epistemic value to belief states of various agents, when one actually wouldn’t make such differential assessments. This would seem to force her to be revisionist with respect to well-entrenched aspects of standard practice; but such a revisionist position is hard to defend, specially given that the entrenched intuitions that militate against her theory seem to operate even in her own description of some aspects of the theory itself. Secondly, the theory aims to explain the superiority of knowing over mere true believing using as explanans the idea that the motive of love of truth is valuable not only because true belief is intrinsically valuable, but also because of the relational place that such a motive occupies in a constellation of motives that are constitutive of a good life, most of which motives have nothing to do with epistemic value, as Zagzebski herself recognizes. I argue that this admitted mismatch between the kind of value present in the posited explanans and the kind of value present in the explanandum, makes the resulting explanation unintelligible.

Finally, I examine the first part of Zagzebski’s argument. I present two interpretations of the mereological claim that a state that results from an act (process) is a property of it: a restrictive interpretation that imposes some constraints on the spatial location of a property relative to its possessor, and a liberal one that imposes no such restrictions. I argue that neither of those interpretations validates Zagzebski’s metaphysical claim that a state of belief is a property of the cognitive act (process) that produced it, whereas the outcome of a moral act (process) is merely an external or separate consequence of the act. Given that this claim is essential to her further normative claim that the (moral) motives of the agent can affect the goodness of his states of belief, we should not accept this alleged implication of the metaphysical claim until we are given a proper way to understand it that has exactly the normative consequences that Zagzebski thinks it has.

References


Three Independent Factors in Epistemology

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Overview of our project. In this co-authored paper we apply John Dewey’s 1930 essay, “Three Independent Factors in Morals,” as a framework for understanding epistemic goodness, and other aspects of epistemological axiology. Following the conference’s announced prompts, we argue that there are multiple sources of epistemic goodness or value. We also maintain that each of these sources is a good internal to inquiry. In a “zetetic” or inquiry-focused epistemology (zetetic virtue responsibilism), inquiry can function as the unifying consideration in a study of a plurality of epistemic goods. Our epistemological axiology is not only pluralist, but of a sort that claims to support the thesis Pritchard terms the “final value of achievements thesis,” the philosophically-advantageous thesis of cognitive achievements as, in Pritchard’s terminology, “finally valuable.” More specifically, we describe this distinctively responsibilist form of anti-luck virtue epistemology as allowing us to acknowledge as independent sources of epistemic value:

a. agent reliability (or truth-linkedness) in the sense of one or more externalist anti-luck condition on knowledge, something that one must anyway acknowledge if as Becker (and Pritchard et. al) argue, “environmental” luck is potentially knowledge-precluding but is not of the ‘intervening’ kind that characterizes Gettier cases and “veritic” luck and requires modal.
b. the contribution to epistemic value by what internalist evidentialists (like E. Conee and R. Feldman) term an agent’s synchronic or ‘own lights’ epistemic rationality; and
c. the contribution to epistemic value by what we define as an agent’s diachronic epistemic rationality, which concerns achievements-through-inquiry, and the manner in which they can be shown to be finally valuable.

While the three independent factors as we here propose them are not claimed to be especially Deweyan, we are nevertheless here undertaking a project that is the epistemological analogue of the project Dewey sets for himself, “to see what factors of permanent value each group contributes to the clarification and direction of reflective morality” (1930, 183). Our inquiry-focused virtue responsibilism is therefore in Pritchard’s terms a virtue epistemology of a “moderate” rather than a “robust” description; it is anti-luck virtue epistemology where the responsible focus on diachronic traits—what Dewey’s called habits and dispositions—prevails over the standard internalist focus on a kind of volitional act of basing beliefs on whatever evidence one has for a particular proposition at a particular moment (what C. Hookway calls the ‘doxastic paradigm’).

We will aim to show, more specifically, that diachronic epistemic rationality (responsibility in inquiry) is closely related to the value of achievements, and of that level of meta-cognitive control over our beliefs of which we are capable. Secondly, we explain why we think that an inquiry-focused account of epistemological axiology is the best way to support the epistemological centrality of evaluations of agents in terms of their diachronic rationality, and their responsibility
in inquiry. Thirdly, acknowledging diachronic rationality not only as a contributor to epistemic goodness, but as the one of the three factors most directly pertinent to cognitive achievement, our account might in turn provide strongly support the thesis that cognitive achievements are finally valuable (the anti-skeptical implications of the view will have to be considered at another time, though we’d agree with Pritchard et. al. that there are strong implications or advantages it maintaining that thesis).

What follows is a more detailed outline of the paper’s two main sections.

Section 1: Introduction: Dewey’s ‘Three Factors Paper.’ This introductory section asks what advantages might accrue from applying Dewey’s non-reductive, “independent factors” approach to the axiological standpoint on knowledge and other cognitive states and standings. We re-introduce Dewey’s “Three Independent Factors in Morals” (1930), and explain how it proved pivotal in the development of his mature theory of reflective inquiry in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938), and reflected a highlight of the interests in axiology that flourished during the first few decades of the Twentieth century in American philosophy. We discuss not only Dewey’s critique of consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics as “one-sided” accounts, but also how this critique informs his constructive account of the relationship between moral and intellectual flourishing.

Section 2: Three Independent Sources of Epistemic Value. If Dewey’s “independent factors” approach provides the useful resource that we are proposing it does, we need an account of what kinds of things contribute to epistemic value. What are the master intuitions we need to acknowledge, and how does their “independence” as sources of epistemic value provide assurance that the advantages of a pluralistic epistemological axiology cannot be undermined by the reductionistic ploys of epistemological versions of ‘consequentialism,’ ‘deontologism,’ or ‘virtue theory’?

2A. Reliabilism, Environmental Luck, and the Value of an Non-Luckily True Belief Our approach allows us to accept the basic insight, along the lines of what Pritchard calls the anti-luck intuition and the need for an independent anti-luck condition in one’s theory of knowledge in order to account for this intuition. We utilize the best recent anti-luck epistemology to make this case, including Becker (2008) and Pritchard et. al. *The Value of Knowledge* (draft). We discuss how this makes our account “moderate” virtue epistemology, and we develop the view that one can account for the value of knowledge independently of any account of the value of reflection, and that one can also account for the value of reflection independently of one’s account of the value of knowledge. The latter point leads to two the other two sources of epistemic value, which we describe as coming from “internalist” and from “responsibilist” concerns, respectively.

2B. Internalist Evidentialism and the Epistemic Value of Synchronic Rationality Feldman and Conee contend that synchronic epistemic rationality is the only source of properly epistemic value. This view denies that factors external to the cognitive agent’s ken (i.e., bearers of reliability and factors relevant to the etiology of beliefs) can be sources of epistemic value. This view also denies epistemic import to considerations external to the present time-slice at which S evaluates the available evidence for some proposition that stands as a candidate for belief (or disbelief). As such, it also denies that diachronic epistemic rationality can be a source of properly epistemic value. It is our view that diachronic epistemic rationality is an important source of epistemic value. While we reject Feldman and Conee’s internalism and subject it to criticism, we also allow acknowledge that properly reformulated, synchronic epistemic rationality can and does serve as a source of epistemic value with respect to some distinctively human and higher epistemic standings, like theoretical understanding, etc.

2C. Zetetic Responsibilism and the Epistemic Value of Diachronic Rationality. From the evidentialist standpoint advocated by Feldman and Conee, it is solely the relationship, at a given time, between one’s evidence and a proposition considered a candidate for belief (or disbelief) that is of epistemic importance. Although evidentialist epistemic normativity is recognized as valuable from the point of view of inquiry, inquiry allows us to recognize the unique value of diachronic epistemic rationality as well. The idea that virtues facilitate growth clearly reveals the sort of
diachronic epistemic rationality that makes a unique contribution to our epistemic axiology. Inquiry, when conducted well, is a self-correcting process, one that subjects the methods, evidences, and outcomes of past inquiries to scrutiny. The reflective habits that govern inquiry certainly play an important role in the production of particular beliefs; and the responsible weighing of evidence is among those reflective habits. But the reflective virtues that facilitate successful inquiry also serve in the critical evaluation of past inquiries, and in the improvement of future inquiries.

The demands of motivation and effort in inquiry cannot be treated, as some internalists and externalists would claim, as ‘merely’ moral and pragmatic concerns. Attempts to do so are premised upon a fact/value dichotomy that the pragmatists rightly reject; and it is only when that dichotomy is rejected that we have the resources we need to make better progress in our thinking about epistemic goodness. Those who deny that diachronic considerations contribute to properly epistemic value presuppose a sharp distinction between fact and value, and wind up with a nearly unbridgeable gap between theory and practice. We argue that theory and practice are no more ultimately divisible than are epistemology and axiology.

3. Summary and Conclusions: Epistemology and Axiology in Pragmatist Perspective. We have addressed the nature and sources of epistemic goodness, and developed the proper role of goodness in the epistemological approach we describe as zetetic virtue responsibilism. The approach that Dewey took in rejecting the reductionistic theories of moral reasoning in his day, is not unconnected with the substantial unity that he and other pragmatists, by classical and contemporary, claim to offer to an account of intellectual virtue, if not indeed to all virtue, by identifying them through the roles they play in inquiry. We discuss the broader prospects from the epistemic proposal we have made, for axiology in its primary sense as “general theory of value.”

GOODNESS IN EPISTEMOLOGY

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ABSTRACT. When epistemologists ask about the goodness of an epistemic agent, they are asking, of course, about her epistemic goodness (as opposed to, say, her moral goodness). It may seem a truism that the only kind of goodness that is of interest to epistemologists, the only kind of goodness that matters, epistemically, is epistemic goodness. I would like to challenge this apparent truism. I shall argue that there is an important role in epistemology for at least two other kinds of goodness: goodness as a human being, and goodness for a human being. There is also, I shall argue, an important role for epistemology in the study of these kinds of goodness.

I. Good as a human being, and good for a human being

According to Aristotle, the good for a human is eudaimonia: thriving, living well, in a particularly human way. Being good as a human is a matter of having a certain character traits, among them (Aristotle thinks) justice, honesty, courage, temperance, and others. Aristotle’s emphasis on the moral virtues can lead the reader to think the account of goodness he is offering is an account of distinctively moral goodness, but other remarks he makes have led many to see this as too narrow a reading. What he is offering is an account of the good human being, qua human being, and while being a good human being has a moral dimension, it also has epistemic, prudential, and many other dimensions. (In fact, if any dimension has priority in Aristotle’s account, it is the epistemic, since he thinks the good life, for a human being, consists in ‘activity of the soul in accordance with the highest virtue’, which he takes to be contemplation.)

A central part of Aristotle’s view is his claim that being a good human being is good for a human
being. I do not wish to discuss this claim. I wish merely to investigate these two kinds of goodness, as they have been developed by neo-Aristotelians, since I think they bear on some important problems in epistemology.

Consider first the idea of a good human being, as such. This is the idea of a human who is exemplary, who is good in a way that is characteristic of the kind of beings we humans are, who carries out well (i.e. admirably) the activities characteristic of human beings. Since human beings are social beings, the good human being will act (and think, and feel) ‘well’ with respect to other beings, and society. (This is why Aristotle thought that the good human being would be just.) Since human beings are reasoning beings, the good human being will reason well—in the kind of way appropriate for a human, of course (as opposed to a computer, for example). More would have to be said to establish that there is such a thing as goodness qua human being, or that such an idea should, or is even able to, guide our behavior. (The burden is no lighter for those who wish to make these points about moral goodness.) But my interest here is just to get the idea across of this kind of goodness: goodness as a human being (rather than as a moral agent, epistemic agent, etc.).

Consider now the idea of goodness for a human being. Here the Aristotelian idea, as developed by neo-Aristotelians, is that of doing well, of thriving in a characteristically human way, over a complete life. Just as each kind of living being—cactus, fish, wolf, and so on—has its own unique way of flourishing (due to the way it, uniquely, is), so do human beings have their own unique way of flourishing (due to the way we, uniquely, are). While the flourishing of a plant may involve strong roots, and the flourishing of an animal may involve a robust constitution and glossy coat, the flourishing of a person will be not simply a matter of physical health, but also of mental health, and (as rational and emotional creatures) of our recognition of any genuine norms (if such there be) that may rightly govern our thought or behavior. The flourishing human can be rightly said to have a happy—in the sense of ‘full’, or ‘complete’—life.

II. The role of epistemology in the study of ‘goodness’

If there is an ideal of a good human being, it stands to reason that the good human being will be, to some extent, a good epistemic agent. The good human being, on any plausible conception, is a reasoning being, one who is curious about her world and pursues important truths. Thus she will need, to some extent, those traits which make her a good epistemic agent. (Likewise, if there is an ideal of a good human life, it stands to reason that it will include some amount of epistemic goods.) If that is the case, epistemology will play a central role in articulating these senses of goodness.

III. The role of ‘goodness’ in epistemology

But is it the other way around as well? Can these senses of goodness—the notion of being a good human being, and the notion of the good human life—play a role in epistemology? I suggest that they can, as they may be able to offer plausible solutions to some stubborn problems in epistemology. I offer two examples here.

The problem of an account of deep truths. One problem in epistemology that has resisted solution is the problem of explaining the apparent fact that some truths are ‘deeper’ than others. I cannot argue, in this paper, against the many attempts to address this problem, only explain how the notion of what is good for a person (in the Aristotelian sense) can form the basis of a plausible solution. In this case, it seems that, at least in some cases, what explains the ‘depth’ of beliefs, or what makes someone wise rather than merely knowledgeable, has to do with truths that are important for a good human life. Paradigm examples of deep truths are diverse, and include truths about the fundamental workings of our world, and about human nature. What makes these truths ‘deeper’ than truths about the number of grains of sand on a beach is that these knowing (or perhaps learning) these truths is necessary for, and perhaps even partly constitutive of, living the full human life Aristotle has in mind. Our lives fall short of good human lives when our knowledge is restricted to knowledge of numbers of grains of sand, or, for that matter, the kind of trivia that game show contestants are quizzed on. By contrast, coming to understand how the world works, or
the features of the human social animal, is part of what it is to live a full life. It is this connection to the good human life, rather than any purely epistemic notion, that distinguishes deep truths from their shallow counterparts.

*The problem of reasonable disagreement.* A second problem in epistemology that has resisted solution is the problem of explaining what we ought to believe in light of disagreement from an epistemic peer: persist in my belief, or withhold judgment? Without arguing against the many attempts at resolving this problem, let me explain how the notion of a good human being can form the basis of a plausible solution.

It seems plausible to me that the solution to this problem is determined not by standards of good epistemic agency, but by standards of what it is to be a good (as in exemplary, admirable) human being. Is persisting in one’s belief appropriately confident, or is it stubborn or willful? Does it demonstrate a proper firmness in one’s beliefs, or an inappropriate inflexibility? On the other hand, would choosing to withhold judgment in light of reasonable disagreement indicate proper deference and humility, proper respect for others, or a degrading subjection of one’s will and judgment to another’s? The answers to these questions, it seems, will come from the standards of what it is to live a human life well. What makes it the case that one should persist in one’s belief (or withhold judgment, as the case may be) are facts about what it is to be a good or admirable *human being*, rather than a good epistemic agent.

Thus we see that the notions of a good human being, and the good for human beings, are potentially fruitful for epistemology (as is epistemology helpful in our study of what it is to be a good human being, and to live a good human life). No doubt these notions require more robust normative commitments than epistemologists are in the habit of making, but, if the potential gains are great, then it is worth taking a cue from ethics and thinking of the ideal human epistemic agent not just as an ideal epistemic agent with unfortunate human limitations, but as a full-fledged human being with a good that extends beyond the narrow realm of the subject matter we are investigating.

**Virtues, robustness, and truth-conduciveness**

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ABSTRACT. Intellectual virtues are, roughly, creditworthy or excellent cognitive dispositions. This general rubric appears to cover two very different types of dispositions, which Hookway calls the “high-level” and “low-level” virtues. The former are inquiry-regulating intellectual character traits like open-mindedness, charity, and originality; they are integral to our evaluations of cognitive agents. The latter are reliable belief-forming capacities like perception and memory; they appear to be centrally involved in knowledge. As of yet, we do not have a single account of intellectual virtues that does an adequate job of handling both levels of virtue. The extant accounts tend to do a good job with one level, but only awkwardly extend over the other.

The value of a cognitive disposition is determined by more than just its reliability. One important factor is power, or the range of true beliefs a disposition generates. Another is portability, or the range of environments in which a disposition can operate reliably. Since we are not just interested in having any old true beliefs, but beliefs that are useful or that contribute to particularly valuable states (such as understanding, wisdom, or explanatory coherence), a third contributing factor is the significance of the beliefs produced.

When we appraise beliefs, we are primarily concerned with how reliable the belief is. When we appraise cognitive agents, however, it seems that these other factors are as important or more important than reliability. I thus argue that the value of the high-level virtues arises chiefly from
their contributions to the power, portability, and importance of a subject’s belief-formation. High-level virtues are additionally valuable when they are robust; that is, when they are themselves powerful and portable dispositions. I argue that this approach accounts for both levels of intellectual virtue, and that this framework suggests that there should be a wide range of virtues between the low and high levels that have not yet been examined.

The Epistemic Goodness of Believing Based on the Evidence

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ABSTRACT. Evidentialism in epistemology is—broadly construed—a deontological position: it asserts that you are epistemically justified only if you have done your epistemic duty, where the primary duty is to (at least try to) believe in accordance with your evidence. I’m an evidentialist. On the other hand, I believe in the priority of the good to the right (in all domains I can think of), a view usually described as teleological. It is typically thought that deontological views and teleological views are inconsistent with one another. So what’s an evidentialist to do if—as I do—she wants to fit these two commitments together into a coherent and natural whole? In this essay I will defend not either of these commitments of mine, but rather the proposition that they fit into a coherent and natural whole. An application of the results will be that there is reason to think that value monism about knowledge is false. In doing so, I will attempt to unify the evidentialist approach with virtue approach via the basing relation.