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RAYMOND BLAINE STEWART
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VALUISM: A NEW THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

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BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Linda Zagzebski, Chair

Dr. Wayne Riggs

Dr. Martin Montminy

Dr. Stephen Ellis

Dr. William Frick

Abstract

Since Plato, epistemologists have tried to explain why knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief. Traditionally, they have tried to answer this by defining knowledge as true belief plus some additional properties and then tried to explain why these properties are valuable. This dissertation flips this approach on its head. Rather than attempt to explain the value of knowledge in terms of the components that make belief into knowledge, I argue that value itself is what transforms belief into knowledge. It is the sole transformative component of belief. Not only does this approach solve the value problem out of hand, but it can also assist in solving the Gettier problem and can unify otherwise competing theories of knowledge.

Valuism: A New Account of Knowledge

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Introduction

This dissertation shall defend a radical new theory of knowledge. Traditionally epistemologists have tried to define knowledge without reference to value, and only once this is accomplished, to turn to the question of why knowledge is valuable. On these traditional accounts, knowledge is true belief that has some additional property like being well-evidenced, reliably or virtuously formed, sensitive, or safe, and so on.

It's understandable why this approach has been preferred. If we could say define knowledge without referencing value, then we could use the various properties that make knowledge what it is to explain its value. Knowledge is valuable because it is true and because being well-evidenced, reliable, etc. are valuable properties to have. Unfortunately, both the task of saying what knowledge is and why those various other properties are valuable have met with controversy.

My account flips this approach on its head. I begin with the idea that knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief and take this to be the defining feature of knowledge. On my view, it is not the possession of any of the properties favored by traditional accounts that transforms true belief into knowledge. Instead, it is the possession of epistemic value itself. Those properties favored by traditional accounts may contribute to the value of a belief, but only the value directly contributes to the belief's being knowledge. I call this view valuism.

One thing to note. In this dissertation I am assuming that knowledge is a kind of belief. This is by far the dominant position in contemporary epistemology, but it has not always have been so. Plato, for instance, does not appear to have held it. This assumption has also been

challenged in recent years by Zagzebski (2009), Williamson (2002) and Climenhaga (forthcoming). So, I adopt this position, but only as a working assumption. If knowledge should turn out to something other than a type of belief, the framework proposed here can be easily adapted to whatever it should turn out to be.

This dissertation is divided into four chapters. In Chapter 1, I will discuss the value problem and survey the challenges that it presents to traditional accounts of knowledge. In Chapter 2, we will discuss my preferred way of fleshing out the idea that value makes belief knowledge. In that chapter, I will also argue that my account solves the problems raised here and is structured in a way that avoids counterexamples. In Chapter 3, I will argue that my account avoids Gettier cases. Finally, in Chapter 4, I will discuss several of the most important epistemic values and I will argue that my account can accommodate what seems right about traditional theories of knowledge.

Chapter 1 discusses three problems that theories of knowledge face when attempting to explain why knowledge is better than belief that falls short of knowledge. I then draw lessons from them, introduce a new obstacle to solving them, and discuss the prospects of prominent accounts of knowledge. The three versions it discusses are called the primary, secondary and tertiary value problems and correspond to the questions: "Why is knowledge more valuable than mere true belief?", "Why is knowledge more valuable than non-knowledge?" and "Why is knowledge worth the time epistemology has spent on it?" respectively.

I then introduce a new challenge that any theory of knowledge must meet if it is to solve these problems. This is what I call the Bad Knowledge problem, and it arises when a theory of knowledge allows knowledge to possess serious defects. This might seem like an odd feature

for a theory of knowledge to have, but as we shall see, it is a feature that proves very difficult to avoid. This problem is important for two reasons. First, if knowledge can be defective, it becomes harder to hold that knowledge is more valuable than non-knowledge, much less that that value difference justifies epistemology's focus on knowledge. Second, because the problem can only be avoided by defining knowledge such that all such defects are ruled out, it becomes impossible to solve the value problem in a theory-neutral way.

Finally, I discuss how some of the most prominent theories of knowledge can respond to the value problem. The theories discussed are reliabilism, evidentialism, and virtue epistemology. While each theory gets something right (I will expand on what they get right in Chapter 4), I conclude that each faces obstacles to solving the value problem. Or, to put it a different way, I think that each theory is unlikely to have the whole story about what makes knowledge valuable.

In Chapter 2, I introduce a new approach, which I call valuism. The core idea is that knowledge is the best kind of belief. Much of this chapter is spent developing it into an analysis of knowledge. The particular analysis I defend is:

> *Valuism*: S knows that P iff no relevant alternative belief or suspension of belief about P is significantly epistemically better than S's belief that P.

After introducing this definition, I then unpack the key terms and concepts involved in it. I first give a brief gloss of the kinds of properties that make a belief valuable (a fuller discussion comes in Chapter 4). Along the way, I use this definition to solve the problems raised in Chapter 1. I close the chapter by arguing that some form of valuism will be free from all counterexamples.

In Chapter 3, I address epistemology's most famous family of counterexamples: Gettier cases. Gettier cases are examples in which a belief is justified and true but not knowledge. I argue that valuism can avoid these counterexamples. The core idea is that every Gettier case involves a mismatch between the way the world is and the way the believer takes it to be and the believer would be epistemically better off if there were no such mismatch. For this reason, valuism avoids counterexamples. I then turn to a second and under-discussed Gettier problem: the problem of explaining why particular Gettiered beliefs are worse than knowledge. I then argue that there is no one size fits all answer to this. Some Gettiered beliefs are worse than knowledge for one reason, others are for other reasons, and these differing reasons are united only by family resemblance. I then argue that valuism can easily accommodate this, while other theories will struggle to do so.

In the fourth and final chapter, I set out to simultaneously unify the various competing analyses of knowledge and give a more thorough explanation of what kinds of properties contribute to a belief's being the best kind of belief. The core idea is this: each of the various accounts of knowledge identify knowledge as true belief plus some epistemically good property, often a property overlooked by other theories.[1] Since valuism holds that being knowledge is a matter of being valuable, valuism can say that each of them is right, so far as it goes. They are right, because all these properties contribute to a belief's being knowledge at least in normal circumstances. I close by asking what these various goods are supposed to be an account of? What is the question to which they are competing answers? Is it justification? Anti-Luck? Achievement? I conclude that none of these is correct. The question that all these

[1] Zagzebski (2009), 106

theories have been trying to answer is: What takes a belief from being merely true and turns it into the best kind of belief? Valuism is the theory that directly answers that question. It therefore unifies what is good about all other theories.

Chapter 1: The Value Problem(s): Solutions, Lessons and Challenges

Knowledge is better than mere true belief. Until recently, epistemologists have unanimously agreed on this. Even today this claim enjoys extremely broad support. For present purposes, we shall take it as a given that knowledge is better than mere true belief. And yet, even as interest in the value of knowledge has intensified and even as the number of value problems has increased, this value-difference has played very little role in defining knowledge. Instead, epistemologists have largely sought to define knowledge in ways that make no reference to value. Only after defining knowledge without reference to value have they attempted to say what makes knowledge more valuable than mere true belief. That has proven to be a difficult task.

This dissertation flips that on its head. I propose to take this value difference not as something to be explained, but as the defining feature of knowledge. The resulting view has several advantages. Most obviously, it solves value problems—problems like explaining knowledge's elevated epistemic position—out of hand. But I think it also assists in solving the Gettier problem and explaining what seems right about the major traditional theories of knowledge.

This chapter is going to focus on value problems and the obstacles they pose to traditional theories. This chapter divides into 3 sections. In Section 1, I am going to discuss three versions of the value problem, which I call the primary, secondary and tertiary problem. These are

> *Primary*: "Why is knowledge more valuable than mere true belief?",
> *Secondary*: "Why is knowledge more valuable than any kind of non-knowledge?" and
> *Tertiary*: "Why is knowledge worth the attention epistemology has paid to it?"

Though this will be largely expository, I will also draw several lessons from each version of the problem. These will guide our search for a solution. In Section 2, I will discuss 2 new variations on the value problem. These challenges turn on the fact that traditional accounts treat knowledge as a matter of having a select group of properties. So, a belief that lacked one of those properties would not be knowledge, no matter how many other good properties it had. And a belief that possessed all those properties would be knowledge, no matter how many defects it had. This is a problem if we want to hold that knowledge is always better than non-knowledge. Finally, I will canvas some of the more prominent attempts to solve the value problem and show that they face serious obstacles to solving the problem. This will not be a complete canvasing of all attempts to solve the problem, but the difficulties facing the most prominent strategies should push us to consider new approaches.

1. The Value Problem

1.1. The Primary Value Problem

> It makes me wonder, Socrates,… why knowledge is prized far more highly than right opinion, and why they are different.[2]

With these words in *Meno*, Plato provides the original formulation of the value problem. In the previous sentences, Socrates has illustrated the problem by asking us to imagine someone who has a mere true belief about how to get to Larissa.[3] If someone holds the true belief that such-

[2] Plato *Meno* 97d
[3] Plato *Meno* 97a

and-such route will get them to Larissa, then they will arrive at Larissa just as surely as someone who knows that that route leads to Larissa. Given this, how do we explain why knowledge is more valuable? What explains the *extra value* that knowledge is supposed to have? This is the value problem or—since there are multiple versions of it—the primary value problem.

I want to make two observations about this. First, Plato's example shows that the value of knowledge cannot be wholly pragmatic. The dictum "knowledge is power" means that knowledge helps us get what we want. Socrates is pointing that true belief does the same. Since "knowledge is more honourable and excellent than true opinion," there must be some other, non-pragmatic value that attaches to knowledge but not to mere true belief.[4] This kind of non-pragmatic value is *epistemic value*.

1.1.1. Epistemic Value

As a first approximation, let's say that epistemic value is the value associated with our specifically cognitive ends. It is the kind of value a belief might have because it's true or well-evidenced, but not because it's comforting or increases social cohesion. It's the value associated with cognitive flourishing, with the good life of the mind, rather than with flourishing more generally. It's the value studied by epistemologists rather than ethicists. It's the value associated with truth, justification, certainty, rationality, with intellectual virtues like fairmindedness and diligence, with knowledge, understanding, wisdom and much besides. It's the value that people hope to gain when they pursue knowledge or any of these other goods for its own sake.

[4] Plato *Meno* 98a

I hope that what I've said so far identifies our target. But it remains to say what epistemic value *is*. What is it that explains the value of the epistemic goods referenced above? This is a debated topic. Some philosophers, like Alston and Sosa, prefer to reduce all other epistemic values to truth.[5]. Others, like Lynch and Plantinga, think that the value of truth is closely related to some other plausibly cognitive value (intellectual integrity for Lynch, proper functioning for Plantinga).[6] Still others, like Zagzebski, hold that epistemic values are dependent on—or at least intimately connected to—"moral value and the wider values of a good life."[7]

Valuism remains neutral on what if what if anything epistemic value reduces to. Valuism plausibly does require variety in the properties that contribute to a belief's epistemic value. If, for instance, a theory held that all epistemic goods besides truth were valuable only as a means to truth, then nothing could be better than true belief and valuism would be forced to say that all true beliefs are knowledge. But this kind of view is quite unpopular since, among other things, it abandons any hope of solving even the primary value problem. So, we'll set that kind of view to the side.

Before we completely move on from this topic, it's worth noting that even those who reduce the value of all other epistemic goods to the value of truth are not committed to the kind of instrumentalism described above. Sosa, for instance, holds that truth is "the ultimate explainer of other distinctively epistemic values," and yet finds room for non-instrumental

[5] Alston (1985) and (2005); Sosa (2003) and (2007).
[6] Plantinga (1993), Lynch (2004)
[7] Zagzebski (2003) 26

epistemic values.[8] For Sosa, what's valuable is not merely getting the truth, but getting the truth in a skillful way. While the value of skillfully pursuing truth is ultimately explained by the value of truth, it is not valuable merely as a means to truth. Valuism is perfectly compatible with this kind of reduction of epistemic value to truth.

A second controversy on which valuism can accommodate multiple answers has to do with how epistemic value relates to other kinds of value. Some philosophers, like Sosa, seem to think that epistemic value is its own special kind of value. He holds that it is particularly within the epistemic domain that truth is the fundamental value. As for whether truth is "intrinsically valuable absolutely," he says only "who knows?"[9] Zagzebski, on the other hand denies that there is an "independent domain of epistemic value."[10] For Zagzebski, "epistemic value is always derivative from what we care about."[11] Again, valuism is compatible with both of these views and more, though the difference between them will have some bearing on the argument we'll consider next.

Before we turn to that argument, I want to do one minor spot of housekeeping. Since our discussion of the value of various beliefs will focus almost exclusively on their epistemic value, from this point out, I will use "better than" to mean "epistemically better than" and "valuable" to mean "epistemically valuable," and so on for similar terms. If I mean to compare two things in some other way, I will indicate which way, e.g., by saying "pragmatically better than" or "morally valuable."

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[8] Sosa (2007) 72
[9] Sosa (2007) 72
[10] Zagzebski (2004) 353
[11] Zagzebski (2004) 353

1.1.2. An Argument that Knowledge is Always Better

In recent years, some epistemologists have held that knowledge is only *usually better* than mere true belief. In particular, some have held that knowledge about trivial matters—e.g., how many grains of sand are on a beach—is not better than true belief about trivial matters. I think this is a mistake, and valuism requires that it be mistaken. We'll address this objection thoroughly at the end of chapter 2, but in this chapter, I want to argue that the very examples that motivate the primary and secondary problem also motivate the claim that knowledge is always better than mere true belief (with one qualification to be added later). We'll discuss the example that motivates the primary value problem, and the examples that motivate the secondary problem in the next section.

The crucial question for our argument is this: Is knowledge that "this route will take you from Athens to Larissa" knowledge of something trivial? Well, it depends on who you are. For Socrates and his interlocutors, it certainly wasn't trivial: they might want to go to Larissa sometime. But for someone who lives in New Zealand and who will never visit Athens, it would be. Now, we've already noted that the extra value of knowledge in this case cannot be pragmatic value. It cannot be that knowledge is more useful; it's not. Both knowledge and mere true belief get you to Larissa equally well. If we are correct and the extra value of knowledge is value associated with our *cognitive* ends, it's hard to see why the usefulness of the belief would affect its epistemic value.

On certain views, it seems impossible that the usefulness of a belief would affect its epistemic value: If we hold a view like Sosa's, wherein there is a distinct realm of epistemic

evaluation and the values by which beliefs are evaluated and which may have no relation to values outside the epistemic realm, this seems impossible. Things do not seem much better if all epistemic values reduce, in some way, to the value of truth. After all, if knowledge is better for the believer in Athens and there's no difference in truth between the Athens believer and the New Zealand believer, it is hard to see why knowledge would not also be better for the New Zealand believer. After all, whatever kind of story explains the difference between the knowledge and true belief in Athens will apply in New Zealand as well, since what that story depends on doesn't change.

But what if we think of epistemic value not as a freestanding kind of value, but as related to more fundamental values of the good life or as flowing from things we care about? If our New Zealander does not care about getting to Larissa and our Athenians do, if it makes no difference to her life but matters to theirs, then maybe we can find a way for the epistemic value to vary with usefulness. Maybe. But notice that even if this is correct, it would not necessarily show that the New Zealander's knowledge of how to get from Athens to Larissa does not have some extra value that does not attach to true belief about the same; it could be that how much extra value a belief has fluctuates with some non-epistemic value.

But, second and more important, I don't think this view gives us reason to deny that the New Zealander's knowledge has extra epistemic value. We can—and usually do—care very much about what kind of thinkers we are and, perhaps more importantly, what kind of thinkers we are not. This matters to us and to the good life. Even someone who doesn't care about the way to Larissa at all, might care about, e.g., not having irrational beliefs about routes. They

might, to borrow Sosa's terminology, care about *how* they hit the mark of truth even if there is nothing about the particular truth at which they're aiming that makes it worth their attention.

I don't want to belabor these points; we'll see another, perhaps stronger reason for thinking that knowledge is always better in the next section. And in Chapter 2 Section 7 we'll consider this and other responses that valuism can make against objections from trivia. For now, the thing to notice is that on some views, Socrates's initial example provides strong reason for thinking knowledge is always better than mere true belief, while on others it is at least plausible that the same is true.

Finally, I want to qualify this universal claim. Plausibly, mere true belief about the deep nature of the universe is at least as epistemically valuable as knowledge of baseball statistics or reality tv.[12] So, even though I will argue that knowledge is always better than mere true belief, my claim must be qualified in the following way: Knowledge *that P* is always epistemically better than mere true belief *that P*. Some may wish to qualify the universal superiority of knowledge in other ways. I don't wish to rule those out. The reasoning behind this qualification is that by comparing knowledge of trivia to the mere true beliefs about the deep truths of the universe, we are comparing apples to oranges. We have changed so much about the comparison that the value of knowledge is getting obscured by the value of something else.

[12] If the deep truths of the universe are indeed superior to trivia, then we have another argument for the purely epistemic nature of the value of knowledge. If we were concerned with the *pragmatic* value of these, truths trivia might win. After all, knowing trivia is good for small talk or leading your team to victory at trivia night. If you're really lucky, knowing trivia can win you lots of money on a game show. These are small or unlikely benefits, to be sure. However, the pragmatic benefits having true beliefs about the deep nature of the universe seem nil. The benefits of such beliefs seem to be wholly cognitive. By contrast, the value of knowing the story behind "Old Hoss" Radbourn's 59-win season lie almost entirely in how amusing it is.

I don't want to rule out the possibility that other qualifications may be needed to compare apples to apples, though we shall not here discover any. On the other hand, perhaps some will want to endorse the stronger claim that knowledge of anything is better than mere true belief about anything. I'm disinclined to accept that, but that possibility need not bother us here. Anyone who wishes to endorse this unqualified universalism will of course accept my more modest universalism as well. If the theory we develop here is otherwise acceptable, then they should accept it as well, even if they think a yet stronger version is preferable.

Let's quickly take stock of what we've learned from the primary value problem. First, we've seen that the extra value of knowledge cannot be pragmatic; it must be epistemically more valuable. Second, we've seen some reason for thinking the value difference is universal: it is always epistemically better to know that P than to have a mere true about P. Third, we're only concerned to say why knowing *that P* is better than having the mere true belief that P. We must compare apples to apples. With these lessons in hand, we can now proceed to the secondary value problem.

1.2. The Secondary Value Problem

The secondary value problem is more general than the primary value problem. It asks us to explain why knowledge is better than any kind of belief which is not knowledge. Its difficulty stems largely from the Gettier problem.[13] Prior to 1963, most epistemologists agreed that knowledge was something like Justified True Belief (JTB), a view they (mistakenly) traced

[13] Gettier, E. L. (1963).

back to Plato. On the JTB account, solving the value problem meant merely showing that justification is valuable.

In 1963, Edmund Gettier published a pair of cases that showed that a belief might be justified and true and yet intuitively fail to be knowledge. In one case, Black has good reason to believe that Smith will get a promotion and has ten coins in his pocket. Black thus has good reason to believe that "the person who will get the job has ten coins in their pocket." This is true, but only because Black will get the job and she has ten coins in *her* pocket. Her belief is true and justified, but it doesn't seem to be knowledge. In a second case, you have good reason to believe that Jones owns a Ford. From this you infer that either Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona. As it turns out, Jones does not own a Ford, but Brown just so happens to be in Barcelona. This belief is also true and justified, but not knowledge.

At first, this seemed to call for minor Chisholming to the JTB theory. Epistemologists proposed various anti-Gettier conditions like "no inference through falsehoods".[14] However, with each new anti-Gettier condition came new counterexamples, and anti-Gettier conditions soon expanded into unwieldy monstrosities.[15] At present, there is no accepted solution to the Gettier problem and every view faces at least a purported Gettier counter-example.

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[14] Clark (1963) proposed a similar anti-Gettier condition.

[15] The apex of this Chisholming was undoubtedly Marshall Swain's defeasibility condition (1974). Though the condition itself was only—"only"—91 words long, it included two sub-conditions, two sub-sub-conditions and made use of four technical terms, which were glossed elsewhere. The most massive of these was "evidence restricted alternative" which required a gloss of 98 words which included three sub-conditions and made use of the term "epistemic framework" which received an informal gloss of 51 words. Putting it all together, it took roughly 300 words just to state Swain's condition.
His condition faced counterexample 2 years later. (Scott 1976)

In all this revising and counterexampling, epistemologists have tended to neglect the question of *why* Gettier cases seemed so convincing. One possibility is that we just have extremely strong intuitions about how "knowledge" applies even in highly contrived cases. Another, to my mind more plausible, option is that Gettiered belief is somehow *defective*, that we look at the examples and think "I don't want to be like *that*." The Gettier problem, I suggest, is motivated not primarily by intuitions about how to use words, but by intuitions about what the best kind of cognitive states are.

We find support for this latter option in the close connection between the Gettier problem and value problems. By this I mean that we cannot solve either without at least being in a position to solve the other. Solving the Gettier problem requires finding a property that knowledge has and Gettiered belief lacks[16]. Call this property, whatever it is, D. Once we've identified D, if we can show that D is valuable, then we can show that knowledge is better than Gettiered belief. (And if D is not valuable, we would plausibly not have a satisfactory answer to the Gettier case.) To solve the secondary value problem, we *must* solve the Gettier problem. However, if the secondary value problem is *solvable*—if there is a difference in value between knowledge and non-knowledge (Gettiered beliefs included)—then we've already found a property that distinguishes knowledge from Gettiered beliefs. Knowledge is *more valuable*. In Chapter 3, I'll argue that this is the only difference we need to solve the Gettier case. But putting that claim on pause for now, notice that this is exactly what we would expect if the Gettier problem is motivated by value intuitions rather than semantic intuitions.

[16] This property may be negative: knowledge may have the property of being not-D, while Gettiered belief is D.

We should draw three other lessons from this. First, every non-belief condition of the definition of knowledge must be valuable.[17] If any non-belief condition is not valuable, a belief that met every other condition would be as valuable as knowledge without being knowledge.

Second, the secondary value problem provides another reason for thinking that the extra value of knowledge cannot be pragmatic. The most common Gettier examples involve pragmatically useless beliefs. It simply doesn't further Black's pragmatic goals to know that "the person who will get the job has ten coins in their pocket." Nor does it further anyone's goals to know a strange disjunction like "Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona." The pragmatic value of such beliefs is nil, regardless of whether they are known or merely justified and true. If the extra value of knowledge were solely pragmatic, we should have no preference for knowledge over Gettiered belief. And yet we do have such a preference.

Along the same lines, this also provides further reason for thinking that knowledge must always be superior to true belief. After all, disjunctions like "Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona" are utterly trivial. If it is only important true beliefs that we prefer to know, it should not matter whether you know that strange disjunction or have a Gettiered belief about it. And yet I think most of us would prefer to know instead of being Gettiered.

1.3. The Tertiary Value Problem

[17] If you accept a view on which something other than belief can count as knowledge, then amend this as necessary. The point remains: every condition that does not set the domain must contribute value to earn its keep.

The primary and secondary problems pose the same kind of challenge: explain the extra value that knowledge has and that some kind of non-knowledge lacks. The tertiary problem is different. Regarding it, Pritchard writes

> One could respond to the secondary value problem by arguing that knowledge is more valuable as a matter of degree than that which falls short of knowledge. It is unclear, however, whether this way of thinking about the value of knowledge can do justice to the idea that knowledge is distinctively valuable. That is, the picture that one is left with is one on which knowledge simply marks a point on a continuum of epistemic value, but on this picture it is far from clear why the focus of epistemological theorizing has been *this* point on the continuum rather than some other point (a point just before the one that knowledge marks perhaps, or one just after). Thus, one might argue that what is required is an account of why knowledge is more valuable than that which falls short of knowledge not merely as a matter of degree but of kind (this is known as the *tertiary value problem*).[18]

This does not seem to be a cousin of the primary or secondary problem, but rather a condition on solutions to those problems. More precisely, it is three conditions.

I. Any solution must vindicate knowledge's place in epistemology.
II. Knowledge must have a non-arbitrary location on the continuum of epistemic value.
III. Knowledge must have a distinct value: a value had by all and only knowledge.[19]

Pritchard does not put the point quite this way, but I think this way of dividing things helps us see what is right and wrong about his conditions. That is, I believe that (I) and (II) are right, but (III) is not. And yet, much of the discussion regarding the tertiary value problem is focused on (III). I think the reason for this is that condition (I) motivates condition (II) and that those two together are supposed to (but do not actually) motivate condition (III).

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[18] Pritchard and Turri (2014)

[19] Pritchard himself does not seem to think of these as distinct conditions. Rather, he seems to think that the only way to meet the first two conditions is for knowledge to have a distinct *kind* of value that is not had by belief that falls short of knowledge.

When Pritchard, or those following him, refer to the "tertiary value problem," they typically mean condition (III), which they take to guarantee the other two are met. This is a mistake. If the extra value of knowledge were distinctive but trivial, it would not vindicate epistemology's focus on it. A distinctive value might not even entail that knowledge lies at a non-arbitrary point on the spectrum of epistemic value. Imagine a spectrum where every point has some distinctive value lacked by points lower on the spectrum. Knowledge would have a distinctive value, wherever we locate it. Yet we could still ask, "why *this* point? Why not slightly higher? Why not slightly lower?" This example is highly artificial, but there are probably points on that spectrum that have distinctive values and lie higher than knowledge: wisdom, understanding and Cartesian certainty are all plausible candidates. Likewise, there are points on the spectrum that have distinctive values and lie lower than knowledge (e.g., true belief). Finding a distinctive value won't vindicate epistemology's focus on knowledge.

So, finding a distinctive value for knowledge is not sufficient for meeting the first two conditions. Is it necessary? I think not. Specific points on a continuum might be interesting even without differing in kind from those on either side of them. For instance, the evolutionary tree of life is a continuum of sorts, but biologists are often most interested in creatures not marked by any difference in kind from the creatures that precede or succeed them. Transitional creatures are interesting precisely because of the *similarities* that they bear to both their ancestors and descendants.

Nor is a distinctive value necessary to avoid arbitrariness. We want to explain why we should focus on knowledge rather than things that lie just above or below it on the spectrum of value. But we can explain this focus without appealing to a difference in kind. Imagine, for

instance, that a swimming pool begins requiring bald men to use sunscreen on their heads. It's clear why the rule focuses on bald men. They're the ones that need it. But the difference between bald and not bald is a matter of degree, not kind. The same may apply to knowledge. If knowledge is "the best kind of belief" or even just "good enough" belief, there's reason to focus on it, and not on what falls short of it. That the distinction between the knowledge and what falls short of it is a matter of degree is irrelevant. Sometimes, degrees matter.

The lessons we've learned so far impose conditions on our solution to the value problem. The tertiary problem imposes two more. Our solution must vindicate knowledge's importance to philosophy, and it must do so by locating it at a non-arbitrary point on the spectrum of value.

2. A New Challenge

2.1. The Challenge Introduced

Before surveying potential solutions to the value problem, I want to introduce a new challenge that any attempt to solve the value problem must meet. Any such attempt must avoid what I call the *Bad Knowledge* problem. I want to introduce this problem by way of an analogy. Imagine two cars that are the same make and model, but one is the luxury edition and one is the standard edition. Does it follow that this specific luxury car is more valuable than this specific standard edition? Not necessarily. The luxury edition car might have been damaged in some way that offsets the value of the luxury features. For instance, perhaps something went wrong in the assembly of the luxury car now it occasionally fails to start. In that case, we'd clearly prefer the standard edition of the car. The luxury car may have some desirable features

lacked by its standard edition counterpart, but the fact that it sometimes fails to start outweighs the value of features.

Could something similar happen with knowledge and mere true belief? There is extra value in being knowledge, but could that extra value be offset by the possession of defects? Many accounts of knowledge do allow for this. Typically, knowledge is defined as something like "belief with properties X, Y, and Z."[20] Suppose each of those properties contributes to a belief's epistemic value.[21] Does it follow that a belief with all three of those properties is more valuable than a belief with only two of them? No, for roughly the same reasons that the luxury car may not be more valuable than the standard car. The disvalue of a defect may undermine the value of some component of knowledge. In that case, we'd prefer the non-knowledge to the (supposed) knowledge.

It will be helpful to have a name for the kind of defect we're discussing. So, let us say that a defect is a *serious defect* if it would be epistemically better to lack that defect and some component of knowledge rather than to possess that defect and said component of knowledge. Bad Knowledge problem can therefore be defined as the problem of defining knowledge in a way that avoids serious defects. Equivalently, the Bad Knowledge problem is the problem of defining knowledge in a way that forecloses the possibility that its value might ever be exceeded by non-knowledge.[22]

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[20] I will use X, Y and Z as a stand in for whatever necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge are. There could of course be more or less than three conditions which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for knowledge.

[21] We should also assume that there is no "swamping" going on. For those unfamiliar with the term see the discussion of reliabilism below.

[22] Or more precisely, non-knowledge about the same proposition. (Recall that we made this qualification in chapter 1.)

Now, we will soon look at examples of "Bad Knowledge," but note that the Bad Knowledge problem is a *structural* problem. The problem is about how we define knowledge and what kinds of defects our definition allows knowledge to have. Though we will examine some famous counterexamples to specific theories of knowledge, the Bad Knowledge problem does not reduce to these. A theory may well avoid all the defects discussed below without avoiding all defects serious enough to outweigh some component of knowledge. And, given the variety of cases we'll raise below, unless a case can be made that a theory is incompatible with knowledge possessing serious defects, it seems likely that it will face a Bad Knowledge problem.

Note also that as I shall use the term, calling a belief "Bad Knowledge" does not imply that anyone accepts it as knowledge while admitting that it is bad. Indeed, when it's been discovered that a theory allows what I call Bad Knowledge, the response has almost always been to revise the theory.[23] To call a belief "Bad Knowledge" is rather to say that it is knowledge *according to some theory* and that it is so defective that the extra value of knowledge is offset.

2.2.1. Bad Knowledge Case 1: Truetemp

We'll begin with the case of Mr. Truetemp.[24] In this case, mad epistemologists have implanted a "tempucomp" in poor Mr. Truetemp's head which generates reliably true beliefs about the temperature. Mr. Truetemp was asleep during the procedure and is unaware that

[23] Heatherington (2001) is the most prominent exception. In his *Good Knowledge, Bad Knowledge*, he accepts that the Gettier cases are literally knowledge that is not very good.
[24] Lehrer (1990).

the tempucomp is generating his constant beliefs about the temperature. Mr. Truetemp does not know why he is constantly thinking about the temperature and regards his own belief as irrational. But if, as early reliabilists held, all that was required for knowledge was reliably formed ungettiered belief, then Mr. Truetemp knows.

Later reliabilists made moves to avoid this problem, but we need not discuss those since my aim is not to criticize reliabilism for facing counterexamples. Rather, my aim is to illustrate what Bad Knowledge looks like and how it can complicate attempts to solve the value problem. On naïve, unrevised reliabilism, Truetemp knows the temperature. But Truetemp's belief vis-à-vis the temperature need not be more valuable than non-knowledge. Suppose I believe that the temperature is 75 degrees for reasons that are pretty good but not quite good enough for knowledge (e.g., it feels like it's about 75, although I would not be able to tell if were 74, or the weather man said it would be 75 degrees yesterday, or the mercury looked to be roughly halfway between 70 and 80 on a course-grained thermometer,) and Truetemp believes the same because the tempucomp generates this belief. According to naïve unrevised reliabilism, Truetemp would know but I would not. And yet I would prefer my own belief to his.

Naïve unrevised reliabilism not only faces a counter-example but it is also unable to solve the value problem. Of course, a revised version of reliabilism might avoid the Truetemp case, and other theories do not have one to begin with. But might they face similar problems? I think many do, as we shall now see.

2.2.2. Bad Knowledge Case 2: Subjective Irrationality

One of the problems with Truetemp is that he is subjectively irrational: he holds a belief that, as far as he can tell, he ought to give up. While the Truetemp case was supposed to be a counterexample to reliabilism, the problem of subjective irrationality applies far more broadly. Christensen provides an example where you prove a quite surprising theorem only to discover evidence that you made an unspecified reasoning mistake. Perhaps, for instance, a practical joker tells you that he dosed your coffee with a drug that inclines you to logical errors, when in fact he did no such thing.[25] Under such circumstances it seems irrational to continue believing the theorem, even though your evidence—the proof—entails it. You should suspend judgment until you can prove it again without the threat of drug-induced error.

If a theory allows a belief to be knowledge when based on good evidence—which proof presumably is—without placing any second-order qualifier on what counts as good evidence, then it will allow subjectively irrational beliefs to count as knowledge. And so, those theories will count as knowledge true beliefs formed via proof, even if it would be subjectively irrational to stand by the results of the proof.

Now this kind of thing could be avoided by adding a second-order condition to one's theory of knowledge or justification. We could say, for instance, that no belief is justified if the believer should think it is unjustified or not one she should hold. Or we could place a similar condition on restriction. But not all epistemologists have been fond of doing this. Weatherson has argued at length against this kind of view.[26] Others have recognized their accounts allow

[25] Christensen (2008)
[26] Weatherson (2019)

for these kinds of conflicts between higher and lower orders of justification and embraced the result.[27]

2.2.3. Bad Knowledge Case 3: Bootstrapping

When I get in my car, I look at the gas gauge and see that it says "full." At this point, it seems I know two things. I know that

I. The gas gauge says "full,"
II. The gas tank is full.[28]

Now, notice that these two things entail that the gauge is working properly on this occasion. If knowledge is closed under entailment, then I should be able to learn that it is working properly by inferring that from the two things I know. But this inference seems objectionably circular: I can't learn that the gauge is working properly simply by reading it. This seems bad. However, the case is usually described so that I perform this kind of reasoning on multiple occasions and then make the inductive inference that the gauge is reliable in general. This seems even worse.

Like Truetemp and subjective irrationality, this objection was originally raised against reliabilism, but the above problem seems much broader than that. After all, the above reasoning makes no special reference to reliabilism. This has led many epistemologists to believe that any theory that allows basic knowledge—knowledge gained from a source prior to knowing of the source's reliability—will face at least a prima facie bootstrapping problem.[29] Their reasoning is that so long as we allow that you can learn from the gauge without already

[27] Goldman (2010) thinks that this feature can be useful in explaining rational disagreement.
[28] This example is from Vogel (2000), though it is also influentially discussed in Cohen (2002).
[29] See, Cohen (2002) for a defense of this claim that basic knowledge entails bootstrapping.

knowing it is reliable, you can use that knowledge along with knowledge of what the gauge says to infer that the gauge is reliable. But even outlawing basic knowledge may not be enough. Weisberg points out that even if we require that I know that the gauge is reliable before I use it to form beliefs about whether the tank is full, I can still use those beliefs (along with perceptual beliefs about the gauge) to bootstrap into the belief that the gauge is *extremely reliable*.[30] I just need to read the gauge and form the corresponding belief about how much gas is in the tank and then repeat the process until I have enough beliefs to (seemingly) license the inference to "the gauge is extremely reliable."

Now, Bootstrapping is bad reasoning, at least in cases like these.[31] But being a case of Bad Knowledge requires more than being defective; it requires being no better than some bit of non-knowledge. In the case of bootstrapping, that bit of non-knowledge is not hard to find: when I get in my car I typically *assume* that my gas gauge is reliable. But this assumption is clearly not bettered by supporting it via bootstrapping reasoning.

2.2.4. Bad Knowledge Case 4: Gettier Cases

Our final example of the problem is familiar: Gettier cases. We'll discuss Gettier cases in depth in Chapter 3, but for now note that it is plausible that we would prefer at least some mere true beliefs to Gettiered belief. For instance, suppose that Black knows that she has ten coins in her pocket and suppose she did well in the interview. She believes she will get the job

[30] Weisberg (2010) and (2012)

[31] Alston (1986) has argued that justifying the claim that a source of belief is reliable always involves circularity, and that this is not necessarily objectionable. While this may be true of something like perception generally, I take it that the kind of circularity involved here clearly is objectionable, even if it is difficult to distinguish it from a more benign kind.

but does not quite *know* it. As a result, she believes but doesn't quite know that the person who will get the job has ten coins in their pocket. (Suppose that in this scenario she does not know that Smith has ten coins in his pocket.) It seems to me that Black in this scenario is epistemically better off than she is in the original Gettier scenario, even though in this scenario she doesn't know. And I take it that much the same applies in general: a reasonable belief that isn't quite knowledge is a better belief than a Gettiered belief all else being equal. And so, theories that have Gettier problems are likely to have a Bad Knowledge problem as well.

I won't say more about this, since my purpose in this section is to illustrate what Bad Knowledge looks like. As I've said, Bad Knowledge does not reduce to any of the four problems identified in this section. They are merely illustrations of how the structural features of many definitions of knowledge can generate Bad Knowledge cases.

2.2.5. The Moral of Bad Knowledge

We've now considered four versions of "Bad Knowledge." Each of them is counted by some theory as knowledge—although advocates of those theories often take these problems to call for theory revision. And I think that in each case, we'd rather have a belief that falls just short of knowledge, but lacks the defects described above. We would rather, for instance, have a true belief that is based on evidence that is good but not quite good enough for knowledge rather than hold a belief that was subjectively irrational, Gettiered, or arrived at by bootstrapping. Theories that count any of these cases as knowledge, or count cases with similarly serious defects as knowledge, have a Bad Knowledge problem.

But even theories that avoid each of these problems may not entirely avoid the bad Knowledge problem. As noted above, the Bad Knowledge problem does not reduce to these four problems.[32] The Bad Knowledge problem arises for any theory that allows knowledge to possess a defect that outweighs the value of one of its components. If it does, a belief would be better off without both that defect and the outweighed component. To put it another way, the problem is this. If we define knowledge as belief with properties X, Y and Z, then any belief with X, Y and Z will be knowledge whatever its defects. So, if we want an analysis of knowledge in terms of belief possessing some set of properties, we need an argument that those properties are incompatible with any defect serious enough to outweigh them.

Of course, if make this kind of argument, we have to say what X, Y, and Z are. A reliabilist who wants to argue that her theory is incompatible with the kinds of defects that give rise to the Bad Knowledge problem will likely make quite different arguments than the evidentialist or virtue theorist who wishes to foreclose the possibility of Bad Knowledge. With this in mind, I think it is now time to look at the tools that various theories have to respond to not only Bad Knowledge, but the other value problems raised thus far.

3. Some Proposed Solutions to Value Problems

In what follows, I'm going to cover how some of the most important theories of knowledge or justification have responded or can respond to these problems. The theories I

[32] It might reduce to facing a certain kind of counterexample—a counterexample that shows the theory to be too weak. But maybe not. Lottery cases are arguably counterexamples of this sort, but you might balk at describing them as *defective*. Regardless, I would agree that there is a close connection between value problems and counterexamples, as we shall see throughout this dissertation.

will consider are reliabilism, evidentialism and virtue epistemology. I argue that all of them face substantial obstacles to solving these problems. The goal here is not to provide a conclusive case *against* any of these solutions, nor is it to argue that they have not uncovered an important feature that makes knowledge valuable. Indeed, I think each of these theories is motivated by a specific value, a kind typically neglected by other theories. I will argue for this in Chapter 4. Here, my goal is more modest: I wish to show that every theory faces obstacles. These obstacles make it reasonable to look for a theory with fewer initial obstacles. And if that theory happens to incorporate the values motivating these theories, even better.

3.1. Reliabilism and the Value Problem

3.1.1. In Moderate Praise of Reliabilism

Let us begin with reliabilism, and specifically process reliabilism. On this view, knowledge is roughly true belief formed by a reliable process. I say "roughly" because (I) there are many variations on reliabilism that tweak this general formula in various ways and (II) we need to add a further condition to handle the Gettier case. Still, this rough formulation is familiar and most of what I say here will apply to the various ways of refining as well.

Of the theories we'll consider here, reliabilism is going to have the most difficulty with the value problem. Still, I think it is worth discussing what reliabilism gets right. Reliabilism has, after all, been among the most important movements in 20th and 21st century epistemology. It would be awkward for my view to claim both that value lies at the heart of our concept of knowledge and that many prominent epistemologists of the last 50 years became enamored with a theory that had nothing to do with value.

I'll say more about what reliabilism (and other theories) get right in Chapter 4, but for now, I think the core appeal is this: reliabilism understands that knowledge is supposed to connect us to the world in some way. It's well known that reliabilism sprang out of Goldman's causal theory of knowledge which arose in response to Gettier. What Goldman saw, even if he didn't articulate it this way, was that belief could *match* the world even without placing in causal contact with it—as was illustrated by Gettiered cases. And while the internalistic theories of the day could easily account for belief that *matched* the world, they struggled to *connect* to the world and thus allowed for an unacceptable defect in knowledge. And what Goldman saw, even if he didn't articulate it this way, was that belief that merely matched the world, wasn't as valuable as belief that was caused by the world. Now, ultimately, I think this insight was lost in the evolution form causal theory to reliabilism, but that is a topic for Chapter 4. For now, before we turn to Reliabilism's difficulties with the value problem, I simply want to highlight that it got something very important *right*.

3.1.2. Reliabilism's Obstacles

We have discussed three versions of the value problem. The primary asks why knowledge is better than mere true belief, the secondary asks why knowledge is better than belief that falls short of knowledge, and the tertiary asks why knowledge is worth the time epistemologists have dedicated to it. We've also discussed the bad knowledge problem which asks can we define knowledge in a way that rules out serious defects?

We'll start with the Bad Knowledge problem and the Gettier problem, since these are related. Although reliabilism grew out of an attempt to solve the Gettier problem, it is now

widely recognized that it, like all available views, faces Gettier problems. So, at least by itself, it cannot explain why knowledge is better than Gettiered belief and hence it cannot solve the secondary value problem. Two of our other examples of Bad Knowledge—Truetemp and bootstrapping—were originally aimed at reliabilism. Reliabilists have developed a number of strategies for avoiding Truetemp. They could, for example add anti-defeater conditions to their account of justification or defining reliability with reference to "normal worlds."[33] It is somewhat less clear what they should say about bootstrapping. Perhaps bootstrapping can be avoided by outlawing No Lose Investigations (investigations that cannot possibility disconfirm a hypothesis) or Rule-Circular Reasoning (using a rule to investigate the rule). Unfortunately, both of these seem to rule out acceptable forms of reasoning, in particular perceptual reasoning.[34]

I am not claiming that reliabilism cannot avoid these problems, only that it would take some maneuvering to do so. I think it's telling that reliabilism is so often targeted as is the fact that reliabilism's best recourse seems to be to add further conditions. That it seems so easy for belief to be reliably formed and defective suggests that reliabilism is not capturing all that is good about knowledge.

So far, I haven't even mentioned reliabilism's most famous difficulty with the value problem. It's not at all clear that reliably formed true belief is any more valuable than true belief, full stop. Of course, we want reliably formed beliefs, but we very plausibly want them

[33] Goldman makes both of these suggestions in Epistemology and Cognition (1986)
[34] For a discussion of these and other potential responses available to reliabilists and others, see Weisberg (2012).

only because they are more likely to be true. Once we specify whether a belief is true or not, reliability doesn't seem to add anything of value. Zagzebski's famous example illustrates this:

> Reliability per se has no value or disvalue. A reliable espresso maker is good because espresso is good… The good of the product makes the reliability of the source that produced it good, but the reliability of the source does not then give the product an additional boost of value. The liquid in this cup is not improved by the fact that it comes from a reliable espresso maker. If the espresso tastes good, it makes no difference if it comes from an unreliable machine . . . [Likewise,] if the belief is true, it makes no difference if it comes from an unreliable belief-producing source.[35]

Although Zagzebski does not use this term, this has become known as the swamping problem.[36]

Now, I want to reiterate *why* reliabilism faces this problem. The problem is that in general, reliably is at most an instrumental value. We want something that is reliably X only because we want X. And if we do not want X, then we will want something that is not reliably X. (We do not want a faucet that reliably drips, to use one of Zagzebski's examples.)[37]

This simple and powerful point is sometimes overlooked in discourse regarding Zagzebski's recommended solution. Zagzebski writes at one point that

> I am not suggesting that a cause can never confer value on its effect. Sometimes cause and effect have an internal connection, such as that between motive and act.[38]

Zagzebski goes on to propose that "*Knowing is related to knower . . . as act to agent.*"[39] [emphasis hers.] And while this has drawn criticism, this isn't where the action is. For instance, Brogaard focuses on cases where the final value of an object may "derive partly from an

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[35] Zagzebski (2003)
[36] This term comes from Kvanvig (2003b). Zagzebski simply calls this the "value problem."
[37] Zagzebski (1996) and (2000).
[38] Zagzebski (2003) 14
[39] Zagzebski (2003) 16

external source."[40] She gives the example of two intrinsically identical dresses one of which was owned by princess Diana and one which was not. The former she concludes is more valuable even on non-instrumental grounds. A similar example is given by Percival.[41] These examples show, in Brogaard's words, that "the value of a source may transfer to the product, even if the source and the product are not internally connected."[42]

But this shows at most that Zagzebski's solution makes a more radical revision than her objection necessitates, and that the relation between knowledge and knower need not be analogous to the relation between act and agent. But these do very little to show that *reliabilism* can solve the problem, because they do very little to show that reliability is not of wholly instrumental value. On this point, both faulter. Brogaard suggests in passing that reliabilists might be able to adopt the virtue epistemologist's view that knowledge is valuable for being creditable to the knower, but in doing so comes close to suggesting that one might get credit in Gettier cases.[43] Percival's answer is obscure. He writes, "since the value of F [the

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[40] Brogaard (2006) 340

[41] His example involves two intrinsically identical printing presses, but one is more valuable by virtue of being the first printing press; Percival (2003)

[42] Brogaard (2006) 341

[43] Brogaard (2006 341ff) argues that if agents can receive credit for beliefs formed by prosthetic-assisted seeing, then they can also receive credit for cases like Greco's Rene, wherein the titular Rene employs the gambler's fallacy but comes out with true beliefs because a helpful demon "arranges reality so as to make the belief come out true." Both cases, she urges, involve the assistance of an outside "device," and the fact that one is supernatural cannot ground a principled distinction between perhaps near-future cases involving prosthetic eyes and "strange" cases like Rene's. Thus, if an agent gets credit for one, they get credit for the other, and perhaps get at least some credit for any reliably formed true belief.

However, there seem to be at least two very clear differences between these cases. First, people with prosthetic eyes presumably will know that have prosthetic eyes, whereas people aided by benevolent demons presumably would not know that. Second, prosthetic eyes aid provide aid by providing a clearer picture of what reality is like. Rene's benevolent demon provides aid by *changing* reality to match Rene's belief. To see why this matters, note that only

property in virtue of which a belief is reliably produced] derives from the value of all the true beliefs it will produce, or will potentially produce, this value will be greater than the value of any true belief it produces on some occasion." But it's hard to see how this helps at all. The value of a reliable espresso machine is determined by the value of the coffee it will or could produce. But we're comparing coffee to coffee, not coffee to coffee makers. And while Percival insists that "it follows that a 'reliable source of truth' could explain a difference in value between token knowings that p, and token true believings that p" it is precisely not clear that this follows.

Goldman and Olsson make a more sustained effort to show that reliably-formed true belief has value over and above truth. They argue that "under reliabilism, the probability of having more true belief (of a similar kind) in the future is greater conditional on *S's knowing* that p [S's having a reliably formed true ungettiered belief that P] than conditional on S's *merely truly believing* that p" (their emphasis).[44] They then write

> If a good cup of espresso is produced by a reliable espresso machine, and this machine remains at one's disposal, then the probability that one's next cup of espresso will be good is greater than the probability that the next cup of espresso will be good given that the first good cup was just luckily produced by an unreliable machine . . . the reliable production of a good cup of espresso does raise or enhance the probability of a subsequent good cup of espresso. This probability enhancement is a valuable property to have.[45]

Rene's belief is inferred through a falsehood—in this case the gambler's fallacy—giving it the same defect as the original Gettier cases.

[44] Goldman and Olssen (2009) 28

[45] Goldman and Olssen (2009) 28

They argue that the same applies to knowledge and the production of true belief. Trivially, the fact that I have a reliably formed belief that P, indicates that I have a reliable belief forming process (namely, whichever process I used to form my belief that P). Since we typically use belief forming processes multiple times, my possessing a reliable process raises the probability of my having future reliably formed—and thus likely true—beliefs.

That's somewhat abstract, so let's consider a case that illustrates their point. Imagine two students are taking a logic exam. The first student rigorously works through the first problem, applies the rules correctly and gets the right answer. The second student just guesses, but also gets the right answer on the first question. They both got the right answer on question 1, but clearly the first student is more likely to do better on the rest of the questions. After all, she has a good procedure for getting to the right answers. The second student does not. Goldman and Olsson think this applies very generally: presently possessing a reliably formed belief is evidence that one will possess true beliefs within the domain later.

Despite the intuitive appeal of that example, I don't think this works for belief, because I don't think they have identified a valuable property *of belief*. Reliably formed true belief provides a merely correlative probability enhancement. Reliably formed true belief raises the probability of future true belief (of a similar kind) only by way of raising the probability of possessing a reliable belief forming *process*. Reliably formed belief does not, by itself, *assist* in discovering future truths; it only raises the probability of having something that does—a

reliable belief forming process.[46] Probability enhancement by correlation is not, I shall argue, a valuable property.

To see why this kind of probability enhancement isn't valuable consider a pair of examples. Suppose that you are at the racetrack when a shady character offers to sell you inside information. After an exchange of money, she tells you that the favorite is seriously injured. If what she is saying is true, it was indeed worth paying for. By acquiring that information, you are now in a better position to win money. That information *itself* enhances your odds of winning. This is a valuable kind of probability enhancement.

Now consider a very different kind of case. Suppose your goal is to end the fiscal year in the wealthiest 1% of Americans. Suppose you know that people with kidnap and ransom insurance tend to end fiscal years in the top 1%. Should you purchase kidnap and ransom insurance? Of course not. The probability enhancement that "S has kidnap and ransom insurance" gives to "S will end the fiscal year in the top 1%" comes by way of the correlation between having kidnap and ransom insurance and being extremely rich. After all, the extremely rich have more need of kidnap and ransom insurance because they are more likely to fetch a large ransom and thus more likely to be kidnapped. While kidnap and ransom insurance is strongly correlated with your goal, purchasing it does nothing to help you achieve it. Or to put it another way, once we fill in *why* you have kidnap and ransom insurance (because you mistakenly believe it helps you get rich), the probability enhancement it previously provided to

[46] One obvious exception: to the extent that reliably formed true beliefs are evidence for other truths, they assist in discovering future truths. But since reliabilists have not employed this feature in their responses to the value problem, we shall merely note it and leave it to them to assess whether it could assist in replying to the problem.

"you will end the fiscal year in the top 1%" disappears. This is unlike buying inside information at the racetrack, but quite like possessing reliable beliefs. Having inside information by itself helps you win money, but having present reliably formed beliefs increases your chances at future truth only by way of its correlation with possessing a reliable belief forming process. What the above examples suggest is that this kind of probability enhancement by correlation is not valuable.

The final solution we'll consider is proposed by Bates.[47] He proposes that

> Reliable Maintenance Thesis (RMT): The probability that S's true belief will be appropriately maintained [i.e., maintained as long as it remains true] over time is greater conditional on its being reliably formed than on its being unreliably formed.[48]

This, he writes, explains the extra value of reliabilism provided that "the epistemic end is to believe truths in such a way that so long as a belief stays true it stays put, and if a belief becomes false it is dropped or revised."[49] This, I grant, is a valuable property for a belief to have. I also grant the three points that Bates makes in defense of RMT. Those are (I) reliable processes tend to produce true beliefs, (II) reliable processes tend to remain reliable and (III) if an agent uses a reliable process to form a belief, they are more likely to use that process to maintain and update the belief.

The trouble is that RMT is at best contingently true. This, I believe, causes two related problems. First, reliabilism is not contingent. If knowledge is reliably formed true belief (or some Chisholming thereof), then knowledge is that in all worlds. But this of course means that

[47] Bates is adapting a second version of the conditional probability solution proposed by Olsson (2007). The one we'll consider comes from Bates (2013).
[48] Bates (2013) 111
[49] Bates (2013) 111

there are worlds in which reliabilism is true and RMT is false. In those worlds, the swamping problem presumably goes unanswered. But if, as Olsson reports, "there is a broad consensus in the literature that the swamping argument is a knockdown argument against reliabilism which has thereby been shown to be clearly untenable," it's hard to see how a satisfactory solution can allow that both it and reliabilism could be true.[50]

The second problem is that this seems to undermine reliabilism's ability to answer the tertiary value problem, i.e., to explain why knowledge should be a central focus of epistemology. If, in this world, knowledge is more valuable than true belief because it helps us achieve our epistemic ends, though mere true belief is more helpful in another world, then it seems like epistemology is focused on the wrong thing. What we should be studying is "belief that helps us meet our epistemic ends" rather than knowledge. And while those concepts might greatly overlap in this world, they would not thereby be the same concept, and attempts to analyze knowledge would be at best focused on a secondary issue.

Finally, even in our world, there are numerous exceptions to RMT. There are cases where a belief is formed in one way but maintained in a different way. One large category is what we might call "we'll see" beliefs: belief which will soon receive decisive confirmation. For instance, if someone holds the true belief that their team will win the big game, or their candidate the election or that it will be sunny on their wedding day or that they will get the promotion, their belief is extremely likely to be appropriately maintained regardless of how it was formed, because they will soon receive decisive evidence one way or the other. This is one kind of case where a belief is formed in one way but maintained in another. Here's another.

[50] Olsson (2007) 344; he says much the same in Olsson (2011) 877

Someone develops a cognitive skill and uses it to produce a reliably formed belief. But the belief is about a changing subject and over time our believer forgets how to apply the skill. For instance, someone might learn how to calculate the expected dollars in their savings account in their accounting class, but then misremember the formula. Though they initially had a true and reliably formed belief, that belief will not be appropriately maintained. A third class of exceptions are dogmatic beliefs about unchanging (or slowly changing) subjects. If someone holds a dogmatic but true belief in politics, philosophy or religion, their belief is likely to remain true, since the subject matter is unlikely to change. In fact, in these cases a reliable process might be a detriment to being appropriately maintained. Someone who has arrived at true political, philosophical or religious beliefs by evaluating arguments might be moved off that true belief by an argument with a flaw too subtle for them to detect. The dogmatist will not be moved off her true belief at all. These are not rare exceptions. Nor are they trivial. We care about politics, religion, about how money will be in our savings account in 20 years and about who will win the big game. (And some of us even care about philosophy.) I have suggested that knowledge is always better than mere true belief (about the same thing), but even if that's wrong, it seems unsatisfactory to have this many exceptions about topics this important.

3.2. Evidentialism

The next view I want to consider is evidentialism. Evidentialism is usually defined as a theory of Justification, e.g., as

> *J-Evidentialism*: S is justified in believing that P if and only if P is sufficiently supported by S's evidence.[51]

But for present purposes, we could easily enough transform it into a theory of knowledge as follows

> *Evidentialism*: S knows that P if and only S's belief that P is true, is sufficiently supported by S's evidence and X where X is a variable for an anti-Gettier (and maybe anti-boot-strapping) condition.

Two things to notice about this: First, the crucial term "evidential support" can itself be glossed in varying ways.[52] How we gloss it will not be especially important for present purposes, although the fact that it comes in degrees will be. Second, many of the qualifications we made about reliabilism apply here too. Evidentialism is not by itself able to address the secondary value problem and hence unable to address the Bad Knowledge problem by itself as well. There may be ways of filling in for "X" that do avoid these problems, but they will have to employ additional non-justification components to do so. Whether they can do so is an open question, but one we will not address so here.

So, as we did with reliabilism, we will focus on whether evidentialism can solve the primary value problem. Evidentialism gets this much right: we clearly care about evidence. When we want to know whether P, one of the first things we do is gather evidence about P. And this is something we approve of about ourselves. We want to be thinkers who attend to

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[51] This is very close the definition given by Feldman and Conee (1985) 15.

[52] One possibility is to gloss evidential support in explanatory terms, see McCain (2014) Poston (2014) and Conee and Feldman (2008). Alternatively, we might gloss it in terms of probabilistic support. This was famously endorsed by Carnap (1962). Modified versions of Carnap's proposal are still popular among Bayesians. For an catalogue of Bayesian accounts of evidential support see Crupi, Tentori, & Gonzalez, (2007). Finally, some epistemologists have embraced accounts that rely significantly or entirely on psychological properties. See Kvanvig (2014) and, for an even more psychologistic account, Byerly (2014)

the evidence, rather than thinkers who disregard it. And, moreover, evidence often does play an important role in explaining why knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief. If Wilma believes that it will snow on Christmas because she wants a "white Christmas" and engages in wishful thinking, her belief is not knowledge and moreover not very good, even if true. If Ellen believes it will snow on Christmas because she has examined the atmospheric readings that strongly indicate snow, then (if everything else goes right), then Ellen knows and her belief is much better than Wilma's. That extra value must in some way be due to the fact that Ellen, but not Wilma, has paid attention to the evidence. So, evidentialism is on to something.

But what do we value about evidence? There are two popular answers. First, we might value evidence because evidence leads us to truth and truth is what we really value. Second, we might think we have a duty to conform our beliefs to the evidence. We'll discuss these options in turn.

Bonjour famously claims that justification is valuable only as a means to truth. He writes,

> If epistemic justification were not conducive to truth . . . if finding epistemically justified beliefs did not substantially increase the likelihood of finding true ones, then epistemic justification would be irrelevant to our main cognitive goal and of dubious worth. It is only if we have some reason for thinking that epistemic justification constitutes a path to truth that we as cognitive beings have any motive for preferring epistemically justified beliefs to epistemically unjustified ones. Epistemic justification is therefore in the final analysis only an instrumental value, not an intrinsic one.[53]

[53] Bonjour (1985) 8

This runs headlong into the swamping problem. If justification is valuable merely as a means to truth, it cannot increase the value of true belief.

In fact, this form of evidentialism actually has a harder time with the swamping problem than reliabilism. Here is why. There is a difference between having good evidence for one's belief and basing one's belief on that evidence. Evidentialists are going to hold that knowledge requires that the belief is *based on* good evidence.[54] But from the standpoint of truth-conduciveness, there's no difference between a mere well-evidenced true belief and a well-evidenced true belief *based on* good evidence. They are equally likely to be true. So, even if we could explain why we prefer well-evidenced true belief to mere true belief, we have the additional challenge of explaining why we prefer knowledge to true belief that is well-evidenced, but not based on that evidence.[55]

To my mind the more plausible approach to the problem holds that we have an epistemic duty to conform our beliefs to the evidence.[56] A version of this view is most famously expressed by Clifford's dictum that "it is wrong always and everywhere for anyone to believe anything on insufficient evidence."[57] On this account, knowledge is distinguished from mere

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[54] Mittag develops this objection in "A Meno Problem for Evidentialism" (2014).

[55] To my knowledge only Mittag (2014) addresses this concern and he concludes that doxastic justification—justification which a belief has when based on good evidence—is fundamentally valuable.

[56] This is view is most famously expressed by Clifford (2010), but many others express it as well. Here's a brief list: Ginet (1975), Chisholm (1982), Boghossian (2009), Peels (2017)

[57] Clifford (2010). Now, for Clifford, believing against the evidence is *morally* wrong. This view has fallen out of favor. Feldman and Connee write

> We acknowledge that it is appropriate to speak of epistemic obligations. But it is a mistake to think that what is epistemically obligatory, i.e., epistemically justified, is also morally or prudentially obligatory. (Feldman and Connee (1985) 23)

true belief because knowledge involves the fulfillment of a duty and mere true belief does not. Since we desire to fulfill our duties, it no wonder why we would desire to know that P rather than to hold the mere true belief that P.

Now I have no qualms with the claim that we have epistemic duties, nor do I deny that the fulfillment of them is valuable. But I don't think that this can be the whole story. There are three reasons for this. First, it's unclear that conforming our beliefs to the evidence exhausts our epistemic duties, or even that we always obligated to conform our beliefs to evidence. It seems that we have duties to be, e.g., open-minded and it is unclear that this duty reduces to conformity to evidence. Likewise, it's not clear that evidence is the only thing that can obligate belief. Plantinga has famously argued that belief in God does not require evidence, but what he says about God will apply to any belief that is properly basic, i.e., not based on other beliefs.[58] Moreover, beliefs that are self-fulfilling do not seem to require evidence. If P is not yet true, but will become true if I believe it, it's plausible that I ought to believe it, even if I have no evidence for it.[59]

This is all I'll say about whether epistemic duties can be reduced to evidence, for two reasons. First, assessing whether evidentialism can adequately respond to these points amounts to assessing evidentialism as a theory, but our goal is merely to assess evidentialism vis-à-vis value problems. Second, one could easily drop the evidentialist gloss of epistemic duty and still have a plausible theory of knowledge even if "epistemic duty" is defined in some other

[58] See, Plantinga (1981) and elsewhere

[59] See Reisner (2013) for more discussion of self-fulfilling beliefs and their implications for evidentialism.

way (or perhaps even left undefined). This raises the question, "would *that* theory be in a position to answer the value problem."

So, from here to the end of this section, I will assume that evidentialists can answer this challenge. And for those who find the idea of a non-evidentialist deontic theory of justification attractive, my worries below can be modified to apply to that without too much difficulty.

My second and third worries have to do with whether duty can provide an answer to the value problems we've discussed. My second worry has to do with the relation of duty to value. The proposal we are considering says that beliefs become more valuable when one fulfills an epistemic duty by holding them. But where does that duty come from? One natural option: we are obligated to hold beliefs that are epistemically valuable. But if this is the case, we do not have an adequate answer to the value problem after all. Even if the belief becomes *more* valuable as a result of fulfilling an epistemic duty, that value would be derivative of the earlier value which generated the obligation. If epistemic duty is to explain the extra value of knowledge, our epistemic duty to know must come prior to the extra epistemic value of knowledge. Some, of course, will be willing to accept the priority of epistemic duty over epistemic value. But this priority claim is bound to be controversial, just as the priority of right over good is controversial in meta-ethics. It would be better if we could solve the problem without taking on controversial claims. Perhaps this will turn out to be unavoidable, but I think this should motivate us to at least look elsewhere.

My third and final worry is that there seem to be beliefs or belief-like states that we ought to hold but which fall short of knowledge. To see why, notice that our obligation to hold well-evidenced beliefs is supposed to be an instance of the more general obligation to believe

according to the evidence. When the evidence strongly favors P, we ought to believe that P; when there's equally good evidence for and against P, we ought to suspend belief regarding P; when the evidence is strongly aligned against P, we should disbelieve P. This raises the question, "What about cases where the evidence favors P, but does not favor it so strongly that we may come to know P by basing our belief on it?" That is, what about cases where the evidence for P is *pretty good*, but *not good enough for knowledge*? It's tempting to say that in such cases, we ought to believe that P, even though we do not know that P. After all, if our duty is to conform our beliefs to the evidence and the evidence favors P, then shouldn't we believe that P? If we should, then we can have true, duty-fulfilling beliefs that fall short of knowledge. In that case, this response, while it may capture something that is good about knowledge, does not capture what distinguishes knowledge from duty-fulfilling mere true belief.

Let's consider two ways that an evidentialist (or other epistemic deontologist) might try to escape this. They might deny that the case is possible. They might say that so long as the evidence favors P at all, then it is good enough for knowledge. This is a possible response, but not a plausible one. If the weatherman says that there is a 51% chance of rain tonight, that evidence favors the proposition "it will rain tonight," and if you have no countervailing evidence, then your total evidence favors that proposition too. But surely your evidence isn't nearly good enough for knowledge. As Bonjour notes, even though "nothing like a precise specification of [the degree of justification] has ever been seriously suggested, . . . [it is]

commonly said . . . [to be] 'strong' or 'high' or 'adequate' or enough to make it 'highly likely.'"[60] That evidence is none of these things.

Alternatively, they might deny that we should ever believe unless the evidence is good enough for knowledge. Although we could still conform our beliefs to evidence in the sense that evidence determines our beliefs, we do not need to believe everything slightly favored by evidence. This may well be right, but I doubt that we should completely suspend judgement even when our evidence for P is pretty good (and thus our evidence for not-P pretty bad). Suspension of judgement seems fitting when the evidence is equally balanced, but when it favors one side, something else seems to be called for. English has terms like hunches, suspicions, educated guesses, inclinations and probably other terms to indicate that an intermediate cognitive state between full belief and complete suspension of judgement. Some of these terms play an important role in common-law justice systems.[61] If the evidence favors P but not so strongly as to warrant belief, and if our duty is to conform our belief to the evidence, then even if we should not believe it, it seems plausible that we should hold one of these intermediate states. We do talk about reasonable and unreasonable suspicions, hunches, etc. And moreover, each of these intermediate states can turn out to be *true*. There's nothing weird about saying that your hunch, suspicion or educated guess "turned out to be right." If that's correct, then a new version of the value problem arises: what makes knowledge better than some true duty-fulfilling intermediate state. It's not clear that what deontological evidentialism can say about that problem.

[60] Bonjour (2010) 60

[61] For a critical assessment Suspicion in common law systems see Skolnik (2015).

At this point, I want to circle back to something I mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this section. Evidentialism as a theory of justification does not have a built-in answer to the secondary value problem or the Bad Knowledge problem. It cannot by itself explain why knowledge is better than all forms of non-knowledge, and specifically why knowledge is better than Gettered belief. And it cannot by itself explain why knowledge is incompatible with defects serious enough to make it less valuable than some non-knowledge. One might react to this by thinking "Well, evidentialism can solve the big one. It can explain why knowledge is better than mere true belief, and the others are further problems that require further solutions. But we'll work those out later." The opposite reaction is also possible. One could see these problems, conclude evidentialism is unlikely to solve them, and dispense with evidentialism. If what we're trying to do is to explain the extra value of knowledge, what we want to know is how, besides being true, is knowledge good. It may well be that ordinary, paradigmatic mere true belief is worse than ordinary paradigmatic knowledge precisely because knowers attend to their evidence and fulfill their epistemic duties by doing so. But what these related problems show, I think, is not merely that value problems are resilient and crop up for almost every theory. What they show is that evidentialism, while it may have located an important part of what makes knowledge good, has only located a *part* of it.

3.3. Virtue Epistemology

3.3.1. Virtue Epistemology in General

Now we turn to virtue epistemology. Virtue epistemology comes in many forms, but when it comes to knowledge the core idea is, roughly:

VE: S knows that P iff S truly believes that P because of S's intellectual virtue.[62]

Zagzebksi, Sosa and Greco all advance versions of this claim. For instance, Zagzebski defines knowledge as

> VE_Z: Knowledge is belief in which the believer gets to the truth because she acts in an epistemically conscientious way.[63]

Likewise, Sosa gives the following definition of knowledge

> VE_S: A belief amounts to knowledge only if it is true and its correctness derives from its manifesting certain cognitive virtues of the subject, where nothing is a cognitive virtue unless it is a truth-conducive disposition.[64]

And Greco defends the following "framework for understanding what knowledge is"

> VE_G: S knows that p if and only if S believes the truth (with respect to p) because S's belief that p is produced by intellectual ability.[65]

So what does this crucial "because of" mean? One natural option is treat it as a modal operator: when someone gets the truth because of intellectual virtue, if the truth had been different, then the virtuous agent's belief would be too. Pritchard and Sosa both find room in their virtue epistemologies for this kind of condition.[66] While Zagzebski is skeptical of whether counterfactual accounts can ever give us the meaning of "A because of B," she seems to think

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[62] I stress "when it comes to knowledge." While VE does describe the most prominent virtue epistemologists, some self-professed virtue epistemologists seem uninterested in the project of defining knowledge. (See, e.g., Roberts and Woods (2007).) While "virtue epistemology" can and in some cases should be used such that it includes those kinds of theorists, the goals of such theorists is orthogonal to my own. We can set them aside for present purposes.

[63] Zagzebski (2008) 127

[64] Sosa (2009) 135; Sosa notes that this definition is "rough and partial" but it is good enough for our purposes, as it was good enough for his.

[65] Greco (2010) 71

[66] See, e.g., Sosa (2007) and Pritchard (2005)

such accounts may do a decent job of telling *when* the "A because of B" relation holds.[67] So, a modal reading, if not perfect, is at least a good heuristic.[68]

A second important notion is that of credit for true belief. While this is not the same notion as truth because of virtue, they are closely related. If S gets the truth because she believes virtuously, we are apt to credit her with getting the truth. By contrast, if T gets the truth by guessing, we are apt not apt to credit her with anything except good luck.

That's an overview of some of the most prominent accounts of virtue epistemology. We have of course said very little about what intellectual virtue or ability or acting in an epistemically conscientious way amounts to. For present contexts, there is no need for a precise definition of these terms. But we can say, roughly, that the virtues are the properties that are characteristic of good thinkers.[69] They include properties like being open-minded, fair, diligent, careful, attentive to detail and so on.[70] This gives us at least a pretty good idea of the kinds of things that are supposed to be virtues. The question, then, is this: Does defining knowledge in terms of virtue help with value problems?

3.3.2. Virtue Epistemology and Value Problems.

[67] Zagzebski (1999) 111

[68] Greco endorse a causal rather than modal reading. I leave Greco's to the side for three reasons. (I) it requires a more complicated approach to Gettier problems than the view discussed here. (II) Greco does not claim to have avoided Gettier cases. And while he does claim that his account goes "a long way toward explaining a range of Gettier cases" he also "concedes . . . that aspects of [his account] leave it unclear how the account adjudicates certain kinds of case." (III) the example we will discuss involves virtuous belief causing its own truth and so should be a problem for Greco as much as anyone else.

[69] We need to be a little careful here. Some, like Zagzebski (1997), distinguish between intellectual virtue and intellectual skills. Others, like Sosa (2007), do not.

[70] For a more extensive list of intellectual virtues see Zagzebski (1997) 112

I think that virtue epistemology does significantly better than other theories in addressing value problems. In fact, I think it is something of a cousin of my own view. While virtue epistemology emphasizes the normative aspect of knowledge, my own emphasizes the axiological aspect. While these are not the same, they are very closely related, since it hard to see how we could have normative reason to pursue something which was not at all good, or how something could be good without our having a reason to desire it. Now, to sketch that relation in detail would take us off course: my goal is not to argue that my view is closely related to virtue epistemology—though I think it is—my goal is assess virtue epistemology through the lens of value problems.

With regards to the primary and tertiary value problems, VE has much more plausible responses than its competitors. We'll start with the primary problem. Knowledge is better than mere true belief, says virtue epistemology, because knowledge crucially involves the exercise of virtue. This seems plausible.

Moreover, this does not seem to face swamping problems. The swamping problem came about because reliability (or justification in a Bonjourian sense) seems to be of purely instrumental value. We want reliably formed beliefs only because they are likely to be true. But, of course, true beliefs are guaranteed to be true. Adding reliability to truth generates no further value, even instrumentally.

Epistemic virtue isn't something we desire as a means to something else. We want it all on its own. Indeed, sometimes we would rather be epistemically virtuous than get the truth. Think of the most epistemically vicious people you know. You don't want to be that way, even if by some stroke of luck, they happen to be mostly right. For instance, even if we are all brains

in vats which are located on a flat disk, I think you would still rather not be a flat-earther. That is, you would still rather interpret the evidence in a virtuous way, even if it cost you the truth. But in that case, virtue can't be desirable solely as a means to truth.

Why we desire beliefs that are the product of virtue, is subject to some debate. The most common answer is that when a true belief is the product of virtue, it is an achievement. Others have suggested that virtue contains a motivational component, and thus beliefs like actions inherit some value from their motives. Regardless, it seems plausible that virtuous beliefs are desirable *in themselves*. It is thus plausible that VE can dodge the problems that beset reliabilism and certain forms of evidentialism.

As for the tertiary value problem, if knowledge crucially involves the exercise of virtue, it's clear why epistemology should value it. This is especially true if you think of knowledge, as many virtue epistemologists do, as something you get credit for.

Things get trickier when we turn to Bad Knowledge. On the one hand, VE seems to have a ready response to subjective irrationality and bootstrapping. Since such patterns of reasoning do not seem virtuous and thus, do not seem to be knowledge. (This would not totally take the bite out of bootstrapping, since it would remain unclear why deductive reasoning from seemingly known propositions is sometimes vicious, but the problem would no longer have to do with how knowledge is defined.)

However, at least with respect to subjective irrationality things are not are as clear as they might seem. For in other fields, it is clear that one can exhibit virtues while at the same time believing that they are exhibiting vices. A Kantian who believes it is always wrong to lie, still exhibits virtue when he lies to protect a friend from a madman. Likewise, a baseball player

may exhibit excellence in hitting even while mistakenly believing that his swing has some defect or another. Greco explicitly employs this latter analogy to thinking:

> Good thinking is like good hitting: … a good hitter['s] dispositions will generate success in relevant conditions. But even so, the most successful player need not be a good coach—*he may not have any beliefs at all, or may even have incorrect beliefs*, about the nature and character of the dispositions that he himself manifests when batting conscientiously. What makes for a good hitter is that he hits well, and what makes for a good thinker is that he thinks well. Accordingly, [there is] no requirement that a knower believe that she is thinking well.[71]

Now, Greco stops short of saying that a good thinker may believe themselves to be thinking poorly; his only explicit concession is that they might think without holding the belief that they are thinking well.[72] But the analogy seems to suggest more than that, for a hitter may manifest hitting excellence while at the same time believing that he is swinging poorly. Indeed, this actually happens. Sometimes professional baseball players get "check-swing hits," wherein the hitter tries to stop himself from swinging and still makes solid enough contact to get a hit. Clearly some degree of excellence is on display and yet it seems that the hitter believes he is making a mistake or else he would not try to stop.

Could something similar occur when it comes to thinking? Maybe. Above we imagined a math student who proves a complicated theorem only to be told that she has been given that drug that inhibits mathematical thinking. Let us suppose she maintains her belief in the proof. Does she get the truth because of her virtues? On the one hand, she seems to exhibit virtues in forming the belief: she exhibits mathematical excellence as well as, plausibly, care and diligence. On the other hand, she holds the belief despite regarding for reasons for believing as

[71] Greco (1999) 291
[72] Hazlett (2012) makes a similarly claim.

inadequate. This seems like an epistemic vice. Maybe this case seems like a clear case of non-knowledge, so it is obvious that virtue epistemologists should deny she gets the truth because of virtue. But the example could be modified. Perhaps she has not been told she has been drugged, but she has all the symptoms and simply fails to make the connection or has forgotten that a practical joker has been drugging mathematicians' coffees. Forgetfulness and a failure of recognition seem bad things. Are they serious enough vices that she can no longer be said to get the truth because of her virtue? I take it that it is just unclear, and I suspect different virtue epistemologists would have different reactions to this case or various modifications of it. My point here isn't to decisively stick virtue epistemology with subjectively irrational Bad Knowledge. Rather it's just to point out that the concept of truth because of virtue is not so clear as to automatically rule it out. We will return to this point.

The bigger problem, in my view, is that truth because of virtue allows for Gettier cases and thus cannot solve the secondary value problem. (And, if Gettier cases are cases of Bad Knowledge, then VE faces Bad Knowledge problems as well). Now, some virtue epistemologists believe that they can avoid the Gettier problem. The term "because of" is central to their solutions. The idea is that Gettier believers get the truth because of (double) luck rather than because of intellectual virtue.[73] In Gettier cases, you have good reason to believe that the world is a given way, but unluckily it is not that way. However, a stroke of good luck undoes the initial bad luck and the belief comes out true anyway. For example, in the ten coins case it is bad (epistemic!) luck that Black and not Smith is getting the job. However, because Black has the good luck to have ten coins in her pocket, her belief that "the person who will get the job

[73] See Zagzebski (1994) for a longer discussion of the role of double luck.

has ten coins in their pocket," comes out true. It's natural to say that Black got the truth in this case "by luck." It's also quite natural to think that what goes for this case applies more generally: if you get the truth by luck, then you have not gotten it by virtue.

While this handles a great many Gettier cases, I don't believe that it handles all Gettier cases. In particular, I think virtue epistemology faces self-fulfilling Gettier cases. To see what I mean, we will start with a case that virtue epistemology *can* handle before moving to one that causes more problems.

First, the case that poses no problem: Suppose that a law firm is hiring. Typically, law firms would want to hire candidates with a vast knowledge of case law, high marks in law school, good recommendations, previous experience and so on. Let's say that candidate Cindy has all of that and more. Cindy is, by any objective measure, the best candidate available for the job and should be a shoo-in to get one of the open positions. Cindy knows this and for these reasons forms the belief that she will be hired. Cindy's belief seems perfectly virtuous. But there is a twist: Of course, since this is a Gettier-inspired case, there is twist: the law firm doesn't care about recommendations, past experience and so on. All the hiring committee values is confidence: they hire all and only candidates that believe they will be hired. So, Cindy's belief is virtuously formed and true, but it doesn't seem like she knows it. Her belief depends on the false belief that her recommendations, experience and so on matter to the hiring committee.

Virtue epistemology has an easy response to this: Cindy may have a virtuous true belief, but her belief is not true *because* it is virtuous. It is true simply because it is held. It does not matter how she holds the belief. No matter how poorly she reasons or how much intellectual

vice she displays, if she believes that she will get the job, then her belief will be true. (In fact, if she believed the opposite, that would be true also.) Intellectual virtue has nothing to do with it. So far, so good.

Now suppose we modify the example slightly. Suppose the hiring committee cares not only confidence but also about intellectual virtue. They will, in this example, hire all and only candidates who believe they will be hired *and who have displayed intellectual virtue in forming that belief.* In this example, Cindy's belief is still inferred through falsehood; there still seems to be a disconnect between the reasons she believes it and the reasons it is true. And yet, it seems difficult to deny that she gets the truth because of her virtue. After all, if she had formed her belief in an unvirtuous way, she would no longer get the truth. This example actually has a tighter connection between virtue and truth than usually obtains. In ordinary life, someone who pays careful attention to the evidence may still end up with a false belief. That is impossible in this case.

3.4 Why This Matters

As I've noted regarding previous theories, I don't mean to simply point out that virtue epistemology faces counterexamples. But, as with other theories, I think counterexamples can often indicate something deeper. And here, I think they indicate an incompleteness in virtue epistemology. Whether a belief is virtuously formed is largely a matter of what goes on in the head. Virtue epistemologists are quite cognizant of this fact as well as the fact that knowledge requires what Aristotle would call "external goods." And they have been more explicit than anyone about trying to capture both. Zagzebski, for instance, talks about knowledge

connecting us to the external world and of knowledge being belief where "everything goes right.[74]" I think these are both extremely insightful. But the trouble comes in trying to make "everything going right" a result of virtue. Phrases like "because of" or assignings of credit are, I think, hard to make clear enough for an analysis. Indeed, this kind of issue has led some virtue epistemologists to give up the search for an analysis.[75]

Again, I don't claim to have conclusively rebutted virtue epistemology. But I think the issues raised here suggest investigating an alternative approach. If we think of knowledge as belief where everything goes right and if we are convinced that that must involve intellectual virtue, maybe the way to connect these two is to go in the opposite direction. Maybe we should start with the idea of knowledge as belief in which everything—or at least everything of importance—goes right and get the necessity of virtue out of that. This is the kind of theory I advance in the next chapter.

[74] Zagzebski (2017) 108

[75] Roberts and Wood (2007) are probably the foremost example of this abandonment, but see also Kelp (2017)

Chapter 2

Introducing Valuism: A New Theory and a Solution to Value Problems

1. Introduction

1.1 Recap

In the previous chapter we discussed three variations on the value problem. The primary problem asked, "Why is knowledge better than mere true belief?" while the secondary problem asked, "Why is knowledge better than all forms of non-knowledge?" This latter problem, we noted, was especially difficult because of its connection to the Gettier problem. The tertiary value problem asked, "Why is knowledge worth the time epistemology has spent on it?" We then raised a new challenge to any theory that aims to solve those problems. We called this problem the Bad Knowledge problem. It went like this. Knowledge is supposed to have an extra value not shared by mere true belief. We asked whether knowledge could possess defects which offset that extra value. If so, then it seems impossible to solve the value problem, since knowledge will sometimes be no better (and perhaps worse) than mere true belief. This presented a new obstacle in our attempts to solve the value problem: can we define knowledge in a way that forecloses the possibility that it might possess defects which make it less desirable than knowledge.

In this chapter, I shall offer a new theory of knowledge, which I will call valuism. I shall argue that it solves each of these problems. In fact, I will use these problems to flesh out its core idea. That idea is that knowledge consists in being epistemically valuable. I will close by considering an objection to this theory and present an argument that if knowledge is always

superior to belief that falls short of knowledge, then some form of valuism will be at least extensionally adequate.

1.2 Overview of the Theory

Valuism's central thesis is that being knowledge does not make a belief valuable; being valuable makes it knowledge. Put differently, valuism holds that being knowledge consists in having a high enough epistemic value.

This offers a novel solution to the (primary) value problem: knowledge is better than mere true belief because *it's defined that way*. Since knowledge consists in having a high enough epistemic value, any belief that is as valuable as knowledge *is knowledge*.[76] Conversely, any belief that is not knowledge must be less valuable than knowledge. This applies to mere true belief, Gettiered belief and any other belief that fails to be knowledge.

That is the core idea. One could elaborate on it in many ways. In what follows, I will defend one elaboration of this idea. Though I expect that my account, like all previous, will have problems that clever philosophers will expose, I believe the core holds promise. With that, I present my account:

> *Valuism*: S knows that P iff no relevant alternative doxastic attitude toward P is significantly better than S's belief that P.

I want to make several quick points about this definition. First, a pair of terminological points: I am using "valuism" both to refer to the general claim that being knowledge consists in being valuable, and to my specific elaboration on this claim. This is not ideal, but I would rather not

[76] With, of course, the caveat that we must compare the same things: Mere true belief about the deep nature of the universe may be better than knowledge of baseball statistics.

refer to either with asterisks or some similar denotation. From this point on, when I use "valuism" without further comment, I mean the above definition. When I mean to refer to the general claim, I will mark it with the words "as a general thesis" (as I do in Sections 3 and 7) or "some form of valuism" (as I do in section 10).

A further terminological point: As I shall use the term, "doxastic attitude" means anyway of believing that P, of disbelieving that P or of suspending belief about P. While doxastic attitudes all fall into these three general categories, I shall use the term in a way that individuates doxastic attitudes more finely. For instance, if Jack believes that P based on evidence E_1, but Jill believes that P based on E_1&E_2 then, as I shall use the terms, Jack and Jill have neither the same belief nor the same doxastic attitude. The same is true if Jack and Jill use different processes for forming the belief, or display different virtues, and so on. In general, anything that makes a difference to value will make for a different doxastic attitude. This is a terminological stipulation. I could allow that Jack and Jill have the same attitude but since there will be cases where I want to say that Jill knows and Jack does not I would need to add some qualification to the effect that S only knows if there is no relevant possibility in which her own attitude is significantly improved. Adding that stipulation would not change the content of the theory, but it would make it wordier and more awkward to discuss in certain places. Thus, I opt for stipulation.

Second, valuism as defined above is complicated enough to obscure the relatively simple idea underlying it. That idea is roughly that knowledge is the best kind of belief. To call a belief knowledge is to give it a stamp of approval, a gold seal, an A grade. It may not the uniquely best belief, but no belief is so much better than it as to merit a higher honorific. (We

will address whether "wisdom" and "understanding" are higher honorifics at the end of the section.) So, that's the rough idea, let's turn to the details of the definition.

Third, the comparison is between *S's belief that P* and other relevant doxastic attitudes regarding P including disbelieving P and suspending belief about P. This is important for two reasons. First, this entails that S actually believes that P. We can't compare S's belief that P to anything unless it exists. And, of course, without this qualification, it would be possible for S to know what she does not believe. Second, we must compare S's belief to all ways of believing, disbelieving or suspending belief that P. This is because suspension of belief may sometimes be better than any alternative belief and failing to account for that will make us too generous with knowledge attributions. For example, suppose that the evidence regarding P is inconclusive. In that case, the best doxastic attitude may be one of suspended belief. Since S must actually believe P in order to know P, it follows that knowledge in this case is impossible. This seems right. But if we only considered ways of believing that P, then we'd be forced to say that the way of believing P counts as knowledge, which seems wrong.

Fourth, we're concerned only with *relevant* doxastic attitudes. "Relevant alternatives," at least in my account, will be context-sensitive.[77] This is a natural fit with our claim that knowledge is the best kind of belief. Whether something is best obviously depends on the alternatives. But we do not typically consider every alternative when calling something best. We consider all those that are relevant. I will discuss this in section 5. For shorthand, I will call

[77] It is at least theoretically possible to endorse a theory that includes a relevant alternatives qualifier without being a contextualist. In fact, Dretske may have done so. For Dretske's own discussion on his relation to contextualism see Dretske (1991).

the relevant alternative doxastic attitudes "competitors" or "competing beliefs" or some similar cognate.

I want to note a potential source of confusion. In Section 5.1 I will gloss relevance such that in includes beliefs S could have had if her evidence or the world outside her had been slightly different. But above I said that if the evidence for P was inconclusive the best doxastic attitude may be one suspended belief. But given this gloss of relevance, this may seem unnecessary. You might think we could just as easily point to a relevant alternative belief based on better evidence. There's no need to appeal to suspension of belief to explain why belief on insufficient evidence is not knowledge.

In many cases, this is probably true. But I do not want to place the entire burden of such cases on relevance for three reasons. First, I worry about the possibility that there may be cases where acquiring conclusive evidence is so difficult—where it requires the world to be so different—that it is no longer relevant. The second reason is that suspensions of belief might be better even than any attitude that S could have had even if the world were slightly different. Finally, I want my theory to be as open to amendment as possible. Someone might want to gloss relevance differently than I do. Or might want to dispense with it entirely. I would prefer my theory be able to handle cases of undecisive evidence that does not rely entirely on glossing relevance as I do.

Finally, let's consider an objection to the claim that knowledge is the best kind of belief. You might say, "What about wisdom or understanding? Aren't they significantly better than knowledge?" Yes, but they are not attitudes *toward P*. Belief, disbelief and suspension of belief are all targeted at a single proposition. I believe, disbelieve or suspend belief that P. Wisdom

and understanding are directed at *topics* or *practices*.[78] This is why we do not say someone has wisdom that P. Nor do we call someone a person of understanding unless they know a great many interrelated things about a particular topic.

Think about, for instance, what's required to understand chess. To understand chess, one must know not only how one piece moves, but how every piece moves. Not only that, one must know what the goal of the game is. And not only that, but one must know something about how to employ the various possible moves to accomplish the goal. This isn't unique to chess. Understanding requires knowledge of numerous interrelated propositions and how they fit together. Wisdom plausibly requires at least that, perhaps with the added ability to apply that understanding to practical situations.

1.3 The Plan for the Chapter

The plan for the rest of this chapter is as follows. In Section 2 we will discuss what properties belong to the best kind of belief. In Section 3, we will discuss what it means for a doxastic attitude to be significantly better than another. In Section 4, we will solve the tertiary

[78] Here's a different way to put this point. There are at least two kinds of questions we can ask "whether" questions and "why" questions. We know when we have the right kind of answer to a "whether" question, and we have understanding when we have the right kind of answer to a "why" question. But whether questions are the only ones we respond to with belief, disbelief or suspension of belief. These correspond to the answer "yes," "no" and "I don't know" respectively. To be sure we can believe that "P is the reason why Q," but notice what we believe there. We believe *that*. The whether question to which we answer "yes" is just "whether P explains Q." The point is this: whether questions are fundamental and answers to them are assumed by why questions. And this means that belief is more fundamental than understanding. And this is one reason for investigating knowledge. If knowledge is the best kind of belief, and if belief is fundamental, then that is worth investigating even if something better can be built on top of belief.

value problem. In Section 5, we'll discuss the role that context-sensitivity plays in valuist ascriptions of knowledge. In Section 6, we will discuss the *Bad Knowledge* problem. In Section 7, we will consider the objection from trivia. In Section 8, we will show that valuism is extensionally adequate.

2. The Best Kind of Belief

I have said that knowledge is roughly "the best kind of belief." In this section, I explain what that means. Here, I want to say a little about the term "best kind" and I want to describe what kinds of properties the best kind of belief will have.

The first thing to notice is that the best *kind* of belief is not necessarily the best belief one could actually have. Compare: an A student is the best kind of student. But some students may simply be incapable of getting an A. (Imagine, for instance, a student who has somehow managed to sign up for an advanced logic, math or language class without ever taking the prerequisites.)

This might seem surprising given that I have defined "S knows that P" in a way that makes reference to relevant alternative doxastic attitudes. But notice that I have not said that the alternative doxastic attitudes are ones that S could have had. The relevant alternatives are not the set of possibilities for S, but rather the class of doxastic attitudes against which S's belief that P is compared. Now, I do take it that if S easily could easily have had some a belief, then that belief is one against which her present belief should be compared, but this shows that being easily had is sufficient condition for being a relevant alternative, not a necessary one. We shall discuss relevant alternatives more in Section 5.

Let us now discuss the kinds of properties that the best kind of belief must have. The first and most important property that the best kind of belief must have is truth. To believe something is to believe that it is true.[79] This is not merely an accident; this is part of what it means to believe something or at least to believe it without defect. Likewise, William James famously listed believing the truth as one of only two intellectual duties—the other being to avoid error.[80] James may have been simplistic here (do we have no obligations to rationality, evidence or virtue?) but no one would deny that truth is an important cognitive goal.[81]

So, the best kind of belief must be true. But truth alone is not enough. After all, if the only good thing we could say about a belief is that it was true—if it is not well-evidenced, if it is not one you ought to hold, if no virtue is exercised in its production, if it does not track the truth, and so on—then it would not be a good belief, let alone the best kind of belief. Philosophers since Plato have almost unanimously agreed that knowledge was better than mere true belief.[82] (The very fact that we call it "mere" true belief indicates that it is in some ways lacking.) But if knowledge is better, then something must be lacking from mere true belief.

Existing accounts of knowledge provide a natural place to look for this "something else." While these accounts differ greatly in what is required to transform true belief it into

[79] A similar point is made in Williams (1973).
[80] James (1979).
[81] Perhaps this is optimistic: recent events have led many to suggest that a post-truth politics have ascendant. This is an important issue, but one which lies far outside the scope of this dissertation and outside the author's expertise. I will, however, say only that I take this to be a *bad* development, the badness of which testifies to the value of truth.
[82] Kvanvig (2003) is a notable exception to this.

knowledge, they all agree that it is something valuable.[83] This includes properties like being well-evidenced, being rational, being virtuously or reliably formed, tracking truth, being truth-apt, motivated by the desire for truth, being responsibly acquired, not being the product of luck etc.

Valuism can hold that some or all of these properties indirectly contribute to a belief's being knowledge. This is one of the more attractive features of valuism. It can function as a kind of umbrella theory, taking what's good about other theories and placing that under a single over-arching theory. In doing so, it explains what's intuitively plausible about other theories of knowledge. They are plausible because the things they claim transform true belief into knowledge sometimes do, albeit indirectly, by raising the value of the belief in question.

This has been an abstract look at the view. Let's look at some concrete cases.

> *Case 1*: An agent examines the best available evidence for and against P. The evidence is decisive in favor of P and P is true. She believes that P and bases her belief on that evidence.

Evidentialists will say that our agent knows—provided we don't spell out the details in an abnormal way. (If we transform the case into a Gettier case, the evidentialist will retract their knowledge attribution.) Valuism agrees with this. However, it gives a slightly different explanation for why she knows. For the evidentialist, she knows because her true belief is

[83] Plantinga puts the point this way:

> One thought emerging from our canvas of contemporary accounts of warrant … is that there are many different valuable epistemic states of affairs… and different conceptions of warrant appeal to different epistemic values. (Plantinga 1993, 1)

based on good evidence. For the valuist, this is true, but only because being based on good evidence makes the belief valuable.[84]

Here's a second case.

> *Case 2*: I look to my left and see a mousepad. Because of this, I believe that there is a mousepad to my left.

Proper functionalists will say that I know that there is a mousepad to my left because my belief is generated by a properly functioning visual apparatus. Valuists will again agree that I know, but will again hold that this is only indirectly because of the way the belief is formed. The proper functioning of the visual faculty contributes to the value of the resulting belief, but it's that value that makes the belief knowledge, not the proper functioning itself.[85]

I use these examples merely to illustrate how valuism works. If you want, you can explain the value of the beliefs in *Case 1* and *2* in other ways. You could explain the value of the *Case 1* belief in terms of proper function or the *Case 2* belief in terms of evidence. You could appeal to the beliefs being reliably or virtuously formed, having certain modal properties, etc. You could explain them both in the same way or in two different ways. In normal cases, there are many options, because in normal cases belief have *all* these properties. This makes sense, since any plausible theory of knowledge will say we know in ordinary cases.

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[84] If we're careful, the valuist would say she knows because her belief is not significantly worse than the alternatives. If we hold fixed the evidence before her, any alternative belief would either be (I) not true, or (II) not well-evidenced or (III) not based on the evidence. Any of (I)-(III) would make her belief significantly worse.

[85] One might think that this is not truly indirect, since to say that a faculty functions properly is to say it functions *well*. Value is baked into the definition already. (Indeed, Plantinga explicitly places axiological requirements on his proper functionalist account of warrant (Plantinga 1993 28)). Still, the larger point is that the value that *makes* a belief knowledge and that that is conferred by what proper functionalism focus on.

The overarching point remains the same: the familiar epistemic properties still *matter*; they merely play a different role now.

3. Significantly Better

We now have a sketch of what the best kind of belief would look like. But, remember, the "best kind of belief" is shorthand for "a belief that is not significantly worse than some relevant alternative doxastic attitude." And that raises the question: what does "significantly better" amount to?

I readily admit that the term "significantly better" is vague, but all accounts of knowledge include some vague term. Usually the vague term refers to the property that transforms true belief into knowledge. For the evidentialist, the term "well-evidenced" is vague. For reliabilists, the term "reliable" is vague. We can ask, in each case, "how well-evidenced or how reliable must a belief be to count as knowledge? Similar questions apply to virtue epistemologists and proper functionalists.

It would be objectionable if "significantly better" were so vague that we could not tell whether one belief is significantly better than another even when it is clear that one belief is knowledge and another is not. But I don't think that is the case. Here's a very general argument for the conclusion that we can tell. If knowledge were not significantly better than non-knowledge, the value problem wouldn't be worth solving, but it is. So, knowledge is significantly better than non-knowledge. And so, if we can tell that one belief is knowledge and a competitor is not, we can tell that the former is significantly better than the latter. That's not to say that we can always tell whether one belief is significantly better than a competitor, but it

is to say that when we can't, we also can't tell whether either belief is knowledge. And indeed there are borderline cases of knowledge.

Still, that doesn't tell us much about how we can tell whether a belief is significantly better or worse than its competitors. On this score, I provide two questions which will serve as heuristics. Or rather: one question and one family of questions. The first is "does it have any defects in kind that its competitors lack?" Many counterexamples exploit this kind of defect. Consider Truetemp. Assuming the Tempucomp is more reliable than ordinary thermometers, Truetemp's belief is more reliable than the beliefs of ordinary people. So in that respect, it is better. But that is only a difference of *degree*. Truetemp's belief is worse in that it irrational by his own lights. And that is a difference in *kind*. A similar diagnosis applies to the original Gettier cases. The problem in those cases is not that they possess some ordinary defect to a higher degree, but rather that they possess an extraordinary defect such as being inferred through falsehood or possessing some other defect that we will discuss in the next chapter.

Differences in degree are trickier, since they seem significant in some cases but not others. If P is .99 probable on A's evidence, and .98 probable on B's evidence, the difference is insignificant. But if P is .99 probable on A's evidence and only .6 probable on B's evidence, then the difference seems significant. Do we have any guide to distinguishing between significant and insignificant differences in degree?

I suggest we adopt questions like "is the improvement worth the effort?" as heuristics. If a rational person is not willing to continue investigating to raise the likelihood of getting a true belief, then the expected improvements are probably not very significant. Now, this heuristic comes with several caveats. For one, it won't work in cases where improvement is not

possible. If I can't raise the probability of my belief beyond .6, the test doesn't apply. But we can ask a similar question, namely, "If I could improve my belief in such-and-such respect, would it be worth the effort such improvements usually take?" Similarly, this heuristic gives a universal "no" for beliefs that don't matter much to us. And yet, in some cases, differences of degree do seem to matter even to beliefs that don't matter to us. If I'm .6 certain the 7th digit of the 26th number in my contacts is prime, I don't know that it is. If I'm .99 certain, I might know. So, that difference must be significant, even though I don't care enough about the question to open my phone and check. Again, this can be fixed by asking a slightly different question: "Would it be worth the effort if I cared?" There are likely other exceptions. But what makes this a good heuristic is not that it is exceptionless nor even has very few exceptions. It is a good heuristic because the exceptions are clear. That is not to say that it always yields a clear answer; since "significant" is vague our heuristics should not always deliver a clear answer. But it is to say that when the heuristic delivers a clear answer and when that answer is wrong, I think it is clearly wrong.

4. Tertiary Value Problem

Let's turn now to the tertiary value problem. Recall that the tertiary value problem places two conditions on a solution to the value problem. First, knowledge must be a non-arbitrary point on the continuum of value. Second, any solution must vindicate epistemology's focus on knowledge.

On my view, the first condition is obviously met. The point at which a belief is valuable enough to count as knowledge is the point beyond which improvements are insignificant.

Calling something knowledge locates that belief high enough that no other belief would be a significant improvement. That's an important point on the spectrum and one we'd expect natural language to mark.

This is a feature other views struggle to replicate. Suppose, for instance, that knowledge is true belief that has at least .95 probability. Why not .94 or .96? Similar problems occur for pretty much any view on which knowledge includes a component that varies by degree. Why focus on belief that has just this much probability, reliability, virtuousness etc.? I don't claim that they *can't* answer this question, but I doubt that their answer will be as natural as valuism's.

This leaves the second condition: vindicating epistemology. My account does this. If we're interested in the continuum of epistemic value at all, we ought to be interested in the point beyond which improvements become insignificant. This is because we want to know not only what is valuable in the abstract, but also what is worth our time. One reason to devote special attention to the point beyond which significant improvements in epistemic value become impossible is that insignificant improvements are usually not worth our time. (Indeed, this is why "Is it worth our time?" can serve as a heuristic.)

It is almost always possible to improve our evidence for a true belief, but investigation takes time and weighing evidence takes mental energy. Sometimes this is worth it. If a proposition is worth having a belief about, it is worth spending some time and energy to ensure that our belief has epistemically valuable properties: truth, rationality, evidential support and so on. If there's a point up to which it makes sense to trade time and energy for epistemic

value, and beyond which that trades ceases to make sense, then that point would be worthy of special attention. I hold that knowledge is that point. Knowledge is the sweet spot.

5. Context-Sensitivity

For valuism, whether a belief is knowledge depends on how it compares to relevant alternative doxastic attitudes. But which alternatives are relevant? In this section I will develop a partial contextualist answer to that question. It will be partial because I will stick to providing sufficient conditions for an attitude's being relevant but will make no attempt to specify the necessary conditions of attitude relevance.

I will model this on Lewis's four rules of relevance. There have been modifications to Lewis's account over the years, but his is easily digestible and remains influential. I will retain Lewis's titles for those rules, so that the reader can easily compare mine to his, but I will not give a step-by-step description of how I am modifying these rules.[86] However, some discussion of the modifications made to rules (II) and (III) can be found in the next chapter.

5.1. Relevance and "Best"

[86] Lewis's rules can be found in Lewis (1996) p554-559. They are summarized below

I. *Rule of Actuality*: "Actuality is always a relevant alternative."
II. *Rule of Belief*: Possibilities the subject believes of should believe obtain are always relevant.
III. *Rule of Resemblance*: If possibility P_1 is relevant, and P_2 saliently resembles P_1, then P_2 is relevant.
IV. *Rule of Attention*: Possibilities that we are considering are relevant.

Ascriptions of "best" always involves comparison to alternatives, but not to every alternative. If I call a college basketball player "the best player in the country," you do not respond by saying several NBA players are better. If I say that something is "the best outcome," you do not reply that it would be better if we found a million dollars or acquired super-powers. When we call something "best" we are only considering *the relevant* alternatives.

Of course, *if* you did respond in that way, I might accuse you of being uncharitable, but I would not accuse you of being wrong. This is another important feature of the term "best." Which alternatives are relevant can "shift." Merely bringing a previously ignored possibility to mind can expand the realm of the relevant. And as what is relevant shifts, so also will the truth values of ascriptions of bestness.

5.2. Four Rules

Now, we don't typically call beliefs "best," but we do judge them, and we judge them *against* other beliefs. A term I've used repeatedly is "defect," but it is natural to think that a belief has a defect only in comparison to something else, even if that something else is an ideal. Valuism's claim is that a belief counts as knowledge when it is not significantly worse than any of the beliefs against which it is being compared. So what are those?

I suggest that the following rules do at least a decent job of capturing the comparison class

1. *Valuist Rule of Actuality*: The attitude a subject holds is relevant.
2. *Valuist Rule of Belief*: The attitude a subject takes herself to hold or should take herself to hold is relevant.
3. *Valuist Rule of Resemblance*: Attitudes the subject easily could have had are relevant.
4. *Valuist Rule of Attention*: Attitudes that have been brought to our attention are relevant.

Rule (1) is trivial: it tells us that the belief we're comparing is among the things compared.

Rule (2) is important and in the next chapter we will discuss how it enables us to dodge Gettier cases. (This is something that Lewis's *Rule of Belief* was not designed to do. We will discuss this as well.) For now, notice that this rule rules out the possibility of false belief being knowledge. This is because to hold a belief just is to take the belief to be true. Even if you could hold a belief that P while taking it to be false, you would only have managed to hold a contradictory set of beliefs (that P and not that P) rather believing P without taking P to be true.

Likewise, I take it that holding a belief involves taking oneself to have good reasons for holding that belief. Or at least it should. It seems incoherent to, in full consciousness, believe that P and take oneself to have no reason to believe that P (or worse, to take ones reasons to favor not-P). One need not believe that her reasons for belief are so good as to qualify her belief for knowledge. There's nothing incoherent about believing that P and in full consciousness taking oneself not to know that P. But coherence requires taking oneself to have at least some reason to believe that P. If so, then among the relevant alternatives will be not only a belief that is true, but one that is supported by reasons.[87] So belief against one's reasons cannot count as knowledge.

[87] An interesting feature of this: I take it that the belief that is relevant here has the same content as the agent's belief: If an agent believes that P, then she should take herself to hold a belief that P that is true and at least somewhat supported by evidence. This may turn out to be an impossible belief. Some beliefs are necessarily false. Perhaps some beliefs are necessarily unsupported by evidence (perhaps explicit contradictions are such an example). I do not take this to be problematic. We can very plausibly make value comparisons between the actual and the impossible. (See, e.g., Kraay's volume *Does God Matter* which is almost cover to cover

Rule (3) tells us that beliefs one easily could have had are relevant. When the evidence can be interpreted in different ways or if a different belief would be acquired simply by paying closer attention to it, then those alternative attitudes are relevant. Indeed, they seem like some of the first comparisons that we reach for when assessing someone's belief. But these alternatives do not exhaust the doxastic attitudes I easily could have had. If there is additional evidence that is easily acquirable, beliefs based on that evidence will also be among those that could easily be had. And if that evidence would significantly change what the subject believes or why or with what confidence they believe it, we will not be inclined to ascribe knowledge if they have not acquired that evidence.

Rule (3) will receive more discussion in the next chapter. I don't want to get sidetracked here, but I want to acknowledge that I have made an important change that will be discussed later. Lewis's original version of this rule was speaker-sensitive. That is, what possibilities it made relevant depended on what the speaker was aware of. That is not true of my version of Rule (3). Or at least is not true if we gloss it in the correct way. If we gloss "attitudes S easily could have had" as "attitudes S has in nearby possible worlds" and place no further restriction on "nearby" we introduce a degree of speaker-sensitivity since which worlds are most similar (and thus most nearby) the actual world depends on how the speaker weighs various factors. Now, I am not committed to a modal reading of easily, but if we adopt it, we probably need to enforce some specific weighting of factors, such as Lewis's "standard resolution."[88] If we

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comparisons between worlds in which God exists and worlds in which he does not, with at least one half of the compared worlds being impossible.)

[88] Cf. Lewis (1979). He there urges that nearness of possible worlds is determined by the following factors:

enforce such a regimented weighing system, then we will have eliminated the speaker-sensitivity of Rule (3).

Rule (4) is what allows us to maintain contextualism's biggest advantage: its response to skepticism. As DeRose notes, "Contextualist theories of knowledge attributions have almost invariably been developed with an eye toward providing some kind of answer to philosophical skepticism."[89] The core idea for contextualists of all stripes is this: under ordinary circumstances, many ascriptions of knowledge are true. Under ordinary circumstances, it is true that "I know that I have hands," "I know that Texas is a state and Dallas is a city," "I know that Lincoln was assassinated." But, says the contextualist, this changes when a skeptic arrives and brings new possibilities to mind. When the skeptic brings to mind, for instance, the possibility that I am a handless brain in a vat, then it is no longer true that "I know I have

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> (1) It is of the first importance to avoid big, widespread, diverse violations of law.
> (2) It is of the second importance to maximize the spatiotemporal region throughout which perfect match of particular fact prevails.
> (3) It is of the third importance to avoid even small, localized, simple violations of law.
> (4) It is of little or no importance to secure approximate similarity of particular fact, even in matters that concern us greatly.

Employing this, or any other precisely regimented weighing of factors, would provide a speaker-insensitive way of determining which worlds are closer than others. It would not, however, provide a way of determining which worlds are so far from our own that they could not easily be reached. That is, to dispense with the metaphor of closeness, (1)-(4) tell us what matters to similarity, but it does not tell us how similar a possibility must be in order to easily have been actual. But I think this is the right result, since there will be cases where it is unclear whether we should ascribe knowledge. My hope is that the vagueness that remains after we regiment similarity (if indeed we gloss "easily" in this way) matches up with the vagueness in knowledge ascriptions. Should this turn out not to be the case, I will need to pursue alternate ways of glossing "easily," or perhaps search for a better term to capture the range of speaker-insensitive possibilities that I wish to capture. For now, absent any example wherein this gives the wrong result, I am tentatively content with glossing "easily" as discussed above.

[89] DeRose (1999) 193-4

hands." Now, for most contextualists, this is because "S knows that P" is true when S's evidence eliminates all possibilities in which not-P. This will not work for valuism.

For valuism, what the skeptic must bring to our attention is the possibility of a better *belief*. Thankfully, I think they do this. Skeptical scenarios, e.g., brain in vat scenarios, are *challenges* to our beliefs. And what challenges do is bring to mind beliefs that can withstand them. After all, when I am confronted with a challenge to my belief, I begin looking for evidence that would allow my belief to withstand that challenge—or at least I should. And given the earlier stipulation that doxastic attitudes are individuated finely, this is tantamount to searching for a belief that can withstand those challenges.

Now, I have put this in first person; I have asked you to think about challenges to our beliefs. But the point works just as well in third person. If I say, "Tom knows that P," and you raise a skeptical scenario in which not-P, I think you have still turned my attention a belief that can withstand that challenge. By pointing out that Tom's cannot, you are pointing out that his belief is defective. But to point out that it is defective, is to bring to mind a belief that lacks that defect.

Now, one might balk at my claim that challenges bring to mind beliefs that can withstand them on the grounds that it is hard to imagine what kinds of belief can withstand skeptical challenges. I do not think that we must have a clear mental image of what a belief is like for it to be raised to our attention. After all, we do not typically have a clear mental image of the possibilities that skeptics raise to our attention when they challenge our beliefs. Think of the brain in vat example. When this possibility is brought to attention, it is almost never with any degree of detail. Not only how envattedness would be accomplished, but why it is

accomplished is left out. Questions like "Where do the wires (if there are wires) connect," "Am I suspended in fluid and if so what kind," "Who is simulating my experience and why?" go unanswered. There's very little content to the skeptic's scenario besides the fact that if it obtained, then I would be a brain in a vat. Likewise, there may be very little content to the belief the skeptic brings to mind besides the fact that if we possessed it, then our belief would stand up to skeptical criticisms. If it is acceptable for standard contextualism to allow vaguely conceived of possibilities to undermine knowledge attributions, I think the same should apply to vaguely conceived of doxastic attitudes.

Now, we will say more about these rules and in particular more about rules (2) and (3) in the next chapter. But for now, I take it we have a rough idea of what it means to say that no relevant alternative is significantly better than S's belief that P. And, this together with what I have said in the previous five sections, should give the reader an idea of what valuism counts as knowledge.

6. The Bad Knowledge Problem

We're now ready to solve the *Bad Knowledge* problem. Recall that the *Bad Knowledge* problem arose for theories that defined knowledge as belief possessing some set of non-axiological properties. However good those properties were, it's very difficult to see how they can protect a belief against any defects serious enough to outweigh one or more of them. That is, it hard to see how we can guarantee that there will not be any belief that possesses these non-axiological properties will and is beset by even worse defects.

Valuism, as a general thesis, has a simple answer to this problem. Since knowledge is defined in terms of epistemic value, if a belief that supposedly counts as knowledge yet possesses defects that outweigh the value separating it from non-knowledge, then it is not knowledge after all. Any belief which is no better than non-knowledge *is non-knowledge*.

The specific version of valuism that I am defending can make essentially the same reply. For all I have said about relevant alternatives, my account is fundamentally comparative. If one belief is better than another, we cannot call the better belief non-knowledge while calling the worse belief non-knowledge. Valuism does not allow the value of knowledge to dip below the value of mere true belief.

You might object that while this response ensures that the value of knowledge will not dip below the epistemic value of non-knowledge, but you might worry that I have achieved this by lowering the bar to knowledge. Recall that my view counts a belief as knowledge if it is not significantly worse than any relevant alternative. This might lead you to wonder, "Couldn't a belief have even a fairly significant defect, but that defect be shared by every relevant alternative?" Now, I doubt that such a scenario is possible but let's suppose, just hypothetically, that we could find an example where all relevant doxastic attitudes towards P share a defect. In that case, valuism would ask whether the best of these relevant doxastic attitudes is a belief. If it is, then that belief (if adopted) could be called knowledge. Is this objectionable? My inclination is to say it's unobjectionable, but it's hard to see one way or the other when the cases are described so abstractly. So, let's see if we can find an example.

Now, if we can find an example, it will not resemble like the cases we considered in the previous chapter. Last chapter we considered cases of Bad Knowledge that involved subjective

irrationality, bootstrapping and being Gettiered. We will discuss the Gettier case next chapter, but if what I say there is correct, then valuism will never count Gettiered beliefs as knowledge. So set that case aside for now. That leaves subjective irrationality and bootstrapping. But subjectively irrational beliefs and bootstrapped beliefs are ones agents should not hold. If a belief is subjectively irrational, you should either suspend belief or believe the opposite. And if a belief is bootstrapped, then you should either not believe it or else base your belief on different evidence (which given our stipulation that attitudes and beliefs are individuated finely, amounts to holding a different belief). Each of these would, I take it, be significant improvements in the agent's epistemic position. Since, per our discussion in section 5, the attitude an agent ought to hold is among the relevant attitudes, neither subjective irrationality nor being bootstrapped can be shared by all relevant alternatives. Those cases of Bad Knowledge are dodged.[90]

A more plausible approach is to try and find a case where every alternative has *some* defect, rather than a case where every alternative having the *same* defect. If we could find a case like that, then valuism would be forced to say that the least defective belief (if held) is knowledge.[91] Can we find a case like that? Misleading evidence is a natural place to look for this kind of case. If the best evidence I can get for a proposition is misleading, it seems I must

[90] Note that is still a kind of puzzle regarding bootstrapping, though not one regarding knowledge. What remains puzzling is why bootstrapping is bad reasoning. It seems clear that it is, but since it merely involves seemingly good inferences from things seemingly known, it is difficult to say what has gone wrong. But what is not difficult, for the valuist, is to say why bootstrapped beliefs are not knowledge. They are not knowledge because they are arrived at by bad reasoning.

[91] Or, if the least defective is not significantly better than some other belief(s), valuism would say that the least defective beliefs are knowledge.

either adopt a false belief or believe against the evidence. But this is not a problem for valuism. We already discussed in Section 5 how the *valuist rule of belief* rules out the possibility that false or irrational beliefs could be knowledge.

To summarize then, valuism offers a tidy solution to the bad knowledge problem. Any defect serious to render knowledge less valuable than non-knowledge would strip it of its claim to be knowledge. And while this solution does not render knowledge incompatible with all defects, it hard to see that it makes knowledge compatible with objectionable defects.

7. Trivia

In the previous 6 sections, I've outlined my view and discussed how it could solve the various value problems raised in the previous Chapter. In this section, I want to consider a new objection: the objection from trivial knowledge. Here's the rough idea. Some knowledge has no value whatsoever. Since it lacks value it cannot be better than non-knowledge. It is difficult to find any precise statement of this argument. Ward Jones gives an argument like this, but his reasoning is far more tortuous than would appear necessary.[92] Treanor notes that a similar argument has "ascended to orthodoxy in a single bound," though his concern is importantly different than ours.[93] Perhaps this unchallenged ascension to orthodoxy is why the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (perhaps the bearer of philosophical orthodoxy) states without elaboration that

> Some true beliefs are beliefs in trivial matters, and in these cases it isn't at all clear why we should value such beliefs at all. Imagine someone

[92] Jones (1997) 435
[93] Treanor (2014) 552

> who, for no good reason, concerns herself with measuring each grain of sand on a beach.[94]

Or perhaps such arguments have gone unanswered because most epistemologists have wanted to solve the value problem first and then address trivial concerns. For valuism, however, such objections are anything but trivial. For if they are sound, then we have a counterexample to valuism. It thus behooves us to take a deeper look at these arguments than their espousers typically have.

All agree that some knowledge has little or no pragmatic value. Let's grant that some knowledge is also of little or no epistemic value—that some knowledge contributes little to cognitive flourishing or fulfilling our epistemic goals. Let's call this knowledge trivial knowledge. Trivial knowledge is supposed to be no better than something. But what is that something? Here we face a choice. It could be that trivial knowledge is no better than mere true belief about that the same thing. Or it could be that knowledge is no better than no having no belief at all about the same thing. The latter isn't a problem for valuism. Knowing that P is compatible with there being an alternative doxastic attitude of roughly equal value. It would only be a problem if knowing trivia was significantly worse than having no belief about trivia.

So perhaps the claim is that trivial knowledge is no better than trivial mere true belief. This claim is far less intuitive than the above claim about non-belief. There may be no value, epistemic or otherwise, in knowing how many grains of sand are on a beach. But there could be *disvalue* in having a belief that "falls short" of knowledge even on such trivial things. I may not care to hold any belief about how many grains of sand are on a beach, but if I do hold such

[94] Pritchard, Turri and Carter (2018)

a belief, I want that belief to true rather than false, held for good reasons rather than bad, well-evidence rather than poorly-evidenced and, in general, to be undefective rather than defective.

I think our intuitions about cases bear this out. Here's the positive case. Imagine your lounging on the beach, when a fellow lounger tells you they know how many grains of sand are on that very beach. Don't you ask, "how many?" And once she answers, don't you ask how she knows? This piece of knowledge is ex hypothesi trivial, but once it's brought to our attention, we're still willing to make an effort to gain it. Small efforts, to be sure, but small efforts befit small profits and small profits are better than no profits.

The negative case is stronger. Suppose you wake up one morning with the belief that there are $7x10^{15}$ grains of sand on a given beach. So far as you can tell, you have no reason to believe this at all. And yet, you can't stop believing it. Doesn't that strike you as bad? Or consider conspiracy theorists or pseudo-scientists: flat-earthers, young-earth creationists, moon-landing truthers, etc. Many of these beliefs are trivial: what does the shape or age of the earth matter to me? And yet, I think we emphatically want *not* to hold any of those beliefs, and specifically not for the reasons their advocates do. This may be an extreme example, but the point applies to less extreme cases. The point is that bad ways of thinking are ones we want to avoid even in trivial cases. Poorly thought out beliefs about how many grains of sand a beach has may go wrong is less serious ways that conspiracy thinking, but they still go wrong for all that and so are still to be avoided.

Here's a second response the valuist can make. Valuists can say that trivial knowledge is significantly better than trivial mere true belief because the value of trivial knowledge is *proportionally* much greater than the value of trivial mere true belief. If something has very

little value, a small increase in value might still be significant. For example, old wheat pennies are often worth 10-15 times as much as current pennies. That's a significant increase, but not a large one. Perhaps something similar is happening with trivia. When someone knows a piece of trivia a lot has gone right in their forming their belief: they've paid attention to the evidence, exercised the relevant virtues and gotten the truth. That matters at least a little. If the value of a trivial true belief is very small (and it seems to be), then difference between trivial mere true belief and trivial knowledge may be significant, even if not large.

8. Valuism is Extensionally Adequate

I'm now going to argue that some form of valuism has a benefit unrivaled in epistemology: it gets all the right results. Not only does it get the right results in the cases we've considered, but it gets the right results in every possible case. It is extensionally adequate; it faces no counterexamples. I will not attempt to show that the version I've defended here is that version. The theoretical utility of the version I've defended will serve as a defense of that claim. Here, I will only try to show that some version of valuism has this advantage.

To see why this is, suppose that there were some property P had by all and only knowledge. In that case, we could define knowledge simply as whatever has P. This would get the right results in every case. If knowledge is always better than non-knowledge, then there is such a property: being sufficiently epistemically valuable. Put it another way. Imagine every possible belief arranged on a continuum of epistemic value. On leftmost side, we'd have irrational, vicious and false beliefs. On the rightmost, we'd have something like Cartesian

certainty. As we moved from left to right, we would leave ignorance and cross into knowledge. What we would cross, is what I'll call the axiological line of demarcation. If knowledge is always better than non-knowledge, then such a line exists. And the property that divides knowledge from true belief is "being to the right of the line." All that's left is to locate that line.

Of course, as we've noted already, that line may be relative to propositions and contexts. But a relativized line is still a line. There's a line of demarcation for S's knowing that P. It may simply be a different line than S's knowing that Q, R's knowing that P or even S's knowing that P in a different context. But so long as there's a way of drawing that line so that it gets it right all the various cases, some form of valuism will still come out extensionally adequate.

I admit upfront that a definition can be extensionally adequate without being a good definition. If we defined a chordate as a creature with a kidney, our definition would be extensionally adequate, but it would not be a good definition. It would not be a good definition because possessing a kidney is not what makes a creature a chordate. Possessing a notochord is what makes a creature a chordate.

However, there's an important difference between these two cases. The co-extensionality of "creature with a notochord" and "creature with a kidney" is a fluke. The co-extensionality of knowledge and valuable belief is not. It's part of the nature of knowledge that it is valuable. Philosophers at least since Plato have agreed that knowledge must be valuable and indeed more valuable than non-knowledge. That's why every epistemic theory has focused on some property that is good. Even reliabilism, with its swamping problem, has hit on a property that is clearly valuable. Even while the value problem went largely ignored,

epistemologists still produced accounts of knowledge as true belief plus X, where X is a good way to believe. If it's extensionally adequate *and* gets at the heart of what knowledge is, we should think that some form of valuism is true.

Chapter 3

Gettier Problems

The Plan of This Chapter

In Chapter 2, I argued that some form of valuism will avoid all potential counterexamples. The rough idea was that if knowledge is more valuable than non-knowledge, then we can use that value difference to define knowledge without fear of counterexample. This is because a difference in value ensures that there will be an axiological line of demarcation: a degree of value had by knowledge, but not by non-knowledge. This meant that knowledge could be defined as the beliefs above the line. The difficultly lay in drawing that line correctly.

Here, I want to address one of the most resilient counterexamples in epistemology: the Gettier problem. I want to argue that my way of drawing that line—i.e. my specific version of valuism—solves it. I will give my solution in Section 1 and argue that it is immune to counterexamples in Section 2. In Section 3, we will consider a secondary Gettier problem, namely, the problem of explaining how Gettiered belief differs from ordinary cases of knowledge and we will discover two explanatory advantages of my solution. These advantages will turn on the denial that Gettier cases share a single unifying defect. In Section 4, I will argue that if there is no unifying Gettier defect, then valuism is likely true. In section 5, I will consider and reject two potential unifying defects. In section 6, I reflect on what Gettier teaches us about the role of defects in knowledge.

1. How Valuism Solves the Gettier Problem

On my account, Gettiered beliefs will fail to be knowledge just in case some relevant alternative belief is significantly better than they are. This will be the case for any Gettier example. In fact, every Gettiered belief is significantly worse than at least *two* relevant alternatives. Both alternatives rely on a very simple observation: Gettiered believers are ignorant of some crucial fact about their situation. There's always a gap between the way they believe the world to be and the way that it is. We can generate alternatives to their Gettiered belief simply by closing that gap.

I call the first alternative the *changed-mind alternative*. Here we close the "gap" by changing the agent's mental life to better match the world. There are a couple ways we could do this. In the first and simplest case, we could change the case to give the Gettiered agent more information. For instance, suppose we change the ten coins case so that Black knows both that she has ten coins in her pocket and that she will get the job. Once we adjust the rest of the story so that Black continues to believe for good reasons, her resultant belief is significantly better than her Gettiered belief.[95] Here the basic idea is simple: if the Gettiered believer were better informed about her situation, she would no longer be Gettiered.

Two other possibilities also count as *changed-mind alternatives*. These involve changing what the Gettiered agent believes or *why* they believe it. These are more complicated cases and it is not immediately obvious whether they represent significant improvements. I will discuss these, along with the first version, in Section 3.

[95] Her belief would also be improved if she learned merely that *she* had ten coins in her pocket and then proceeded to infer "the person who will get the job has ten coins in their pocket" from it from "both candidates for the job have ten coins in their pockets."

I call the second alternative the *changed-world alternative*. It's the alternative we arrive at when we change a Gettier scenario so that the world is as the believer takes it to be. It's what we get if, for instance, we change the ten coins case so that Smith gets the job. Thus modified, Black's expectations for the world are met and her belief that "the person who will get the job has ten coins in their pocket" is improved. We can construct a *changed-world alternative* for every Gettier case. For all Gettier cases rely on a mismatch between expectation and reality.

I want to head off two potential misconceptions here. The first is that the *changed-mind alternative* is circular since it relies on altering what the agent knows. This would be circular if we were using the *changed-mind alternative* to *define* knowledge. But we are not. Neither it nor the *changed-world alternative* nor their conjunction is being added to the definition of knowledge as dreaded anti-Gettier conditions. Rather, we're using these cases to show that the Gettier cases do not meet the definition of knowledge as it stands. So long as we allow that these alternatives are relevant and superior, Gettier cases will fail to meet my definition. Second, we can just rephrase this to eliminate references to knowledge. We could say, for instance, that Black's belief would be better than Gettiered belief if she overheard the boss tell say to his secretary to "draw up the contract for Black, but don't tell her, I want to play a little joke" and if she then reached into her pocket and counted how many coins she had. Even though we haven't used the word "know" we have described a case where she knows enough to recognize the situation for what it is. Of course, it's hard to generalize this strategy without using the terms like "know" or "learns," which is why we used them above.

Here's a second potential misconception: the Gettier case is worse than the alternative *because* the agent knows less. This may be true depending on what you mean by "because," but it's not something I'm committing myself to here. All I'm claiming is that Gettier cases are worse than cases in which the agent knows more. For my purposes, it does not matter why this is.

Still, there's an important point lurking in this potential misconception. Both alternatives are constructed by reducing the agent's ignorance, either by changing the world to better match the agent's beliefs or by changing her beliefs to better match the world. We could end the description of either alternative with "if the believer were less ignorant, her resulting belief would be less defective." So far, so uncontroversial. There have been many proposed Gettier solutions that have tried to spell out how it is that ignorance undermines knowledge in Gettier cases.

Here is where I depart from those accounts. I am not going to spell out how ignorance undermines knowledge because I doubt that there is a singular answer to that question. Yes, every Gettier case crucially involves ignorance about how the world is. But I do not believe that such ignorance is *the reason* why Gettiered beliefs are worse than their alternatives. Instead, I believe that such ignorance is a necessary condition for a variety of defects, but none of those defects is instantiated in all Gettier cases. I will say more about this lack of a unifying defect in sections 3 and 4 but, first, I want to argue that my solution is safe from future counterexamples.

2. Valuism's Solution is More Secure than Alternatives

I think that my solution, unlike all previous solutions, will not be undermined by a revised Gettier example. To see why my solution is immune to revised Gettier cases, it's worth examining other Gettier solutions and why they were not. Three of the earliest solutions were Clark's "no false lemma" proposal, Lehrer's "indefeasibility" solution and Goldman's causal theory of knowing.[96] Each of these theories, in their own way, attempted to say what had gone wrong in the Gettier case. Each of these solutions, if successful, would explain both why Gettiered belief is not knowledge and why it is worse than knowledge. Even if they didn't use the term, these solutions attempted to identify a *defect* in Gettiered belief. The alleged defects were being inferred through falsehood (Clark), possessing a defeater (Lehrer) and being formed in causally aberrant ways (Goldman).

Later solutions blamed different defects. The problem with Gettier cases was, depending on who you asked, that the beliefs weren't safe or didn't track the truth or were formed by an improperly functioning faculty or a properly functioning one in the wrong environment.[97] Others held that they didn't manifest virtue or competence, weren't creditable to the agent or were just lucky.[98] (Unlike the three solutions mentioned in the paragraph there is a great deal of overlap between these later solutions.) Whatever the alleged defect, once it was identified all that remained was to rule it out. Some ruled it out by adding a fourth "anti-

[96] Clark (1963), Lehrer (1965), Goldman (1967)
It's worth noting that Clark's response was not *just* a no false lemma response. It also entails the controversial claim that if S knows that P, then S knows that she knows that P.
[97] Nozick (1981) and Plantinga (1993).
[98] Zagzebski (1994 and elsewhere) and Turri (2011) both provide versions of these solutions.

Gettier condition" that stated roughly that knowledge can't have that defect.[99] Others folded such a condition into an independently motivated condition.[100]

It's important to note that the alleged defect here is supposed to apply not only to Gettier's original cases, but to *all* Gettier-inspired cases. This assumption shows up within six months of Gettier's original publication. There, Clark takes his solution to apply not only to Gettier's cases, but also to a "further adaptation of the example."[101] This assumption was later echoed in Sosa's response to Clark.[102] And so began the pattern: a Gettier solution was supposed to identify a property that all Gettier cases had that disqualified them from being knowledge. And thus, whenever epistemologists proposed a Gettier solution, they would test their solution against all Gettier cases they knew of and then against any they could think up. Whichever solution they adopted, they inevitably suffered the same fate. Some clever philosopher came up with an unforeseen Gettier case that lacked the alleged defect, but which nonetheless seemed not to be knowledge.[103]

My solution is different. I haven't attempted to say what's gone wrong in the Gettier cases; I've only attempted to show that Gettier cases do not satisfy my analysis of knowledge. Now, that Gettier cases are worse than some relevant alternative, plausibly does imply that they have some defect or other. But I have not attempt to identifiy that defect, much less

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[99] E.g., Goldman (1967)

[100] Nozick (1981) has attempted this with his modal account of knowledge. Zagzebski's approach was similar in that it posits no extra anti-Gettier condition, but different in that it folds such a condition into the relation between her conditions.

[101] Clark (1963) 46

[102] Sosa (1964)

[103] A brief list of those: Sosa (1964), Saunders and Champawat (1964) and Feldman (1974), Church (2013)

shown that it is shared by all Gettier cases whatsoever. Since I have not identified any particular defect, I am not vulnerable to counterexamples that simply avoid that defect.

In place of a universal defect, I've provided a recipe for generating alternatives that are better than Gettiered belief. In order to be successful this recipe needs to do three things. First, it needs to apply to every Gettier case. We must be able to take any Gettier case and, by altering it in the ways described above, generate either the *changed-world* or the changed-mind alternative. Second, we must show that these alternatives are relevant. Third, these alternatives must be significantly better than Gettiered belief. In what follows, we'll consider challenges to each of these. Beginning with the challenge to relevance.

3. The Relevance of The Two Alternatives

3.1. Why Other Contextualism Solutions Fail

In Chapter 2, I outlined a contextualist answer to the question "what alternatives are relevant." This was modelled on Lewis's version of contextualism. Although my account of relevance is in some ways similar to Lewis's, my solution to the Gettier problem is quite different.

In this section we shall why Lewis's contextualist solution to the Gettier problem fails and how valuism avoids the issues that undermined his solution.

For Lewis, someone can be said to know only if their evidence eliminates all alternatives in which not-P. Importantly, this means that

> *Possibly Not-P*: To show that "S knows that P" is false, one must show that there is a relevant not-P alternative.

For Lewis, it is the *Rule of Resemblance* that is supposed to make relevant a not-P alternative. That rule says

> *Rule of Resemblance*: If possibility P_1 is not properly ignored, and P_2 saliently resembles P_1, then P_2 is not properly ignored.

An example will illustrate how this is supposed to work.

> Betty looks out her window and sees a dog so fluffy it appears to be a sheep. She thus concludes "there's a sheep in my yard." As it turns out there is a sheep in her yard, but it's hidden behind a tree, out of her sight.

Intuitively, Betty does not know that there's a sheep in the field. And at first blush, the rule of resemblance explains why. For Betty's evidence does not eliminate the possibility that there is merely a fluffy dog in her field and no sheep hidden out of sight. This possibility certainly resembles actuality in an important way: in both she sees a fluffy sheep dog, not a sheep. Since actuality is a relevant alternative and the uneliminated possibility resembles actuality, it too must be relevant. And so Betty cannot be said to know. Problem solved.

Unfortunately, things aren't so simple. Relevance requires a possibility not merely to resemble actuality, but to *saliently* resemble actuality (or some other relevant possibility). And salience is a psychological feature. To say a resemblance is salient is to say that it is striking or stands out to the attributer. But what happens if the attributer is unaware that Betty is looking at a fluffy dog rather than a fluffy sheep? Then the way in which the uneliminated possibility—that there is merely a fluffy dog in her field and no sheep hidden out of sight—resembles reality would be very *un*striking to the attributer. As a result, the uneliminated possibility will not be relevant for such attributers and they can rightly say that Betty knows. This seems wrong.[104]

[104] This example is adapted from Cohen (1997)

There are other ways to formulate contextualism, but Brogaard argues that similar problems apply to many of them.[105]

The problem is that the Rule of Resemblance is speaker-sensitive. Valuism solves that problem in two distinct ways. First, it solves it by replacing the *Rule of Resemblance* with

> *Valuist Rule of Resemblance*: If the subject easily could have had an attitude, that attitude is relevant.

This revised rule is then used to show that the *changed-mind alternative* is relevant. Second, it solves the problem by using the *Valuist Rule of Belief*, i.e.,

> *Valuist Rule of Belief*: The attitude a subject takes herself to hold is relevant,

to show that the *changed-world alternative* is relevant. We will discuss each of these in turn.

3.3. The Changed-Mind Alternative

For our purposes, the important difference between the Rule of Resembalnce and its valuist counterpart is that the valuist version replaces the speaker-sensitive term "salience" with the term "easily." As mentioned last chapter, easily should be read in a way that eliminates speaker sensitivity (e.g., as a modal term with a regimented weighing of factors which contribute to similarity).

You might worry that this is ad hoc. Lewis's view had a problem, and I am making a change purely to avoid that problem. I think the move I am making is not ad hoc for two reasons. First, Valuism is supposed to be an account of the best kind of belief and best kind of belief ought not be outclassed by beliefs I easily could have had. This seems like a truism.

[105] Brogaard (2004)

Second, the addition of "salience" seems to render Lewis's Rule of Resemblance unnecessary, since as Cohen notes "For it looks as if any possibility relevant by the *Rule of Resemblance* will also be relevant by the *Rule of Attention*."[106] This is because for a similarity between A and B to stand out to us, we must be considering whether A and B are alike in that way. But, of course, if we're considering whether A and B are alike, we're not ignoring A or B. So, in order for the *Rule of Resemblance* to be non-redundant, salience must be dispensed with.[107]

3.2.2. The Valuist Rule and The Changed-Mind Alternative

[106] Cohen (1997) 305 (Footnote 28).

[107] It's worth noting that Lewis himself sometimes treats the Rule of Resemblance as though it were subject-sensitive. For instance, when Lewis introduces the rule, he notes that all uneliminated possibilities—including skeptical possibilities—resemble actuality (a relevant alternative) at least in being uneliminated. This raises the threat that skeptical possibilities will be relevant. Given what we've just said, you might expect Lewis to respond that while that is a resemblance, it is not a salient one. Instead, Lewis says

> The Rule of Resemblance was never meant to apply to this resemblance! We seem to have an ad hoc exception to the Rule… What would be better, though, would be to find a way to reformulate the Rule so as to get the needed exception without ad hocery. I do not know how to do this. (Lewis 1996 555)

Lewis also seems to assume subject-sensitivity when he qualifies the rules with the following

> We should say that if [possibility] may not properly be ignored in virtue of rules other than this rule, then neither may the other. Else nothing could be properly ignored; *because enough little steps of resemblance can take us from anywhere to anywhere.* (555)

The salience condition makes this qualification seem unnecessary. If mere resemblance generated relevance, then, indeed, "enough little steps of resemblance can take us from anywhere to anywhere." But only so many resemblances can be salient at once. So, given that condition, this worry seems misplaced.

The core idea behind the *Changed-Mind Alternative* is that if Gettiered believers just learned the right truth, then they would become knowers. If they learned for instance that their present situation is a Gettier case, then they would be in position to know (since learning that you are Gettiered means learning that your belief is true). Gettiered believers do not typically need to learn that much about their situation to become knowers. If Black reached into her pocket and learned that she had ten coins in her pocket, then she would come to know that the person who gets the job has ten coins in their pocket, since her evidence would entail it. Now, this alternative is relevant because she easily could have reached into her pocket and counted out the coins, but the things which make a *Changed-Mind Alternative* relevant are not always within the agent's control. Here's an example. Wilma looks out her window and sees what she believes is a sheep in the field. In fact, it is merely a fluffy sheep dog. However, there is a sheep somewhere in the field that it is just out sight. Wilma's belief that "there is a sheep in the field" is Gettiered. But the sheep that made her belief true easily could have wondered into her field of view—sheep are not especially inclined to hide from human eyes. So, this too is a relevant alternative. Since Wilma's belief would have been much improved by being based on actually seeing a sheep, valuism rules that Wilma doesn't know.

The question for valuism is whether this kind of move is always available or are there cases where an agent could not easily have had information that significantly improved their doxastic attitude. There is a special kind of Gettier case where this move is not available, I shall call these unknowable construction cases. In these cases, a Gettiered agent believes a falsehood, P, and infers from that falsehood some logical construction involving a not-easily-knowable proposition. Because P entails P or Q for any proposition Q, constructing such cases

is trivial. Here's one example. Given misleading evidence that Jones owns a Ford you might conclude that Jones owns a Ford or there is life in the Horsehead Nebula. If that latter disjunct is true, then you are Gettiered, but there's nothing that easily could have happened that would allow you to have any information about life in the Horsehead Nebula. Thus, the type of improvement had in the ten coins and sheepdog case are relevant alternatives here. I shall return to these cases shortly, but let us set them aside for now.

Are there cases where an agent is Gettiered about an atomic proposition and could not easily have had better evidence regarding her situation? It is harder to think up a case than you might expect. These cannot be cases in which an agent is misinformed by a bad actor, because agents could always choose to provide accurate information or could do so by accident. The boss in the ten coins case, might be overcome by a compulsion to honesty right at the moment it came time to inform Black of his decision. But even with humans removed from the equation, we would need a situation where an agent has all the evidence she easily could have had about the topic and where that evidence is good enough for knowledge under ordinary circumstances and where the agent is nonetheless Gettiered.

It is difficult to visualize such a case and when I try to, I find myself tempted to ascribe knowledge. Consider the following case. Sue believes that P because of a well-evidenced but false scientific theory, T, that predicts P. P is true. Discovering that T is false would require technology not available in Sue's lifetime. Likewise, there is no way Sue could easily acquire independent confirmation that P. Is Sue Gettiered? In some ways, this resembles a Gettier case: there is an inference through a false belief. But not all inferences through false belief are problematic. Suppose Sue believes that the probability of Q is .991, but Sue has made a slight

mathematical error and the actual probability is only .989. If Sue infers Q from the false belief that Q's probability is .991, is she Gettiered? It doesn't seem so. But why not? The most plausible explanation is that there's not a serious enough mismatch between Sue's false lemma and the actual world. If so, the moral is that only serious mismatch introduces significant defect. Maybe this same thing can be said of her scientific theory. If it's truly well-evidenced, then it must have a high degree predictive power. There must not be a serious mismatch between it and the world. And if so, then perhaps Sue knows after all.

Now, maybe I am just not good enough at thinking up Gettier examples to find one in which there is strong temptation not to ascribe knowledge and where the agent could not easily have more information. Maybe. But the issue of unknowable constructions remains and what I say about that will largely apply here as well.

3.3.1. The Changed-Mind Alternative and Gettiered Constructions

Above, we acknowledged that there are certain Gettier cases in which the believer could not easily have had a significantly better belief. These are easy to construct with disjunction addition. Just take a reasonable but false belief and disjoin it with a truth the agent could not easily have any reason to believe. Above, we gave the example of having the Gettiered belief that Jones owns a Ford or there is life in the Horsehead Nebula.

When an agent holds this type of Gettiered belief, there is not a changed-mind alternative in which they have a significantly better belief. But valuism does not say that a belief is knowledge if no relevant *belief* is significantly better. It says that a belief is knowledge if no relevant *doxastic attitude* is significantly better, where doxastic attitude is broad enough

to include suspensions of belief. And the claim here, is that at least in these cases, it would be better to suspend belief than to be Gettiered.

Before I argue that suspension of belief is better than Gettiered belief, let me start with a smaller claim: suspension is better than well-evidenced false belief. Here's an example that will illustrate this. Imagine a demon offers you a deal. She can provide with all kinds of misleading evidence for some proposition (she does not specify which) and will wipe your memory of this encounter. Or she can give you nothing and can be left in the state that you are in. I think it's clear you should refuse her offer. Better to suspend belief than believe on bad evidence.

Now, the Gettiered constructs we are considering are in many ways like a rational but false belief. For one, a rational but false belief is *part of* the unknowable construct at issue; one of the disjunctions is a rational but false belief. Moreover, in this case, you also believe on bad evidence. If you were, somehow, to discover why the disjunction in question is true, not only would you not regard your pre-discovery self as a non-knower, but you would regard them as on the wrong track. It is not as though your reasons for believing, though they fall short of the standard for knowledge, brought you closer to that standard than you would be without them. Rather, when the whole situation is seen for what it is, your former reasons for believing contribute nothing to your knowledge.

Now, Gettiered beliefs do have the additional value of being true. But I think that in this case, truth is a small improvement at best. It is sometimes said that Gettiered believers get the truth because of luck, but it could equally well be said that they get it *because of* ignorance. If you were to realize that Jones does not own a Ford, you would give up your belief that "Jones

owns a Ford or there is life in the Horsehead Nebula." And this generalizes: if a Gettiered believer were to realize that her reasons put her on the wrong track she would give up the belief (if she is rational). Gettiered true beliefs are the fruits of ignorance.[108]

There is one final complication I need to deal with. Gettiered agents have good reasons for their Gettiered beliefs. And if they were to suspend belief, they would not be believing according to their evidence. That seems bad.

I agree that this kind of overcaution, as I shall call it, is a bad thing, but I do not think it is as bad as being Gettiered. In many cases being overcautious seems barely objectionable. Suppose someone makes a devasting objection to your view. You now have very strong reason to think your view is false. Yet, it seems reasonable to take some time to think it over. Even if the objection seems obviously right to you and even if there is no response available to you, it seems reasonable to proceed cautiously, for it would be worse to adopt a false view too easily.

But even if I am wrong about the relative veniality of being overcautious, it probably doesn't matter. Being Gettiered is a fragile state and the evidence we have almost always could have easily been different. If Gettiered agents have too much evidence, if they see their

[108] I suspect the above argument is likely to appeal to virtue epistemologists especially, since appeals to notions like "truth because of." Here is an argument that may be especially appealing to reliabilists: Gettiered beliefs may be worse than rational false beliefs but Gettiered beliefs may be more apt to mislead. If I hold the rational false belief that P, I may discover that my belief is false and re-evaluate other beliefs inferred from my reasons for believing that P. But if I hold the Gettiered belief that P, I may discover that P without discovering that my original reasons for believing that P were defective and may draw future false conclusions from them.

I myself am not especially persuaded by this type of argument, but I have been defending both general and specific forms of valuism. I do want there to be room for philosophers with inclinations different than mine to adopt some version of valuism. So I leave this here.

situation a little too clearly, then the rational thing for them to do would be to withhold belief. If, for instance, Wilma saw the sheep-looking sheep dog just as she heard it bark, she would have no reason to believe that there is a sheep in the field. Likewise, if you knew Jones had a pension for misleading people about what cars he owned, you would be rational in suspending belief. The possession of this additional evidence—evidence that allows Gettiered believer to see their situation clearly enough to suspend belief—would improve their belief in two ways. First, it improves the amount of evidence they have. Second, it would make their overall body of evidence non-misleading. These are things worth pursuing.[109] And so, provided that this kind of information can easily be had, a Changed-Mind Alternative is relevant and valuism concludes that the Gettiered believer does not know.[110]

3.3 The Changed-World Alternative

The core idea of this section is fairly simple. Gettiered believers take themselves to have a better epistemic belief than they in fact have. By the *Valuist Rule of Belief* that alternative is relevant. Therefore, Gettiered believers do not know.

[109] To see this, note that if someone tells us that our reasons for believing something are bad, we usually hear them out. The exceptions to this would be (A) when we don't think the person is reliable and (B) when we do not care about the belief. But if we do not care about the belief, we usually default to suspension upon challenge. For instance, I mentioned in a previous footnote that Old "Hoss" Radbourne won 59 games one season as an example of trivia. You likely believed me. But if a baseball fanatic tells you that widely believed stat is based on some bad assumptions about early baseball, you will likely suspend belief, even if you don't continue the conversation about late 1800s baseball.

[110] In fact, valuism might be able to get by with less than that: if it would be better not to have the information that leads one to be Gettiered and if one could easily have lacked that information, then a different kind of *Changed-Mind Alternative* would be relevant. But I do not think it would be helpful to discuss yet another variation on this solution.

I take it that Gettiered believers always, at least implicitly take themselves *not to be Gettiered*.[111] Let's start with an intuitive reason, before moving to a theoretical one. Discovering that you've been Gettiered is surprising. And being surprised by P requires more than not expecting P, it requires expecting not-P. To give but one of many possible examples, I know nothing about horse racing, so there is no horse that I expect to win the Kentucky Derby. And yet, I will not be surprised when the winner is announced. By contrast, I do know something about professional basketball, and I strongly expect that the Cleveland Cavaliers will not win this year's NBA championship. But if they somehow manage to do so, then I will be surprised. The difference between these cases is just that in the former case I have no expectation, while in latter case I expect something not to happen. If this is right, and if discovering that one is Gettiered is surprising, then we have reason to think that Gettiered believers expect that they are not Gettiered.

Here's a more theoretical reason. Believing that P requires that one take oneself to be responding to truth-indicative features of the world.[112] Or to borrow a phrase from Williams, belief is "something purporting to represent reality."[113] And if belief purports to represent reality, it also purports to be *molded* by reality. As Williams and many others have noted, our beliefs are to large extent outside of our control. I cannot just believe something; My belief

[111] This claim should be read de re. That is: I claim that Gettiered believers take themselves not to be in situations which are in fact Gettier scenarios, even though they do no take the proposition "I am not in a Gettier scenario" to be true.
[112] One exception: If a belief is known to be self-fulfilling, the believer plausibly takes herself to be creating truth-indicative features of the world. This qualification does not change the subsequent argument in any substantial way
[113] Williams (1973) 148

must have a basis.[114] I must regard that basis, whatever it is, as truth-indicative. If I give up that assumption, I will give up the belief. I think that this is likely part of what makes belief what it is, but at the very least this must be true for *Gettiered believers.* This is because Gettiered believers would be knowers if only they were not Gettiered: they meet all other conditions for knowledge, including rationality. But if someone bases their belief on grounds that they do or should regard as inadequate they fail to be rational and do not know for that rather mundane reason. Gettiered believers must have a basis for their belief and must at least tacitly assume that their basis is truth-indicative, or else they will fail to know for more mundane reasons.[115]

So, Gettiered believers take themselves not to be Gettiered. Would they be better off if the world were as they take it to be? Well since knowledge is better than Gettiered belief the answer must be yes. This lines up with our intuition about Gettier cases. We simply desire not to be Gettiered. Discovering that one is Gettier is a surprise—an unpleasant one. But why? I think we have seen why. If Gettiered believers take themselves to be responding to truth indicative features of the world, then they take themselves to be, as Zagzebski puts it, in cognitive contact with the world. And this is a desirable relationship to have with the world. But when those features to which a believer is responding turn out not to be truth-indicative after all, then they do not have that desirable relationship after all. And this means that the belief Gettiered believers take themselves to have is worse than the one they actually have. They not only lack a desirable relationship to the world, but (perhaps worse) are deceived

[114] I remain neutral on what kind of thing that basis must be. Perhaps the basis must be another belief or perhaps it could be something else, like a perception.

[115] By at least tacitly, I mean at least that upon reflection they would not regard the basis as inadequate.

about the relationship they have. And thus, by valuism, their belief is worse than a relevant alternative.

4. A Second Gettier Problem and Two Further Advantages

So far, I've argued that my account avoids Gettier counterexamples. But there's more to the Gettier *problem* than avoiding Gettier *cases*. We still need to explain what's gone wrong in the Gettier cases. To put it another way, we need to explain why Gettiered belief is worse than knowledge.

It's worth noting that other Gettier responses face this same task. If we adopt skepticism in response to the Gettier case, we will avoid all Gettier counterexamples. But we won't explain the difference between Gettiered belief and ordinary probable-but-not-certain true belief. Lycan makes a similar observation

> A subject who has what anyone would consider overwhelmingly strong evidence should be counted as just-about-knowing, or as-good-as-knowing, or knowing-for-all-practical purposes… even if the skeptic is right and no one ever strictly knows.[116] But this holds only so long as the subject is not gettiered. A Gettier victim does not just-about-know or as-good-as know; a Gettier victim simply does not know. That difference remains to be explained, even for a skeptic.[117]

Similar points will apply to any solution to the Gettier problem that avoids Gettier counterexamples without identifying a Gettier defect. We'd still want an explanation as to why Gettier cases aren't knowledge—or just-about-knowledge for skeptics.

[116] Lycan notes that this parallels Unger's use of "flat". He cites Unger (1971, 1984)
[117] Lycan, W. (2006) 152

I'll call this additional problem the "the Contrastive Gettier Problem." In this section, we'll see how valuism solves it. On first pass, valuism's answer seems easy and uncomplicated: Gettiered beliefs are different simply because they are less valuable. But one could reasonably object that this simply pushes the Contrastive Gettier Problem back a step. Yes, Gettiered belief is less valuable than the alternatives, but why? There is an answer to question, but there's no universal answer to it: there is no unifying defect shared by all Gettier cases. That doesn't mean we can't explain why Gettier cases are worse than knowledge; it just means that this must be done on a Gettier case by Gettier case basis.

This claim may seem surprising since we do call Gettier cases by the same name—surely they're united by *something*. I agree: that something is family resemblance. The very name "Gettier cases" suggests that. We do not call Gettier cases by this name because we prefer to honor Gettier rather than give the cases descriptive names. We call them Gettier cases because the class is united by their resemblance to the paradigmatic Gettier cases, i.e., Gettier's own cases. And they are united in sharing similar, but not identical, defects.

Valuism gains two advantages by denying that Gettier cases share a unifying defect. The first advantage is that valuism can adopt the most natural explanation for why any particular Gettier is case worse than knowledge. Take for instance the original Gettier cases. The problem there is obvious: the Gettiered belief is inferred through a false proposition.[118] Of course, there are well-known Gettier cases in which no false belief is involved.[119] For instance,

[118] Michael Clark (1963) was the first to identify that as *the* defect in Gettier cases. He was subsequently shown to be mistaken in Sosa (1964), Saunders and Champawat (1964) and Feldman (1974).

[119] See Sosa (1964), Saunders and Champawat (1964) and Feldman (1974) for cases.

suppose that Black infers "the person who will get the job has ten coins in their pocket" not from "Smith will get the job and Smith has ten coins in his pocket," but instead from "the boss told me that Smith will get the job and Smith has ten coins in his pocket." This results in a Gettiered belief without inference through falsehood. Once we give up the quest for a unifying defect, this modification poses no trouble. Sure, that's a Gettier case and it is worse than knowledge, but we have little difficulty explaining why. The inference has a defeater. In general, it's not typically difficult to say what the problem in a particular Gettier case is. In the fake barn case, it's luck. In the non-inferential cases, it's typically a causal defect; e.g., the agent is looking at a fluffy sheep dog when she forms the non-inferential belief that "there's a sheep in the field." The problem is usually not identifying what makes any particular case defective, but in universalizing that diagnosis.[120] The solution is not to universalize.

Valuism gains a second explanatory advantage by denying that Gettier cases share a unified defect. It explains why the Gettier problem has been so hard to solve. It has been hard to solve because epistemologists from the very first began looking for something that didn't exist. It's an understandable mistake. If there were a unified Gettier defect, we'd simply have to identify it and add an "and not that" condition to our theory of knowledge. It would have been the absolute minimal revision to an otherwise plausible theory. And yet, in the nearly 60 years since Gettier's paper, we have not identified any such defect. The best explanation of this is that there is none.

[120] In fact, when it is difficult to say why a particular case is defective, the reason is often because there are *many* plausible answers to "what's gone wrong?"

5. From No Unified Defect to Valuism

In the previous paragraph, I suggested that part of the motivation for assuming that Gettier cases share a unifying defect is that it kept things simple. There's another motivation I left out because I want to discuss it here. If there's no unfying defect, then it's not clear how we can analyze—or even give a rough account of—knowledge without appealing to value. If there's no unifying defect, then valuism is likely true.[121]

To see why this is, begin by supposing that knowledge can be analyzed, but there is no defect which unifies Gettier cases. How can we solve the Gettier problem? One option is to add several anti-Gettier conditions, rather than just one. We could have anti-Gettier conditions for each Gettier defect. So, for instance, one might say then that knowledge is justified true belief that is not inferred through false belief and that has no easily obtainable defeaters and is not lucky and so on. This approach is hopeless. For one, it is a massive violation of Ockham's razor. For another, it seems impossible to complete: there are now so many variations on Gettier's cases that compiling a complete catalogue of defects is probably impossible.[122] But the most damning problem is the most obvious. Everything we're ruling out is a *defect*. Even if we aren't explicitly employing axiological conditions, we sure seem to be guided them. We seem to be explicitly crafting our account to secure a high degree of epistemic value. Why not

[121] By contrast, I do no think the existence of a unifying defect makes valuism unlikely. It does lower the probability of valuism because it takes away the two advantages discussed above, but I think valuism has enough other advantages that it still comes out as plausible.

[122] Shope (1983) is probably still the most comprehensive account of anti-Gettier solutions and the cases that did them in. Of course, given that it is now nearly 40 years old, there are many rounds of solutions and counterexample not covered by it. At this point, I suspect the number of Gettier examples has simply grown beyond what any philosopher could catalogue unless they dedicated their career almost exclusively to Gettier cases.

simply dispense with the long string of conditions in favor of an axiological condition like "is better than alternatives" or "has no defects"?

Now, you might be thinking, "Couldn't we rule out all the Gettier defects with a single, non-disjunctive condition?" Yes, but I think that condition would have to be axiological. To see why, notice that failing to meet this condition—whatever it is—cannot itself be a defect. For if it were, then we'd have a unifying defect, namely, "failing to meet this condition." And this brings us to a point where we need to be precise about what defects are. When I say that D is a defect of T, I mean that D *makes* T worse. It's not enough that D *entail* that T is worse than it would be if it lacked D. It must be the case that possessing D explains why T isn't as good. Here's an example: suppose I say that a philosophy paper is bad. "Bad" is not a defect in my terminology. The defects are the things that make it bad: a lack of original thought, poor argumentation, unfamiliarity with the literature, and so on. So, at least in my terminology, being bad entails that a paper has defects, but it is not itself a defect.

So, what we need for this proposal to work is a condition, C, such that (I) failing to meet C entails the possession of a defect and (II) failing to meet C does not itself make the belief worse. There are properties like this: they're axiological properties like "bad" or "good." They must be, because they're properties that things possess in virtue of possessing good- and bad-making properties. And that means that taking this approach commits us to some form of valuism.

The difficulty of analyzing knowledge without a unified Gettier defect might lead us to stop trying to analyze knowledge. We might do this by affirming that knowledge is family

resemblance concept. Saunders and Champawat took this view almost immediately after Gettier

> It is our opinion that the instances of knowledge bear at most a family resemblance. Although the search for knowledge is misguided, since there is no essence, it is the dialectic of would-be definition and counter-example as it reveals the multifarious nature.[123]

I have two problems with this. First, if F is a "family resemblance" concept, then being F is a matter of having *enough of* the right properties. But knowledge doesn't seem like that at all. For one, the difference between knowledge and non-knowledge often comes down to having enough of a *single property* both share. For instance, suppose a doctor runs some tests and determines that the likelihood that a patient has disease D is .65. The doctor doesn't know even if we assume the patient does have D. But she could know if the probability were high enough (.99 or .999, etc.). It's a difference in the degree to which properties are possessed, not in which properties are possessed. Second, since family resemblance concepts are a matter of having enough of the right properties, most of their properties are fungible. The loss of one can be replaced with another. But knowledge isn't like that. If a belief is false, improbable, subjectively irrational, vicious or Gettiered, it's just not knowledge. That's a lot of necessary conditions for a family resemblance concept. And that list is incomplete. In general, if a belief is seriously defective, it cannot be knowledge, no matter what else can be said for it.

Williamson argues that instead of analyzing knowledge, we should take knowledge as primitive and analyze concepts like evidence in terms of it. Williamson could also explain why Gettier cases are different than corresponding knowledge cases on a case-by-case basis.

[123] Saunders and Champawat (1964) 9

I'd make two points about this. First, part of the appeal of Williamson's approach is rooted in the failures of previous attempts to analyze knowledge. If my account faces no counterexamples, then part of the appeal of Williamson's view is lost. More strongly, if epistemic value is more primitive than knowledge—if we can make sense of it without appealing to knowledge—then a counterexample-free account of knowledge in terms of epistemic value *would be* an analysis. For this is just what it means to analyze something: to give a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for one concept in terms of a more primitive concept.

Second, Williamson does provide a positive description of knowledge. Knowledge is the most general factive mental state. But it is not clear that this is true. Mental states like ignoring, repressing, forgetting, and being in denial about are factive but incompatible with knowledge. Any state general enough to include them can't be knowledge. Similarly, Schroeder and Pritchard have both argued that factive mental states like seeing do not always entail knowing.[124] Now, Williamson's project is complex, and I cannot refute it or even do it justice in two paragraphs. But if you find his approach appealing, and you think that knowledge is a mental state, you might try to combine our views. You might say something like "knowledge is the mental state that best fulfills our cognitive goals." That would not be my version of valuism, but it would be a cousin of mine.

But even if we adopt a view on which knowledge is unanalyzable, it doesn't follow that we've quite escaped valuism. Value could still be part of what makes something knowledge. After all, even if knowledge is a family resemblance, there are still certain traits that contribute

[124] See Schroeder (2015) and Pritchard (2012) for these arguments.

to it having that resemblance (e.g., being true, based on good reasons and so on) and certain traits that do not (e.g., being believed on Thursday). And the same goes for any other way of denying that knowledge can be analyzed: there are still some features that improve a belief's (or a mental state's) claim to be knowledge and certain features that do not. If we discover that Gettier cases do not share any unified defect, but that each are defective in some way, the natural conclusion is that Gettier cases are not knowledge *because* they are defective. And if defects ruin a claim to knowledge, then it seems very plausible that having a high value is part of what makes something into knowledge.

6. Two Candidates for Unified Defects.

I've argued that Gettier cases have no unifying defect. Rather they're a class of examples united by similarity to some paradigm cases: Gettier's own examples. Here I want to briefly consider two candidate unified defects. The first is luck. Many epistemologists have thought that knowledge is, roughly, luck-free true belief. Now, when we talk about lucky true belief, it's important to be clear what we have in mind. If I am lucky to have a piece of evidence, that does not typically undermine my claim to know. If, for instance, someone accidentally texts me regarding my own surprise party, I am (epistemically) lucky to have that evidence, but it is not the kind of luck that undermines knowledge. The kind of luck that has that power is not the lucky possession of truth, but the lucky possession of truth *given* the evidence I have.

Even this kind of luck can't account for all Gettier cases though. Our self-fullfilling Gettier case at the end of chapter 1 was one such example. So long as Cindy virtuously believes

she will be hired, she will be right. Luck had nothing to do with it. Another luckless Gettier case would be one in which I intentionally bring it about that you are Gettiered. Here, I might get you to have the false belief that P knowing you will infer Q, which is true. (Why would I do this? Perhaps it is important to me that you believe Q, but also important to me that you do not believe a particular truth through which you might infer Q. Or perhaps I'm just an epistemic prankster.)

Moreover, it seems like there are cases that involve luck, but still count as knowledge. Here's such a case:

> *Assassin*: Suppose Jones is the Mayor of Larissa. At 12:00, Black is reading in her study with her devices muted, unable to receive alerts if, for instance, Jones were to be assassinated. At 12:01, Smith has Jones in his sights and is prepared to pull the trigger. Just then, Smith suffers a massive heart attack and dies. Jones lives. At 12:01, Black still knows that Jones is mayor.

Given Black's evidence, it is a matter of luck that her belief is still true. And yet her belief still seems like knowledge. And so, we can't define Gettier cases in terms of luck.

A second alternative is to say that Gettier cases are those where (I) the agent meets some theory's conditions for knowledge, (II) intuitively does not know and (III) the defect does not lie in the agent. This certainly seems like what's going on in the ten coins case: Black has been lied to. It's not her fault that she is Gettiered. But there are cases where the defect does seem to lie in the agent. Zagzebski provides such a case:

> Suppose that Mary glances into her living room and sees someone resembling her husband sitting in his favorite chair watching his favorite football team. She forms the belief that "my husband is in the living room." This is indeed true, but it was not her husband she saw. Instead

> it was his brother, but her husband was sitting in the living room just out of sight.[125]

That seems like a perfectly normal case and yet, as Zagzebski notes, "of course, something has gone wrong, probably something in Mary." This seems right. If Mary were slightly more attentive, she would have realized that it was not her husband, but his brother that she saw. Likewise, if her eyesight were better, she might have realized it without being more attentive. Even in the original cases, we should note that Black is not entirely without blame. She could be more cautious in her inference-drawing or she could be more diligent in her evidence collection and check her own pocket.

If this is correct, then Gettier cases are not defined by luck or by conditions (I)-(III). It's hard to see any other candidates. And so, it remains difficult to say what Gettier cases are. This is exactly what we would expect if being Gettiered is a family resemblance concept.

7. So What?

What if I'm wrong and Gettier cases do share a common defect? Well, since it's a defect, valuism will still be able to avoid Gettier cases. They'll still fail to be knowledge because they're defective. And the argument I gave in Chapter 2 for the extensional adequacy of valuism will still be sound. Valuism will be fine.

What about non-valuist analyses of knowledge? Given this assumption they can solve the Gettier problem simply by adding a condition that rules out that defect. They are no longer

[125] Zagzebski (1994)

seem vulnerable to the charge that they are implicitly relying on axiological conditions. Or at least, they do not seem vulnerable to the charge that they are relying on axiological conditions *to solve the Gettier problem*.

This qualification is important. Solving the Gettier problem is not the same thing as saying what knowledge is. It is not even close. For being Gettiered is just one way for a belief to be defective. A belief could be defective because it is a lucky guess, an instance of wishful thinking, the result of sloppy or fallacious reasoning and much more.

We might hope that the justification condition could take care of all these other defects. We might even hope to roll the anti-Gettier condition into justification so that all defects are handled by one condition. Suppose we could actually do this. We have one condition, justification, that is had when and only when no defect or at least defect that would ruin knowledge is present. Now, this would be a quite different justification condition than any which have thus far been proposed. But is also unclear to me that it would not just be an axiological condition. At the very least, it would be equivalent to some kind of anti-defect condition and given that equivalence, it is hard to see why it should be preferred to an anti-defect condition.

Here is a different way to drive home the point. Suppose we solve the Gettier problem. Suppose we then perform a second miracle and reach consensus on which account of justification is correct. And now suppose that a new Gettier-esque problem arises. Suppose some clever philosopher comes up with a case that meets our conditions; it's true, it's justified, it doesn't have the Gettier defect, but it does have some other defect. Do epistemologists say,

"turns out knowledge can have that defect?" Or do they set about coming up with new anti-whoever-conditions? I think it's obvious it's the latter.

This, I think, is the importance of Gettier. What he showed us was not just that there is a hard to close gap between justified true belief and knowledge. What he showed us was that, however good justification is—and every account before or since Gettier agrees that justification must be good—it cannot rule out the possibility of defects. Even if there is a unified Gettier defect, it's only of the defects that disqualify a belief from being knowledge. Ruling all of them out, I think, requires an axiological condition.

Chapter 4

Finding the Good in Other Theories

In this chapter, we're going to discuss the various properties that have been thought to transform true belief into knowledge, at least in ordinary cases.[126] These are properties like being reliably formed, well-evidenced, tracking the truth, or being the product of the exercise of intellectual virtue. Because theories of knowledge almost always divide into camps based on which of these properties they accept—they divide, e.g., into reliabilist, evidentialist, virtue epistemologist or tracking theorists—I shall call these properties the distinctive properties of their respective theories.

I shall defend two claims in this chapter:

1. Valuism can account for the appeal of the major theories of knowledge.

Here's a rough outline of that argument. Each of these distinctive properties is an epistemic good. For each of them, we would rather our beliefs have them than lack them. Because of this, valuism can *incorporate* the insights of each theory. It can show how each theory has identified some good or at least is motivated by some good which genuinely contributes to transforming true belief into knowledge.[127]

The second claim I shall defend in this paper is this:

2. Valuism can explain the theoretical role of the good identified in other theories.

[126] Ordinary cases here is supposed to exclude at least the Gettier cases.
[127] At least in ordinary cases.

At first blush, this might seem to require no explanation. These properties are supposed to transform true belief into knowledge. But when we survey the very different kinds of properties that have been alleged to play this role, we may begin to wonder whether there is a single concept of knowledge, and thus whether there's a single role for these various properties to play. To put it another way, when we see just how different the various distinctive properties are, we may start to suspect that reliable formation transforms true belief into knowledge$_1$ while being well-evidenced transforms true belief into knowledge$_2$ and being a product of the exercise of virtue transforms it into knowledge$_3$ and so on. While some philosophers have endorsed disunified views of knowledge, these have not proved popular.[128] For those of us who are not ready to adopt such views, valuism offers a way to unify these disparate distinctive properties.

This chapter has 4 sections. In section 1, I will canvas several distinctive goods and explain why they are valuable. In section 2, I will explain how valuism can incorporate these different goods. In section 3, we turn to the task of unifying the various goods. I canvas three options before presenting my own view, that the distinctive goods are unified by being attempted solutions to the value problem. Since our discussion to this point will give us a clearer picture of what the best kind of belief looks like, we will close with a brief discussion of why knowledge has received so much philosophical attention in Section 4.

1. Each Distinctive Property is an Epistemic Good

[128] See, e.g., Brink (1989 298ff) who holds that there is both an internalist and externalist conception of knowledge and that which we employ varies depending on context.

The claim that each distinctive property is an epistemic good is not particularly controversial. Zagzebski notes that almost all theories of knowledge fit this general schema:

Knowledge is true belief + X where X is a good way to believe.[129]

Plantinga makes a similar point regarding warrant which is his name for the distinctive properties

> There are many different valuable epistemic states of affairs—epistemic values, we might call them, giving that oft-abused word a decent sense; and different conceptions of warrant appeal to different epistemic values… The problem here is to come up with a conception of warrant that gives to each [epistemic value] its due.[130]

Meanwhile Alston, after canvassing several epistemic goods, writes

> For each condition no one denies that it is desirable to satisfy it, and desirable from an epistemic point of view, desirable vis-a-vis the basic aims of the cognitive enterprise.[131]

Perhaps we've gotten ahead of ourselves. I've led with quotations from three esteemed epistemologists to the effect that each distinctive property is good, but we haven't yet said what those properties even are. Let's rectify that now. In a recent article with somewhat similar aims to this chapter, Climenhaga identifies nine different distinctive properties (the theories of which they are distinctive are included in parentheses).[132]

1. P is sufficiently probable on S's evidence. (Evidentialism)
2. If P were false, S would not believe that P. (Sensitivity)

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[129] Zagzebski (2009) 106
[130] Plantinga (1993) 2.
[131] Alston (1993) 531
[132] Climenhaga (Forthcoming) describes this as a list of proposed *necessary* conditions on knowledge rather than properties which transform true belief into knowledge. However, this list includes practically every property that has been alleged to transform true belief into knowledge, so this complication can be set aside for present purposes.

3. If S were to believe that P [in slightly different circumstances], P would not be false. (Safety)
4. S's belief is not luckily true. (Anti-luck)
5. S's belief is produced by a reliable cognitive process. (Reliabilism)
6. S's belief is caused by the fact that P. (Causal)
7. S's belief manifests S's epistemic virtue. (Virtue)
8. S can rule out all relevant alternatives to P. (Relevant Alternatives)
9. There are no true defeaters for S's justification for belief. (No Defeaters)[133]

To this list I will add a tenth item

10. S's belief is rational.

Rationality has been an important part of our discussion thus far, especially regarding the Bad Knowledge problem, and will continue to be here. So, some discussion is required.

In what follows, we shall discuss, as briefly as possible, why each of these is valuable. There is some overlap between these properties. (For instance, Anti-Luck is plausibly reducible to Safety and/or Sensitivity and plausibly entailed by Virtue.) Thus, we will group some of them together.

1.1. Evidence

There are many reasons why we want well-evidenced beliefs, but most of them turn on the fact that the more evidence we have for a belief, the more confident we can be in it. This confidence is a reason to value well-evidenced beliefs. As Zagzebski notes,

> We want beliefs that can serve as the ground of action, and that requires not only true beliefs, but confidence that the particular beliefs we are acting upon are true. Acting involves time, usually effort, and sometimes risk or sacrifice, and it is not rational to engage in action without a degree of confidence in the truth of the beliefs upon which we act that is high

[133] Climenhaga (Forthcoming). I have changed the order of Climenhaga's list to roughly match the order in which these will be discussed.

> enough to make the time, effort, and risk involved in acting worthwhile.[134]

Very similar points can be made regarding belief formation. For belief involves the risk of being wrong. Evidence minimizes that risk, since the better-evidenced a belief is, the more likely it is to be true. Belief also has the potential to require time, effort and sacrifice, since adopting one belief may force us to rethink or give up others. This process of revising our beliefs may be difficult and time consuming and it is not rational to engage in it unless we can be confident that we are revising our beliefs in ways that make them more likely to be true.

We also desire confidence for its own sake. To put it another way, if we hold a belief, we want to be confident in it. Imagine someone who lays awake at night wondering about something important—whether there is a God, whether their significant other is cheating on them, whether they did the right thing in a tricky situation, or whether the doctor's tests will come back positive. That person wants the answer to their question, but they surely want more than this. They want to have confidence in that answer. Of course, the examples I've given here are quite serious and important beliefs, but I think the same applies even to trivial beliefs. Most of us have had the experience of watching a movie and thinking, "wasn't that actress in that other movie," and then looking up her filmography just to be sure. (If you haven't had that exact experience, you've likely used the internet to shore up some equally trivial belief.) Even on trivial matters, we want to be sure.

Evidence is also a crucial component of how we engage with others. When our beliefs are challenged, we appeal to evidence in defense. We appeal to evidence not just in defense of

[134] Zagzebski (2009) 10

the truth of our belief, but also in defense of our rationality.[135] When we want to persuade others, we provide them with evidence. And even when neither side can convince the other, it's through the exchange of evidence that we get a clearer picture of what the alternatives are and the inner logic supports them. For these reasons and the ones mentioned above, we value well-evidenced beliefs.

1.2. Modal Conditions: Safety, Sensitivity and Anti-Luck

We'll class our next three conditions together, since the first two are often used to define the third. Of course, one might doubt that luck can be defined in terms of safety and sensitivity, but I think that their appeal lies in the apparent ability to analyze luck in terms of them. We want safe and sensitive beliefs because we want to avoid luck.

These kinds of "tracking" conditions are typically brought out to solve the Gettier problem and while I've argued that they cannot do that, I do not deny that it is at least usually a bad thing for a belief to be luckily true. (The exceptions would be cases like the assassin case, considered last chapter.) To use the language of the last chapter: Luck is typically a defect.

Why is luck a defect? I think Riggs gets it right when he notes that luck undermines achievement.[136] We value knowledge not merely because we value true belief, but because knowledge is the result of good capacities well-exercised. And luck severs the connection between the exercise of such capacities and the result.

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[135] This defense winds up being only partial, since a belief can be supported by good evidence and believed for bad reasons. For a fuller discussion on what besides evidence is rationality see section 1.5.

[136] Riggs (2007)

Riggs gives the example of a lucky basketball shot: a fan rushes the court and flings the ball from one end to the other and it happens to go through the hoop. We aren't impressed by the fan's basketball prowess; what she did there isn't anything to brag about. By contrast, when Michael Jordan hits a much closer shot, it is impressive. Indeed, when basketball fans discuss Jordan's accomplishments, some of these comparatively easy shots (one of which is simply called "the shot") are often among the first things mentioned. Why is this? The most obvious answer is that Jordan's shots are the result of skill, whereas the fan's wild heave was not. The lesson is that accomplishment requires getting the intended result because of skill. And that's the connection that luck severs.

If this is right, we should expect the same thing to occur in epistemology, for good thinking is a kind of skill and truth is the desired result. And, indeed, we can find examples of this. For instance, when someone overcomes their bias to re-examine an important belief of theirs and arrives at the truth of the matter, they have accomplished something epistemically significant. But if they just guess or unreflectively adopt the beliefs of their peers or employ sloppy reasoning, then they have not achieved anything, even if they manage to wind up getting the truth. They haven't gotten the truth because they're a good thinker, they've just gotten lucky.

1.3. Reliabilism and Causality

Reliabilism is different from the other theories because its distinctive good—the reliable formation of beliefs—is plausibly "swamped" by truth. Reliably formed true belief is no more valuable than mere true belief because reliability is valuable only as a *means* to truth. The

other theories have identified goods which are not only valuable, but which plausibly make a unique contribution to the value of ordinary cases of knowledge.

Still, a swamped good is still a good. So, we could still explain the appeal of reliabilism in this way: reliabilists have latched on to an epistemic good, and simply not realized that it is not finally valuable. They've confused a good guide for acquiring knowledge—use reliable processes—with an explanation of what's good about knowledge.[137]

While we could stop here, I think we would miss the real source of reliabilism's appeal. Its real appeal becomes apparent when we reflect on its history. Reliabilism was preceded by Goldman's causal theory of knowing. In that account, Goldman proposed to solve the Gettier problem by adding a causal component to the otherwise evidentialist JTB-account of knowledge.[138] Adding a causal component only makes sense if the original analysis neither includes nor entails such a component already. The lack of such component is an important defect in the traditional analysis. As Zagzebski puts it "Perhaps the central feature of knowledge… is that it is a state that puts us in cognitive contact with reality."[139] Now, Zagzebski emphasizes the factive nature of cognitive contact, but I think the kind of contact we want will involve a causal component. We want more than true beliefs. Mere true belief seems more adequately described as matching the world, rather than having contact with it. The contact

[137] This is somewhat plausible since reliabilism is in many ways an externalist counterpart to evidentialism. The more reliable a belief forming process, the more likely the beliefs it produces are to be true. And if I have decisive evidence that a belief was formed by a process reliable to degree X, then the probability of that belief is X. The trouble is that since reliability is external—we need not be aware of whether our beliefs are reliably formed—reliably formed beliefs are not necessarily ones we can have confidence in. So, reliabilists cannot borrow evidentialists' explanation for why their distinctive property is good.
[138] Goldman (1967)
[139] Zagzebski (2009) 2

we want involves our beliefs being shaped by the world, and that requires (at least in ordinary circumstances) that our beliefs are caused by the world.

An example will illustrate why this is. Suppose you are deceived by an uncreative evil demon. The dream world she creates is in many ways like the real world including that in it the sky is blue. And so, when you believe that the sky is blue you hold a true belief.[140] But it would be weird to say that you are in cognitive contact with the world, at least in any desirable sense. Your belief that the sky is blue may be true, but you've never *seen* it.[141] For that reason, you don't have the right kind of causal connection to the world.

This, I think, is where the appeal of reliabilism lies: not in reliability, but in causality. Now, reliabilism retains the emphasis on causality since the paradigmatic reliable processes—perceptual processes, memory, etc.—are causal. And In "What is Justified Belief" (the article wherein Goldman transitioned from his causal theory to reliabilism), Goldman writes: "The principles of justified belief must make references to causes of belief," and the question to be answered is "what kinds of causes confer justifiedness?"[142] But there's been a subtle shift here. The causality required by reliabilism is not a relation between the world and the belief, but

[140] Very plausibly this belief is also not luckily true

[141] Chalmers (2018) has argued that beliefs in a global skeptical scenario are about the objects in that scenario—e.g., your belief that the sky in blue would be about the dream-world's sky. On that view, you would have seen the sky and my account would not work. But we could modify the account so that (I) you have only recently been deceived by an evil demon and that (II) prior to being deceived you had heard about but not experienced some part of reality. We might imagine, for example, an especially unfortunate version of Jackson's (1986) Mary scenario wherein Mary has heard about the sky (but not what color it is) and becomes deceived by our demon only as soon as she leaves the room. In that case, her belief would be about the non-dream-world sky, and would be true, but would lack the valuable kind of causal connection.

[142] Goldman (1979) 95

between the belief forming process and the belief. In making this shift, Goldman moved away from a finally valuable property to an instrumentally valuable one. But this shift is subtle and I suspect went largely unnoticed. At any rate, a causal connection to the world remains valuable and, I believe, motivates reliabilism. And valuism can incorporate this finally valuable property.

1.4. Virtue Epistemology

We value virtuously formed beliefs because we value epistemic flourishing, we value the good life of the mind. The good life of the mind requires not merely the possession of virtue, but its exercise. While is good to possess virtues such as intellectual diligence or carefulness, it would be a waste if there were nothing worth thinking diligently or carefully about. The same applies, I think, to other intellectual virtues. If virtue is an excellence, then failure to exercise it is a waste.

Further examples reveal that failure to exercise the virtues is not only wasteful, but in many cases impossible. For instance, consider intellectual courage. The intellectually courageous person will consider ways that her beliefs could be challenged, even if no one ever challenges her beliefs. And there will always be challenges to consider; the world simply can't be arranged so that she can live with beliefs that are wholly beyond challenge. Think about the great debates in philosophy: what is the nature of morality or freewill, does God exist, what is the good life, what can we know. Every position on each of these topics is subject to a priori challenges. The intellectually courageous person will face up to this and her beliefs—if they withstand these challenges—will be better as a result. The value of autonomy is similar. Even if an authority simply tells you the truth on any subject you like, you still face a decision regarding

whether to trust them. And if you don't rely on your own powers in making that decision, then you don't seem to have the virtue at all. What we see, in each of these cases, is that we value the exercise of virtue, not merely its possession. That is why we want virtuously formed beliefs.

1.5. Rationality

We now turn to three goods that reduce to goods discussed above. The first of these, rationality, reduces to the value of virtue, or more specifically, to the value of virtuous handling of evidence. This might seem surprising since rationality is more closely associated with evidentialism than virtue epistemology.[143] Hence, Quine and Ullian write,

> Insofar as we are rational in our beliefs, the intensity of belief will tend to correspond to the firmness of the available evidence. Insofar as we are rational, we will drop a belief when we have tried in vain to find evidence for it.[144]

Obviously, rationality requires conforming our belief to evidence. But I think it requires more than that. It requires at least virtuously gathering and responding to evidence.

Imagine that Sue collects only the evidence that would confirm her existing opinion. She then conforms her belief to her evidence. Surely this is not enough for rationality. Rational belief must do more than conform to the evidence. The evidence to which it conforms must be gathered fairly.[145]

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[143] For an example of the difference, Evidentialism and Its Discontents features 303 uses of "rational" and its cognates. The Routledge Handbook of Virtue Epistemology, despite being almost 200 pages longer and featuring 14 more articles, features only 161.
[144] Quine and Ullian (1978).
[145] Kornblith (1983) makes this point.

But this also isn't enough. For an agent who was fair-minded but lazy in her evidence gathering could wind up with an equally untrustworthy set of evidence. In fact, this is what happens when people live in ideological bubbles. They may have no intention of collecting biased evidence, but because they are not diligent, they end with an evidence base that's every bit as biased as if they set out only to confirm an existing opinion. What these previous examples suggest is that rationality requires gathering evidence in the right way, where that includes at least both diligent and fair evidence gathering.

There's still more to rationality than conforming belief to evidence gathered in the right way. An agent must also conform her belief in the right way. She must respond to the evidence in an unbiased way. Those who are determined to interpret the evidence in a way that confirms their existing beliefs do not know even if the evidence does confirm those beliefs. I suspect many of us know someone for whom every piece of evidence raises their credence in the effectiveness of hydroxychloroquine for treating COVID-19. Such people are basing their beliefs on the evidence—that's why the evidence changes their credence—but they are basing their beliefs in a biased way and so their belief cannot be rational, and will not be rational even if further testing reveals that hydroxychloroquine is effective in treating COVID-19. And even those who believe without bias may be irrational if they respond to the wrong parts of their evidence. If the evidence relevant to P is a conjunction of facts A&B, where A is favorable to P but B is unfavorable, an agent whose belief conformed to that conjunction, but took A to be

unfavorable and B to be favorable would still not be rational.[146] It doesn't matter if your belief matches your total evidence if you get the details all wrong.

So, our evidence must be collected in the right way and responded to in the right way in order for the resultant belief to be rational. What is the right way? I think the above description suggests an obvious answer: it's the way an epistemically virtuous agent would respond.

1.6. Relevant Alternatives and No Defeaters

Both the elimination of relevant alternatives and the absence of defeaters are valuable for the roughly the same reasons evidentialism is valuable. On most relevant alternativist accounts, S knows that P if S can *rule out* all relevant alternatives in which not-P. What does it mean to "rule out" an alternative? The most natural reading is evidential. Ruling out an alternative means having evidence that weighs against or is incompatible with that alternative. If so, then being able to rule out all not-P alternatives is just a special way of have good evidence for P and is valuable for the same reasons.[147]

Much the same applies to *No Defeaters*. Defeaters come in two types: rebutting and undercutting. Rebutting defeaters are those that provide evidence *against* a hypothesis; they

[146] Zagzebski suggests something like this in her discussion of intellectual obtuseness in (1996) 152, though she does not connect it to the possibility that one could get the details wrong and still have a belief that matches her total evidence.

[147] What if we gave "ruling out" a non-evidentialist gloss? Likely, it's value would just fall out of some other established value. For instance, if we gave "ruling out" a causal gloss—something like: the causal process by which the belief formed could have had been initiated by a cause that occurs in a not-P world—then what we say about it will fall out of what we say about reliabilist/causalist accounts of knowledge.

provide evidence that a hypothesis is false. We want to avoid them for the same reasons that we want well-evidenced beliefs.

Undercutting defeaters, by contrast, provide evidence that a belief is not well-evidenced. We have already discussed one case of this in Chapters 1 and 2. In Christensen's case of seemingly drugged derivation you prove a logical theorem. That's very strong evidence. But then you are given misleading evidence that you have recently ingested a drug that makes you prone to logical errors. In that case, it seems irrational to believe the theorem until you can derive it without the threat of drug-induced error. In this case, your evidence is undercut by a defeater. But what we should say about this kind of case is clear: the possession of an undercutting defeater ruins rationality. Since we value rational beliefs, we value avoiding undercutting defeaters.

2. Valuism Can Explain and Incorporate Other Theories

Valuism explains the appeal of these theories by incorporating them. That is, it says their appeal lies in the fact that they are right so far as they go. For a belief to be knowledge, it must be rational, the result of the exercise of virtue, an achievement, causally connected to the world, and must warrant a high degree of confidence. Each of the theories considered capture or are at least motivated by one of these goods. And each of these goods partially *explains* why a belief is knowledge. This is because each of these properties contributes to the value that transforms true belief into knowledge.

2.1. Is This Too Demanding?

Now, this might seem to place unreasonably high demands on knowledge. If each property contributes to the value that transforms true belief into knowledge, does the loss of any of them result in a loss of knowledge? I want to make two comments about this. First, each of these properties is had by ordinary cases of knowledge, as I shall argue below. So, there's nothing overly demanding about holding that, as a general rule, knowledge possesses each of these goods. Second, this is only a general rule. There are exceptions. And valuism can accommodate exceptions, since for valuism what truly matters is not the possession of any of these properties, but the possession of sufficient value (to which these properties are supposed to contribute). Recall, valuism's core idea is that knowledge is the best kind of belief. If in some circumstance the best kind of belief doesn't possess one or more of these properties, then in that circumstance, possessing that property will not be a condition of knowledge. We'll discuss a few such cases shortly. And I think that in each case, it will be clear why knowledge is (alleged to be) possible without the missing property. As a general rule, all of these are required.

2.2. Valuism is not Overly Demanding in Normal Circumstances

First, though, let's start with the claim that the general rule is not overly demanding. To see why, consider the obvious fact that we know a lot. I know what day it is, I know I have hands, I know that I am seated at a laptop, and I know that this sentence contains more than 3 words. Any plausible theory of knowledge is going to hold that I know these things, and so my beliefs about these things will have the distinctive properties posited by all of them. (See

Chapter 2 for a couple of examples of how different theories might explain ordinary pieces of knowledge.)

Many counterexamples in epistemology exploit the usual necessity of having all the distinctive properties. That is, many counterexamples consist of a case that has one theory's distinctive property but lacks another's and as a result seems not to be knowledge. We've already seen some of them. Take Mr. Truetemp whose beliefs about the temperature are generated by a reliable computer of which he is unaware. He has the kind of causal connection to the world which I've said is valuable and motivates reliabilism. But Mr. Truetemp is irrational even by his own lights. And so, even though his belief is better than a lucky guess (a feature not commonly appreciated about the example), it could be significantly better still and so is not knowledge. In this case, the loss of one of the motivating properties is fatal to the claim to knowledge. Certain Gettier cases are basically the reverse of this with rational, well-evidenced belief that is formed in causally aberrant ways. For instance, suppose a sheep and a fluffy sheep dog are standing in a field. Seeing only the fluffy dog, I conclude that there is a sheep in the field. My belief is true, but it's not connected to the world in a valuable way and so not knowledge. We've also seen that cases of well-evidenced but vicious or irrational belief are not knowledge. If, for instance, an agent collects only evidence supporting her current beliefs or interprets the evidence in a biased way, she will not know, even if her belief is based on the evidence. The lottery case—in which I believe that my lottery ticket is a loser—provides an example of a belief that's well-evidenced, virtuously formed and so on but arguably only luckily true. Most epistemologists believe that I do not know in the lottery case since it is merely a

matter of luck that my ticket did not win.[148] These examples suggest that, as a rule, knowledge requires all these conditions.

2.3. Exceptions

Now, I have said that there are exceptions to the general rule that knowledge requires all these distinctive properties. Two obvious classes of exceptions are (I) cases in which a given property is impossible and (II) cases where a property is irrelevant or inappropriate.

For an example of the first type of case, consider mathematical knowledge. The causal theory has problems accounting for mathematical knowledge since the objects of such knowledge are typically taken to be causally inert. This has motivated some philosophers to reject the causal theory in favor of reliabilism.[149] This move makes sense if you think of the distinctive properties as always-or-never constituents of knowledge. Given that background assumption, if mathematical knowledge cannot have this property, then it cannot be part of what makes a belief knowledge. If there seem to be cases where causal connection is part of what makes a belief knowledge, those cases will have to be explained another way, perhaps by saying that it's not the causal connection that matters, but the reliability that comes from being so connected.[150]

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[148] I am not convinced that my ticket losing is a matter of luck, given the overwhelming odds against it winning, nor am I convinced that I do not know. But these two intuitions travel together: if I were persuaded that my ticket's losing were a matter of luck, I would be persuaded that I do not know. And this supports the point of the example: *if* a belief could have the other goods but be lucky, then it would not be knowledge.

[149] See, e.g., Maddy (1984).

[150] Notice that what's going on here is very much like the search for a unified Gettier condition. The search is for properties had by all and only knowledge/Gettier cases and even when a property seems to explain why a particular belief is knowledge/Gettiered, unless that property

Valuism has a simpler explanation: if attitudes towards mathematical objects cannot be caused by those objects, then they don't need to be. The best kind of belief won't typically have properties that that belief can't have. To put it in the language of chapter 2, doxastic attitudes that stand in the usual causal relationships towards mathematical objects are typically not among the relevant alternatives (for rough outline of what matters to relevance see Chapter 2 Section 6).[151]

Here's a second example, and one that will become important later. I know that I am seated at a laptop. Is that an achievement? I am inclined to say yes, though a very small one. For in order for me to know this, my visual faculties must work correctly, and I must employ the relevant concepts in the right way. Knowledge requires a lot to go right. So, I see no problem holding that this is a small accomplishment.

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can explain why every case is knowledge/Gettiered, it will not be accepted as the real explanation. The real distinctive property/unified defect will have to subsume all the obvious candidates.

[151] Of course, if impossible alternatives are made relevant, then in that case, they may undermine knowledge. But we already know that raising odd cases to relevance can undermine knowledge; that is how skeptical scenarios work.

You might wonder if this same kind of response could be made towards skepticism. We don't need to be certain of our beliefs because we cannot be. If this is correct, then valuism has a response to skepticism that does not require context-sensitivity or at least does not require the kind described in Chapter 2 Section 6. However, most skeptical challenges do not demand certainty, but instead demand evidence against an incompatible alternative. And very often these alternatives are ones that we could in principle rule out. For instance, if I were an evil demon, I would presumably be able to rule out the possibility that evil demons are deceiving me. If I were in a computer simulation and if I woke up from it, a la *The Matrix*, I would presumably be able to rule out being in a computer simulation. Of course, we might raise those challenges at a second-level: "how do you know you're not a human being deceived by an evil demon to think you're an evil demon" or "how do you know that you're not in a computer simulation experiencing a simulated 'waking up.'" But those are *different* challenges, and in principle we could rule them out also. This is why skeptical challenges are difficult to defeat entirely: there's always *some* skeptical challenge that can be raised against any belief. But it doesn't follow that any particular kind of challenge is in principle inescapable.

Now, regardless of whether you see this as a small accomplishment or a non-accomplishment, valuism will say the same thing about it: it's knowledge because it's about as good as it could be. There's no way that (in any ordinary circumstance) knowing that I am at a laptop could be a great achievement, so it doesn't have to be.

For a pair of cases where a property is irrelevant or inappropriate, consider the value of evidence to self-fulfilling beliefs and self-evident propositions. Self-fulfilling will not be well-evidenced in the usual sense. That P will be true if I believe that P is a reason for me to believe that P. But evidence for P is typically defined as a probability raiser for P, and a conditional—if I believe P, then P will be true—doesn't raise the probability of P.[152] Self-evident propositions, despite the name, are not evidenced in the typical sense either. If P is self-evident there is no other proposition Q, such that Q raises the probability of P. For instance, if it is self-evident to me that I am in pain, I do not need to get a mirror and observe my own grimace to determine that "he looks like he's in pain, and since he is me, it is probable that I am in pain."

Plantinga draws a more dramatic conclusion about evidence,

> The Reformed thinkers I mentioned implicitly reject this claim: belief in God on the basis of evidence - the sort of evidence suggested by natural theology - is not epistemically superior to basic belief in God. Consider someone who believes that 2 + 3 = 5, not, as the rest of us do, because he finds that proposition self-evident, but on the basis of the following sort of evidence. He notes that a certain computer has nearly always yielded truth in the cases where he has been able personally to test its deliverances; he observes that the proposition in question is among its deliverances, and accepts it on that basis. This is perverse.[153]

[152] Conjoining that conditional with evidence that you *will* believe that P would raise the probability that P, but it seems to base your belief on predictions about what you will believe.
[153] Plantinga (1985) 62

Plantinga's example is obviously quite contentious, but the underlying thought should not be. If we can find a case—be that basic mathematical knowledge, belief in God, or that I am in intense pain—where it is perverse to believe on the basis of evidence, then belief on that basis is not required for knowledge. Valuism easily accommodates this.

3. Unifying The Distinctive Properties

So far, we've discussed a wide variety of properties including modal, causal, probabilistic and normative conditions, but each of these properties is supposed to do the same thing: transform true belief into knowledge. But how? What is the missing ingredient that these quite different properties are supposed to supply? And if there is no agreed-upon missing ingredient, how can we say they're all talking about the same thing? If, for instance, the only disagreement between reliabilists and evidentialists is just that reliabilists call reliably formed true ungettiered belief "knowledge" and evidentialists call well-evidenced true ungettiered belief "knowledge," then we might think they're just using "knowledge" in different ways.

To put this same point a different way, we can ask "what are these various properties supposed to transform true belief into?" What is the target at which modal, causal, probabilistic and normative accounts are aiming? And if they are not aiming at the same thing, how can we say that the disagreement goes any deeper than how to use the word "knowledge"?

3.1. Justification

Justification is perhaps the most obvious candidate for the missing ingredient. This is the traditional name for the X in Zagzebski's "knowledge is true belief + some good X" formula. And, as she notes, justification "has received more analytical attention than knowledge itself," perhaps because epistemologists have assumed it was the key to defining knowledge.[154] This suggests one possibility: the various distinctive properties are different candidates for what justification consists in.

The obvious problem with this is that not every theory we've considered would describe themselves as theories of justification. Nozick, for instance, was the father of safety and sensitivity accounts but accepted a reliabilist account of justification.[155] Likewise, some virtue epistemologists, like Zagzebski, position their theories as alternatives to the traditional account of justification.[156] And Alston thinks the whole notion of justification is confused.[157]

But even if we restrict ourselves to self-avowed theories of justification, we still find ourselves in a quagmire. And this is because it's not clear what justification is supposed to be. It's tempting to identify justification with a normative property, making it an intellectual analog for moral justification. On this view, justification answers questions like "what should I believe?" or "what are my epistemic duties?" The problem is that reliabilism doesn't seem interested in answering those questions. Goldman himself holds that justification and what it is reasonable to believe can come apart.[158] Similar moves are suggested by Foley and Luper-

[154] Zagzebski (1996) 29
[155] Nozick (1981) 265
[156] Zagzebski (1996) 29-43
[157] Alston (1993)
[158] Goldman (2010) 204, writes "the first-order justificational status of an attitude [i.e., whether it is reliably formed] does not fix its (overall) reasonability."

Foy.[159] Moreover, Goldman's original causal theory wasn't even intended as an account of justification. It was supposed to exist alongside a justification condition that quite plausibly did answer normative questions.[160] It's hard to see how the shift from holding that beliefs must be caused in the right way to holding that they must be reliably formed better equips it to answer questions like "what should I believe?"

Perhaps justification is instead a matter of "believing [a proposition] in such a way as to thereby be in a strong position to get the truth."[161] At first blush, it does seem plausible that reliabilism and evidentialism are trying to give accounts of what being well-positioned to get the truth consists in. For both reliably formed belief and well-evidenced belief are likely to be true.

And yet, there are problems with identifying this as the missing ingredient. The first problem is that evidentialism's basing condition has no place in an account of being well-positioned to get the truth. Evidentialists universally agree that justified beliefs must be *based* on good evidence, not merely supported by good evidence. This is the basing condition. What this basing relation comes to is a matter of debate, but it doesn't matter for our purposes, because beliefs based on evidence are no more likely to be true than beliefs merely supported by evidence. If Jack collects good evidence for P, but bases his belief that P on bad reasons, he is no less likely to get the truth than Jill who bases her belief that P on the good evidence Jack collects. Evidentialism's basing condition just isn't about being well-positioned to get the truth.

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[159] Foley (1987) and Luper-Foy (1985)
[160] Gettier's explicit targets in were Ayer's account which used the phrase "right to be sure" as a justification condition and Chisholm's condition which appeared in the "Ethics of Belief" of his *Perceiving: a Philosophical Study* (1957).
[161] Alston (1993) 534

It's a normative condition that places constraints on how the mind should relate to its evidence. That has a place in an account of what we should believe, not in what it means to be well-positioned to believe the truth.

The second problem resembles the swamping problem: while having reliably formed or well-evidenced beliefs puts you in a good position to get the truth, it does not put you in a stronger position than merely *having true beliefs.* If we're looking for the missing ingredient that would transform true belief into knowledge, being in a strong position to get the truth can't be it, because true belief already puts you in the strongest position to get the truth. If justification is just a matter of being in that position, then justification is not the missing ingredient.

So, even restricting ourselves to just two theories of justification, we can't find agreement on what they're after.[162] Reliabilism does a bad job accounting for a normative gloss of justification, evidentialism does a bad job accounting for a purely alethic one. Alston and others have persuasively argued that things get even worse if we consider all the various accounts of justification. But, of course, not every theory is even trying to analyze justification. So even if all the accounts were after the same thing, we'd still have to ask why justification rather than what the other theories are after is the missing ingredient. We should look elsewhere for our missing ingredient.

[162] And these are not the most extreme examples we could have chosen. If we had added Plato's view (or perhaps one of Plato's views, depending on how you read him), it would be even harder to find a common missing ingredient. Zagzebski makes a similar point in (1996) 262.

3.2. Non-Accidental True Belief

Now, if we were tempted to say that the missing ingredient was justification, it's probably because justification is a common name for the kinds of properties we're discussing. If we focus on the distinctive properties and where they fit into a traditional tripartite account of knowledge, justification seems like a natural candidate for the missing ingredient. The fact that justification is unpromising suggests we might want to focus on something else.

If we instead look for a common target of these accounts—i.e., if we look at what the distinctive properties are supposed to transform true belief into—then we can find new candidates for our missing ingredient. What I mean is that if we can give a general description of knowledge that all parties can agree on, then we can read various accounts of knowledge as attempts to make precise what our agreed-upon definition leaves general.

An example will illustrate how this works. Probably the most popular general definition of knowledge is "knowledge is non-accidental true belief." On this view, the various distinctive properties are attempting to make the truth of the belief non-accidental. What they provide is differing accounts of non-accidentality. This is at least somewhat plausible. Beliefs that are well-evidenced, reliably formed, safe, sensitive and the result of virtue tend not to be accidentally true.

This has two problems. First, we've already seen examples in Chapters 1 and 3 that suggest the common identification of knowledge with non-accidental or non-lucky true belief is misguided. We've seen cases where a belief is non-accidental and yet not knowledge (see the case of self-fulfilling belief at the end of chapter 1) and cases where it is accidental and yet knowledge (see the assassin case at the end of chapter 3).

A second problem is that it's not obvious, in the abstract, why we would want to avoid accidentally true beliefs. Above, I mentioned Riggs's contention that accidentality undermined true belief's claim to be an achievement. Making a long shot in basketball is impressive and valuable if it is the product of hard work and skill, but far less so if it is simply a fluke. But once we've offered this explanation, it looks like what we're really after isn't non-accidentality at all, but cognitive achievement. We also considered the possibility that cognitive achievement could be undermined in other ways. This is what's going on when someone sets you up to be Gettiered: it isn't an accident that your belief is true, but there's no achievement in getting true belief either. Your true belief is the result of a weird epistemic prank, not your own cognitive ability.

The third problem is that, as Zagzebski notes, "only philosophers who have thought about Gettier problems would have thought of [this definition]."[163] But philosophers prior to Gettier were attempting to define knowledge. What was their target? If philosophers both pre- and post-Gettier were trying to define the same thing, we'd expect a target definition that they could both agree on and it would be very odd if that definition could not even be stated until 1963.

3.3. Cognitive Achievement

Above, I said that if the value of non-accidentality is explained by the value of cognitive achievement, then perhaps our target is not non-accidental true belief, but rather cognitive achievement. Now, the view that knowledge is a cognitive achievement is associated with

[163] Zagzebski (1996) 264

virtue epistemology, but at least in principle other theories could adopt it as a target. I think this is a more promising path than non-accidental true belief, but I have two problems with it.

First, it is unclear if every account of knowledge does have achievement as a target. What kind of achievement is having reliably-formed true beliefs? Even if we accept—as I think we should—that reliabilism is really motivated by the desire to attain causal connection to the world, it's not clear that such connection is truly an achievement. We could raise similar questions about bare tracking accounts. While it's true that many virtue epistemologists see tracking as either necessary for knowledge or at least as a good heuristic for when knowledge is had (see chapter 1), mere tracking seems insufficient for either virtuous belief or achievement.

Second, it is not obvious that all and only knowledge is cognitive achievement. Above we considered knowing that I am seated at a laptop. Jennifer Lackey gives the example of knowing how to get to the Sears tower based on directions you got from a helpful stranger.[164] Are these achievements? My inclination is still to identify them as small achievements, but in fairness to Lackey, her argument is not merely that knowledge is not a cognitive achievement, but rather that any sense of achievement that includes cases like our visitor to Chicago will also include Gettier cases. After all, the Gettiered believer does get a lot right in Gettier cases and that's an accomplishment even if a small one.

Now, maybe those virtue epistemologists who stress the importance of achievement can find a way out this charge. My point isn't to adjudicate this debate. But if they get out of that charge by making more precise the type of achievement they're after, they run the risk of making cognitive achievement unsuitable as a target. If we want to identify the target of

[164] Lackey gives this example in multiple places, most notably (2007) and (2009)

analyses as cognitive achievement understood in some highly specialized way, we risk making it "too obviously a response to problems in some other definition."[165]

This problem gets compounded when we consider cognitive achievements that are not knowledge. Duncan Pritchard has influentially suggested that the fake barn cases fall into this category, but that seems to me to be more controversial than necessary.[166] A better example involves propositions that we do or should believe but which we do not know. I have in mind the kinds of beliefs that lead us to say, "I *think* that's right, but I don't know for sure." Think of conjectures of mathematicians. These are presumably not knowledge—else we wouldn't call them conjectures—but they are capable of being true and when they turn out to be true, we laud the mathematicians for their brilliance. And brilliance is a kind of achievement. Indeed, mathematicians like Ramanujan are especially revered for this kind of brilliance.

Here's a different kind of example. Imagine that you're teaching logic, and on one of the homework assignments you've assigned a particularly difficult proof for extra credit. Harriet has worked through it, got the right answer and even done so in a particularly clever way. That seems like cognitive achievement. And yet, let's suppose that Harriet has hardly any confidence in her answer. When Connor confidently tells her that she did the problem all wrong and got the wrong answer, she readily gives up her belief. And yet she is right, and Connor is wrong. Her belief has the exact defect that Socrates charges mere true belief with in *Meno*,

> For true opinions, as long as they remain, are a fine thing and all they do is good, but they are not willing to remain long, and they escape from a man's mind, so that they are not worth much until one ties them down . .

[165] Zagzebski (1996) 265
[166] Pritchard (2009) 91ff

> . That is why knowledge is prized higher than correct opinion and knowledge differs from correct opinion in being tied down. (Meno 98a)

Socrates seems right here. Belief that is too easily lost is not knowledge, which is why Harriet doesn't know, despite her outstanding work.

That a theory has counterexamples isn't especially interesting; what the counterexamples tell us might be. I think that in this case, they tell us that cognitive achievement is compatible with even serious defects.[167] Consider an analogy to athletic achievement. Finishing second-to-last in the 400 meters at the Olympics is a remarkable achievement. You beat one of the fastest sprinters alive! And yet, it's much less of an achievement than winning the 400 meters would have been. The above examples are like finishing second to last at the Olympics. They really are achievements, but less of an achievement than knowledge would be.

Put this together with cases like Lackey's example and cognitive achievement does not seem like a good a target or rather, does not seem like a good target unless it is willing to adopt valuism. I add this proviso because there is a fairly simple, non-ad hoc move that would avoid these kinds of problems. We could identify knowledge with a specific cognitive achievement, namely, getting the best kind of belief. This would explain why the visitor knows in Lackey's case—because her belief is as good as it could be—while the conjectures of mathematicians are

[167] Turri (2016) makes a couple points in the area of this one. He notes that "Achievements populate the road to proficiency in many spheres" And gives as an example "a child's first grammatical sentence [which] manifests her incipient linguistic ability." Now, Turri's explicitly considering achievements gained through unreliable performances, and this example is not much like the ones we've considered. However, he later does give an example more like the ones we've considered, namely, "an intellectual performance as adequate as a typical Ted-Williams double." Turri leaves undecided whether such a performance would be knowledge, but I think the examples above suggest a negative answer.

not knowledge—because as insightful as they might be, they could be improved. But, of course, this account of cognitive achievement is equivalent to my view.

3.4. Value as the Missing Ingredient

If justification isn't the missing ingredient, if we can't use knowledge's status as cognitive achievement or its usual definition as non-accidental true belief to identify the missing ingredient, what's left? The value of knowledge. All sides agree that knowledge is more valuable than true belief and all sides have adopted distinctive properties that are valuable. This suggests that the missing ingredient just is value. It suggests that the general definition of knowledge that we've been looking for is "the best kind of belief." If this is correct, then it suggests that the various distinctive properties are best understood not as varying accounts of justification, or non-accidentality or of whatever besides truth is required for cognitive achievement. Or to put it in yet a third way, the distinctive properties are unified by being answers to the (primary) value problem.

We might think that Reliabilism is a problem for this view. We've already seen that reliability has trouble solving the primary value problem. Does this show that reliabilism isn't trying to solve the value problem, and thus doesn't see value as the missing ingredient that transforms true belief into knowledge? No, because reliabilists' have made responses to the swamping problem. If reliabilists weren't interested in answering the value problem, we would expect them to shrug off the charge that reliability adds no value over and above truth. No one argues that their theory can solve problems that they don't want to solve.

For this reason, we should view value as the missing ingredient: it avoids the problems of all the candidates considered above. Since every theory has adopted an epistemic good as its distinctive property, no theory seems disinterested in epistemic value. True, no theory by itself provides what's required for the best kind of belief, but neither does any theory seem disinterested in that task. Unlike the other candidates, it does not face clear counterexamples and, as we saw in chapter 2, it is plausible that it faces none. Unlike non-accidental true belief, its desirability is not explained in terms of something else. In fact, it's almost the opposite. It captures what is right about the view that knowledge is a cognitive achievement. It holds that knowledge is a specific cognitive achievement, namely, getting the best kind of belief. Finally, it is not a response to problems in some other theory.

If this is correct, then not only can valuism incorporate the various distinctive goods of theories, but each of those goods can be seen as attempts to capture high epistemic value. To put it a different way, valuism can both explain the appeal of the various distinctive properties, but it can also provide what they were after.

4. Concluding Thoughts: Why Focus on Knowledge?

I now want to circle back to a question we addressed in Chapter 2, "Why has knowledge received so much attention from philosophers?" In Chapter 2, I made the point that if knowledge was the best kind of belief, then it is something worth studying. That remains true, but we're now in a place to expand on that answer. For if knowledge really is the best kind of belief—if it is belief where everything of importance goes right—then by studying it we can

discover the various ways in which belief can go right. Examining knowledge provides insights into, to use Alston's phrase, the various dimensions of epistemic evaluation.[168]

We are also now in position to discuss how knowledge is part of the good life. We've seen that knowledge is connected to virtue, achievement, and the good life of the mind. Knowledge is the kind of belief a virtuous mind produces when everything else goes right. It's what a virtuous mind produces when supplied with sufficient evidence and not thwarted by bad luck or the severing of its usual causal connection to the world.[169] And when the mind produces that kind of belief routinely, then there is epistemic flourishing. And since epistemic flourishing is part of flourishing more generally, knowledge is part of that also. The good life must include the good life of the mind.

[168] Alston (2005)

[169] And when it possesses no significant defects, such as those found in Gettier cases.

Conclusion

We've now discussed a wide number of topics in epistemology, and we now come to the point where we must wrap everything up. Our investigation began by asking various questions about the value of knowledge. We wanted to know why it was more valuable than mere true belief, why it was more valuable than any kind of non-knowledge, and why it was worth epistemology's time. As we investigated these questions, we saw that there was a close connection between the value of knowledge and the definition of knowledge, and we saw that our questions about the value of knowledge could only be answered within a theory of knowledge. We examined some prominent theories of knowledge and found that their prospects for answering these questions were not good. This concluded Chapter 1.

In Chapter 2, we introduced a new theory, valuism. This theory took the value of knowledge to be its defining feature. In short, we argued that knowledge was the best kind of belief. By defining knowledge in terms of its value, we were able to solve the problems that we opened Chapter 1 with. In addition to solving Chapter 1's value problems, much of this chapter was spent spelling exactly how knowledge should be defined in terms of value. We closed the chapter by developing an argument based on the close connection between the value and definition of knowledge. While we could not show that the account spelled out here was right in all of its details, we could show that something like it would avoid any and all counterexamples.

In Chapter 3, we applied the theory developed in Chapter 2 to the most notorious of epistemic counterexamples: The Gettier problem. Here we argued that Gettiered belief could

never be the best kind of belief. Whenever we considered Gettier cases, there was always a significantly better belief to which is could be compared. We then argued that this solution was more secure than others on offer. One theme that emerged from this discussion was that Gettiered beliefs shared no common defect. What they have instead is a family of similar but not identical defects. This is why it's been hard to solve the Gettier problem: because it's hard to say what's gone wrong and thus what must be avoided. Valuism's solution doesn't say what's gone wrong. It only says that Gettiered belief could always have been better. We then argued that non-valuist solutions could not adopt this kind of solution, since that would require something like a "no defects" clause. But at that point, you're defining knowledge at least in part in terms of its value.

In Chapter 4 we turned from the "fourth" condition to the "third": that property other than being true and being Gettiered that is supposed to make a belief into knowledge. We argued that each of the most prominent theories had picked a valuable property to play this role. We then noted that valuism could incorporate these properties. It could do so by granting that each of them do indeed have transformative role to play, albeit an indirect one. Each of them explains in part why a belief is valuable enough to be knowledge, at least in normal cases. This "in normal cases" is important. We noted that there are exceptions and thus that while each of these are good, valuism does not take on the counterexamples associated with each. Finally, we noted that valuism could explain what each of these was in its own way trying to do. They were each trying to identify what made belief epistemically good or worth having. And so at the end, we found ourselves not only with a fuller picture of what knowledge looks like, but why epistemology should bother with it. Because in learning what

matters to knowledge, we are learning what makes beliefs good. And good belief is the only kind worth having.

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