Title
The Preconditional Value of Understanding

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Publication Date
2014

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

The Preconditional Value of Understanding

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Philosophy

by

Mathew Mandeville Yunker

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Sven Bernecker, Chair
Professor Emeritus Martin Schwab
Associate Professor Sean Greenberg

2014
DEDICATION

To

my family and friends for their consistent love and support

and especially

to Ashley (and Willie) for reviving me

and giving me the strength to move.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Sven Bernecker, for his help in my development as a philosopher. He has reliably provided me with the important example of a careful interlocutor, listening well and offering clear and constructive counterargument. He has been patient through any disagreement, and encouraging and helpful since I met him. Without his guidance this dissertation would not exist.

I would like to thank Professor Sean Greenberg for his energetic and passionate development of my sense for philosophy's history, and the brilliant example that he sets of how to engage with that history responsibly. All too often contemporary philosophical argument seeks to divorce itself from any past at all, and I have learned from Sean to combine argumentative clarity and historical sensitivity.

I would like to thank Professor Martin Schwab for showing me that unfamiliar texts that seem impenetrable and even nonsensical on first blush can often merit the hard work of close reading. With his help philosophical traditions besides that in which I was originally trained have been opened to me, and I will benefit from this opening for the rest of my life, for which I am and will continue to be grateful.

I would also like to thank the rest of the University of California, Irvine Department of Philosophy for all of the vibrant discussions over the years. Philosophy happens best in conversation, and luckily for me, at this department good philosophy happens frequently and energetically. I have grown a great deal in my time here, and have all of you to thank for it.
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In this dissertation I examine whether and how knowledge or cognitive achievements like it have final value. I first give an account of epistemic value according to which it is not a unique kind of value, but rather value simpliciter which attaches to epistemic objects. I then critically evaluate recent prominent accounts of the value of knowledge and find them lacking. I argue that both virtue- and curiosity-based accounts of the value of knowledge fail to ground universal final value for it. I conclude that knowledge does not in fact have universal final value, and propose my own view that not it, but understanding has what I call universal preconditional value: it is a precondition for the formation of values at all.
0. Introduction

In epistemology there has been a recent upsurge of interest in the so-called 'value problem'. The genesis of this refreshing new body of work is the apparent intuition that knowledge is valuable, indeed something especially valuable. Attention to the value of knowledge raises a two-fold problem for contemporary epistemology. First, the original *Meno* problem itself (in the form of a *prima facie* puzzle about the relative values of knowledge and true belief) remains very much alive, and second, many contemporary analyses of knowledge, driven largely by increasingly specific and detailed responses and counter-responses to the Gettier problem, can seem baroque and complex, and to fail to capture the importance of knowledge for our lives. For these reasons, the issue of the value of knowledge looms particularly large today.

Regarding the first point (that the problem is alive), it certainly seems true on the face of it that knowledge is more valuable than simply having the right belief about something (say, by accident). However, accidentally true beliefs seem to do a fine job getting us what we want in many situations. While epistemologists are still for the most part convinced that lucky guesses are not knowledge, lucky guesses seem to get us all the practical benefits of knowledge. Say that I find myself in a forest and I need to eat some mushrooms to survive. In this particular forest, there are only a few mushrooms that are edible; the rest are lethally poisonous. I can have the true belief "these mushrooms are edible" in a couple of ways: as a 'merely' true belief, or as an item of knowledge. If I randomly look at the edible group of mushrooms and form the belief, then I have a merely true belief by means of a lucky guess. If I have put in the time to research the edibility of various forest mushrooms, and use this preparation to identify the edible mushrooms, then I have knowledge that these are the edible mushrooms. However, I get the exact same benefits (a full belly and continued life) in both cases. How, then, is it more

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1 Riggs (2008) has gone so far as to call recent developments indicative of a 'value turn' in epistemology.
valuable to know that the mushrooms aren't poisonous? How can knowledge be more valuable than true belief? Since knowledge isn't lucky belief, and lucky belief can enable us to achieve our goals, this presents us with a puzzle.

Regarding the second point (that many current accounts of knowledge don't seem to describe something of particular value), taking a moment to step back from work in the shadow of the Gettier problem can reveal that the fruits of that labor either straightforwardly fail to account for the value of knowledge or are such odd pictures of what knowledge is that a natural response is "but why should we care about that?". As an example of the former, some of the early work in value-centered epistemology was directed at showing that a popular view, reliabilism (according to which a belief is knowledge if it is true and produced by a reliable belief-forming process), could not account for the value of knowledge over true belief. Zagzebski (2003) argued that, on such a view, knowledge is no more valuable than true belief. Using the example of a great cup of coffee from a reliable espresso machine as compared to a great cup of coffee from an unreliable espresso machine, she argued that they have the exact same value. The fact that the one cup came from a reliable source does not make it at all better than its unreliably formed counterpart, since its great taste holds all of its value. The same holds, Zagzebski argues, for a merely true belief versus a reliably formed true belief. All of the value is in the truth, so the value of a true belief is not enhanced by the fact that it came from a reliable process. Thus reliabilism cannot account for the value of knowledge over true belief and must regard them as equally valuable. These early arguments cleared the ground for work on virtue-theoretic accounts of knowledge that supposedly were capable of giving a satisfying explanation of the value of knowledge over mere true belief.

Besides reliablism, post-Gettier epistemology has generated a slew of complex attempts at providing a 'fourth condition' on knowledge (beside justification, truth, and belief) to block the possibility of a belief being Gettierized. The analyses can be very baroque (even 'ugly', as some have
said). For example, subjunctive conditional accounts of knowledge hold that, for a subject to know a proposition $p$, $p$ must be true, $S$ must believe that $p$, and some conditional must remain true in some subset of nearby possible worlds. One such conditional is $\text{SAFETY}$, defended by such writers as Pritchard. Pritchard's version of the condition is as follows:

$$\text{(SAFETY**): } S's \text{ belief is safe } \text{iff} \text{ in most near-by possible worlds in which } S \text{ continues to form her belief about the target proposition in the same way as in the actual world, and in all very close near-by possible worlds in which } S \text{ continues to form her belief about the target proposition in the same way as in the actual world, the belief continues to be true.} \text{ (Pritchard 2007: 292)}$$

While such accounts of what knowledge is supposedly block the Gettier problem, with an eye to the value of knowledge we no longer seem to be describing something of central importance in a human life.\textsuperscript{2} Kvanvig (2003, ch. 5) takes this to show that knowledge is going to involve some sort of complex and 'gerrymandered' fourth condition, and thus is in fact not valuable in the way we supposed. The idea is that increasingly baroque Gettier-driven epistemologies that make reference to some, but not all, but most of the mostly near possible worlds are inelegant, and cast knowledge as the sort of thing which no rational person would really care that much about. On these analyses, it just seems that reasonably justified true belief is all that we ought to value, and that the anxiety over the value of knowledge is misplaced. Williamson (2000, p.31) turns this $\text{modus ponens}$ into a $\text{modus tollens}$ and concludes that if knowledge is something that matters to us, then something must be going wrong in the twists and turns of the Gettier debate.

Both of these examples show that the investigation of the nature of knowledge can benefit from investigation of the value of knowledge. In the former, reliabilism - as a view about the nature of knowledge - is shown to be lacking since it cannot account for the value of knowledge. In the latter,\textsuperscript{2} Regardless of whether (SAFETY**) can block Gettierization, I have independent reasons to think that such an account cannot be a satisfactory analysis of knowledge, which I present in "A Dilemma for Safety Epistemology: Common Knowledge versus Lottery Pressure" (ms.).
attention the value of knowledge suggests that a particular direction that epistemology has taken in the post-Gettier years deserves some critical attention. I think that investigations of the nature and value of knowledge should support one another; our view of what knowledge is should fit well with our picture of what is valuable in a cognitive life. This view is opposed to treating either our account of the nature of knowledge or our account of the value of knowledge as foundational for the other. In place of epistemology that takes determination of the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge by means of examination of cases as the sole way to figure out what knowledge is, we should start to take a wider view and allow discussion of value to guide our account of the nature of knowledge. If we find some group of cognitive achievements that is of special value, looking at properties of these achievements can tell us something about what knowledge is.

That said, I believe that thus far the discussion of the value of knowledge has proceeded somewhat haphazardly. As mentioned, the genesis of this discussion is the intuition (apparently shared by the majority of turn-writers\textsuperscript{3}) that knowledge is something especially valuable. Beginning with the assumption that knowledge is especially valuable and running with it is already problematic. It fits well with the (apparently Aristotelian) proclivities of many writers, but needs examination of its own. We ought not blithely assume such a strong view as that knowledge has final value.

To turn to history to see systems which supported this sort of idea, Aristotle held that the highest human good was the pleasure that arises when one contemplates the truth. For him, it was simply a matter of human nature that this was the highest good which structured all other goods in human life. What a felicitous result for an epistemologist! On such a view, every single item of value in the entire domain of objects only has the value that it does in relation to this pinnacle of human good. This might be a bit more grandiose than what contemporary epistemologists have in mind when they assume that knowledge has final value, but at least it is a system which supports their 'intuition.' More recently, and

\textsuperscript{3} With the exception of Jason Baehr who questions this intuition in his "Is There a Value Problem?"
perhaps more moderately, Mill distinguished between higher and lower pleasures, and saved the 'higher' denomination for the pleasures of the intellect. His argument for this was that anyone who has experienced both kinds of pleasure prefers the intellectual, and we ought to trust the majority in matters of evaluation. I imagine that if Mill saw the relative American television ratings of reality shows and documentaries, or thought about what has happened to 'The Learning Channel' in the past decade as it moved from programming focusing on educating viewers about science and nature to its current programming list featuring 'lifestyles' shows such as "Here Comes Honey Boo Boo," he might well abandon this line of argumentation, but that is neither here nor there. In these views, knowledge should be one of the highest goals for a person.

Without regard to history, we can also say with some confidence that many have the 'intuition' that it is good to know things. It certainly seems that at least part of the reason that we value education for our children is that it will lead them to knowledge, though the trend of educating toward standardized tests and the conception of a college degree as a tool for higher income both militate against the claim that this is the justification for public education. Whether it is a cognitive or an economic good seems up for debate. However, since sayings seem to be good vehicles for intuitions, we can say that 'knowledge is power,' or relate the proverbs 'The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out' (Prov. 18:15 NIV) or 'knowing is half the battle' (see the American children's cartoon 'G.I. Joe').

But if that is the game that we are playing, we can also say that 'ignorance is bliss' or 'what we don't know can't hurt us.' We can look to Hume's 'good earthy folk' for an example of what a simple life can be without the burden of knowledge. If we take this line we can imagine those who know things as heroic martyrs, bearing the weight and pain of knowledge so that the rest of the population can enjoy the painlessness of relative epistemic innocence.

In fact, in The Brothers Karamazov, when Ivan is relating his story of the Grand Inquisitor to
Alyosha, he has his character assert that mankind is better off being lied to by a dominant Church:

Under us it will be different. Under us they will all be happy and they will not rise in rebellion and kill one another all the world over. [...] Freedom, free-thinking, and science will lead men into such confusion and confront them with such dilemmas and insoluble riddles that the fierce and rebellious will destroy one another; others who are rebellious but weaker will destroy themselves, while the weakest and most miserable will crawl to our feet. [...] And everyone will be happy, all the millions of beings with the exception of the hundred thousand men who are called upon to rule over them. For only we, the keepers of the secret, will be unhappy. There will be millions upon millions of happy babes and one hundred thousand sufferers who have accepted the burden of knowledge of good and evil. They will die peacefully with Your name on their lips, but beyond the grave they will find nothing but death. But we shall keep the secret and, for their own happiness, we shall dangle before them the reward of eternal, heavenly bliss. (Dostoevsky 344-346).

On this view, those who are forced to know how the world truly is suffer greatly for it, and it is much better to do without this knowledge. Here is a vivid literary description to make sense of how ignorance can truly be bliss. Note that here, in the relevant epistemic domain, the subjects do not have merely true belief as contrasted with knowledge, but rather hold a number of crucial false beliefs. If these are the cognitive states that bear value for them, then this is a far cry from knowledge having final value. On this view, false belief has value, and knowledge has active disvalue.

We are not confined to popular sayings or literature for support of the idea that knowledge is perhaps not so universally valuable as contemporary epistemologists like to assume. Not all philosophers are so taken by knowledge's supposed value. In an early unpublished essay, Nietzsche claims that:

[Just as every porter wants to have an admirer, so even the proudest of men, the philosopher, supposes that he sees on all sides the eyes of the universe telescopically focused upon his action and thought. [...] The pride connected with knowing and sensing lies like a blinding fog over the eyes and sense of men, thus deceiving them concerning the value of existence. For this pride contains within itself the most flattering estimation of the value of knowledge. (Nietzsche 79-80)
In this essay Nietzsche argues that the pursuit of truth itself actually arises from the desire for good (i.e. non-lying) behavior of others in the 'peace treaty' of society. This is far from the view that truth is pursued because of value that it bears on its own. "[Man] is indifferent toward pure knowledge which has no consequences; toward those truths which are possibly harmful and destructive he is even hostily inclined." (Nietzsche 81) On this sort of view, the real value is elsewhere and there is nothing particularly valuable about knowledge. In fact, knowledge is dangerous in that it deceives its possessor into thinking that she has something of value when she may be far from it. Nietzsche would actually diagnose the assumption of most contemporary epistemologists that knowledge has straightforward final value as their being befogged by an overestimation of the importance of their own cognitive achievements.

Now, I am not giving these historical examples or popular sayings as knockdown arguments against the commonly presumed view that knowledge has universal final value, but rather in order to cast some doubt on using offhand appeal to an 'intuition' as justification for beginning our investigation in the context of epistemology's value-turn with such an assumption. In this dissertation I would like to try to take a step back in the question of the value of knowledge. Too much work has been done on the basis of the intuition of epistemic value without attention to what precisely 'epistemic value' is supposed to mean.

Before I outline the argument of this dissertation, it will be helpful to clarify how I will use value terminology. There is some sliding in the literature, and I want to be entirely clear on how I will take central terms.
0.1. Distinctions in Value

a. Subjective/Objective

If an object has subjective value then its value depends on some activity (e.g. preferring, desiring, etc.) of a subject (or subjects).\(^4\) If something has objective value then its value is independent of the activities of subjects.

Note that a theory can hold that there are both subjective and objective values (e.g. that the Good as an abstract is objectively valuable, and that money is valuable only due to the attitudes of subjects). We must be careful here to distinguish between subjective/objective values and subjective/objective theories of value. I call a 'subjective theory of value' any theory which holds that all value is subjective. I call an 'objective theory of value' any theory that holds that there are objective values.\(^5\)

Note also that a subjective theory of value need not be committed to the view that whatever an individual likes is valuable. It need not hold that 'anything goes' with respect to a particular subject's valuing. The dependence of value on subjects is compatible with a wide variety of positions, including one according to which value depends on communities of subjects and thus under which an individual subject can be mistaken in valuing something. To say that value is subjective leaves open the relation between one subject's pro-attitude towards an object at a particular time and that object's value. The crucial thing is that the domain of objects gains no value independent of some activity by a subject or subjects.

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\(^4\) Here I do not mean by 'object' something like 'midsized physical object', but rather whatever is the object of a subject's preference. This is a rather wide domain, as it seems that even as-yet-nonexistent objects can be the 'objects' of preference.

\(^5\) The reason for the asymmetry - a subjective theory says there is only subjective value, but an objective theory is compatible with there existing both subjective and objective values - is that it is more efficient to define as 'objective' a theory which holds that there are any objective values at all, since such is the conception against which I position myself, and the view according to which there is only objective value is farfetched and not worth considering.
b. Extrinsic/Intrinsic

Something has extrinsic value if its value depends on its relation(s) to something else.

Something has intrinsic value if its value is independent of its relations.\(^6\) Speaking of 'independence' can be misleading since nothing is ever totally independent of everything else. What I have in mind here is that, if something has intrinsic value, then it has value no matter what relations it bears to other things. Its value is not independent of any relations to other things altogether (that is, this kind of evaluation does not depend on our ability to conceptualize the object alone in a void), but is rather independent of which relations it contingently happens to bear. Intrinsic value is compatible with any possible set of relations. This brings Kant to mind: the good of the good will is such that:

> Even if it should happen that, owing to special disfavour of fortune, or the niggardly provision of a step-motherly nature, this will should wholly lack power to accomplish its purpose, if with its greatest efforts it should yet achieve nothing, and there should remain only the good will (not, to be sure, a mere wish, but the summoning of all means in our power), then, like a jewel, it would still shine by its own light, as a thing which has its whole value in itself. Its usefulness or fruitfulness can neither add nor take away anything from this value. It would be, as it were, only the setting to enable us to handle it the more conveniently in common commerce, or to attract to it the attention of those who are not yet connoisseurs, but not to recommend it to true connoisseurs, or to determine its value. (Kant 8)

Intrinsic value, then, can survive independently of any arrangement of contingent relations that happens to surround it. In the case of knowledge, for S's knowing that p to have intrinsic value it must be the case that S knowing that p is valuable regardless of the situation in which this knowing finds itself.

Given a stance regarding the subjective/objective distinction, a stance regarding the extrinsic/intrinsic distinction follows naturally. Subjective values depend on the activity of subjects, so

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\(^6\) Some philosophers hold that intrinsic value can accrue to complex things. Feldman, for example, argues that intrinsic value accrues to states of affairs like "S takes pleasure in x" (in his "Basic Intrinsic Value"). I think that this is not so telling, since if we make the 'object' of evaluation large enough, we can generate intrinsic value anywhere. There will always be intrinsic value in the world if the world contains value and we take a large enough subset of the world's constituents as a single unit for evaluation.
under a subjective theory of value all value is extrinsic, since subjects may or may not perform value-generating activity with regard to any particular object. If something must await the activity of a subject to be valuable then it seems it must be of extrinsic value. Note that, on my view, for value to be subjective it must require the *activity* of a subject, not a mere relation to a subject. It is possible that there are necessary relations between subjects and their values. This would be a case of objective value. For Aristotle, for example, the highest good is the pleasure that comes from exercising one's rational nature. This value is objective: contemplating the truth is something that always requires a subject, but on his view all subjects necessarily share (or ought to share) in this pleasure, and thus the value does not depend on the activity of subjects. It is also intrinsic: no matter which relations it happens to bear (where it is happening, which truths one is contemplating, etc.) it has value.

c. Instrumental/Final

Something has instrumental value if it is only valuable as a means to something else, and something has final value if it is not valuable as a means. Note that instrumental value is a variety of extrinsic value. If something is only valuable as a means, then it is only valuable due to its relation to the end. The paradigmatic case of instrumental value is a tool: a hammer is only good since it can be used to generate something of final value (say, a treehouse). While it may seem natural to infer that final value is intrinsic, this would be too hasty an inference. I agree with Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen (1999) and Korsgaard (1983) that it is conceivable that there are extrinsic final values. This is due to the fact that an object's final value can be based on extrinsic features such as rarity (e.g. the only comic book remaining of a particular issue), its history (e.g. Princess Diana's dress), or the attitudes that subjects take up towards it. For example, say that it is a subject's dream to own a

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7 One might object that subjectivism that requires activity does not entail the rejection of intrinsic value on the grounds that there may be actions that subjects necessarily take. I think that this is an unacceptable conception of action. As I see it, actions are such that they can be taken or not; there is no necessary action.
beachhouse. The subject values her job merely as a means to buying a beachhouse, but the subject values the beachhouse in itself, not as a means. However, the value of the beachhouse itself is extrinsic, since it depends on the subject's dream to be valuable. If the subject dies in a surfing accident, the beachhouse has no final value.\(^8\)\(^9\)

Note that these two types of value are not exclusive. It is possible for an object to have final value, but also to be instrumentally valuable in the acquisition of another item of final value. For example, while Princess Diana's dress might have final value, it can still maintain instrumental as a piece of clothing that is useful in achieving the finally valuable state of shelter from the elements.

Note that a subjective theory of value will hold that there is no objective value, that the value of any object is extrinsic, but have room for both instrumental and final value.

0.2. Outline of the Dissertation

In this dissertation, I begin by examining the terminology of 'epistemic value' itself. In my first chapter I argue that we should not understand epistemic value as value of a specific type, but rather as value simpliciter which is predicated of epistemic objects. Attention to this conception of epistemic value has implications for how value-driven epistemology should proceed. In my second and third chapters I take up prominent current accounts of the value of knowledge and find them lacking, concluding that knowledge does not have the universal final value that the majority of the literature assumes. In particular, in my second chapter I examine and reject the popular approach to the value

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8 It should be noted that Rabinowicz and Ronnow-Rasmussen themselves see the argument from the dependence on desire of a final value to its being extrinsic as problematic, since it confuses the "constitutive ground" of the value with its "supervenience base" (pp. 36ff.). I find their objection flawed, and will use this straightforward argument to hold that final values can be extrinsic.

9 It is somewhat common to contrast 'practical' and 'epistemic' value, and I do not discuss this distinction because I think that the contrast is confused. 'Practical' just means 'instrumental', and thus qualifies the type of value (valuable as related to an end). 'Epistemic' means 'having to do with knowledge', and this qualifies the object which has value. So, epistemic value is just value accruing to an epistemic item, which is compatible with both instrumental ('practical') and final value. Formulating beliefs is of instrumental (practical) epistemic value. Knowledge is of final epistemic value (simply because it is of final value, and is an epistemic item). I argue for this position in Chapter 1.
problem which locates the value of knowledge in the cognitive capacities of the knower, as some say, in the 'cognitive virtues' necessary for the possession of knowledge. I engage with the strongest virtue-theoretic accounts of the value of knowledge and argue against them in turn. In the third chapter, I turn to curiosity-based accounts of the value of knowledge, which attempt to ground its final value in the human desire to know. While this has some promise, by considering several objections to this approach I show that the type of curiosity which could serve this purpose is certainly not universally shared by agents, and that such an account therefore cannot ground universal final value for knowledge. Having concluded that knowledge does not have universal final value, and therefore that the starting point of much of contemporary value-driven epistemology is mistaken, in the fourth chapter I give my own account that locates a type of universal value for understanding, but not knowledge. I argue that understanding has what I call 'preconditional value,' which means that it is a precondition for the formation of values at all. It does not itself have to bear final value, but it must be in place for other objects to gain final value. So, where the literature has been concerned with explaining the final value of knowledge (or understanding), I claim that they have been off from the start, and must look a logical level lower to find the source of the value of cognitive achievements.

I now turn to the oft-used terminology of 'epistemic value' itself.
1. Two Readings of 'Epistemic Value'

1.0 Introduction

In recent epistemology, what began with the claim that reliabilism faces a ‘value problem’ has led to many fruitful discussions of various aspects of the value of knowledge.\(^\text{10}\) As Riggs has declared, we are experiencing a ‘value turn’ in epistemology.\(^\text{11}\) Theorists wonder whether epistemic value is monistic.\(^\text{12}\) They argue about whether believing truly always has epistemic value.\(^\text{13}\) They try to show how it is that knowledge can have more epistemic value than true belief.\(^\text{14}\)

In the course of many of these debates, the term ‘epistemic value’ plays a central role,\(^\text{15}\) with insufficient attention to what exactly it is supposed to mean. I think that this terminology requires analysis, and it is my goal in this chapter to shed light on how we should understand 'epistemic value.' I suggest that there are two primary ways to read the 'epistemic' qualifier in this term. First, it can be read as a qualifier on the \textit{value itself}. That is, with this phrase we can be positing a type of value, and deeming it the epistemic type. Another way to read the ‘epistemic’ is as a qualifier on the \textit{object valued}. On this reading, we are saying that something has value, and that it is an epistemic item (a belief, a network of beliefs, a disposition to believe, a belief-forming process, etc.).

In this chapter, I first explain the differences between these two ways of understanding epistemic value and what is at stake on each view. I then argue that if we assume that one makes a reasonable choice when one turns from investigating a 'trivial truth' (the standard example is counting

\(^{10}\) The early arguments against reliabilism based on the differential value of knowledge and mere belief come from (see, e.g., Zagzebski 2003).

\(^{11}\) Riggs (2008)

\(^{12}\) Riggs (2004), Brogaard (2009), Lynch (2004), Kvanvig

\(^{13}\) Sosa (2003), Kvanvig (2003), Horwich (2006)

\(^{14}\) While most epistemologists agree that knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief, Kvanvig (2003) argues that it is not, and Baehr (2009) raises doubts that the 'intuition' that knowledge is valuable is appropriate support for the 'value turn.'

\(^{15}\) Sometimes the terms 'theoretical value' or 'cognitive value' are used. For the purposes of this paper I will treat these as equivalent to 'epistemic value,' and only use the latter.
the grains in a handful of sand) to attend to other features of one’s life, then we cannot hold the former
view positing a separate kind of value with this apparently innocent term. I conclude that the alternate
view is more plausible, and that we should not consider epistemic value as a separate value type, but
merely as value accruing to the objects in a particular domain of interest in our lives.

1.1 Objects with Epistemic Value vs. Valuable Epistemic Objects

There are two primary ways to understand the term 'epistemic value.' One way is to think of it
as picking out a type of value (apart from, say, aesthetic or moral value) and deeming it the epistemic
type.\(^{16}\) I will call this the Distinct Value view. The other way to understand this term predicates
'epistemic' of the object. On such a view, the claim that an object has epistemic value asserts that the
object is valuable, and indicates that it is an item in the epistemic domain. Such items may include
beliefs, reasons, belief-forming mechanisms, memories, and even external objects like books or
universities. For the purposes of this paper the exact extent of the epistemic domain is unimportant.
What matters is that the second view about the term 'epistemic value' sees it as ascribing value to some
object, and claiming that this object resides in this domain. I call this latter view the Distinct Object
view.

The first thing to note is that, regardless of which of these views of the nature of epistemic value
we adopt, it is not the case that epistemic value is to be contrasted with 'practical' or 'instrumental'
value. It is common but incorrect to assume that work-a-day objects like hammers have straightforward
instrumental value which is to be set apart from the lofty epistemic value that accrues to the products of
our contemplation. With attention to what it might mean for something to have epistemic value, we will

\(^{16}\) For example, Kvanvig writes that "We first distinguish among different types of value: practical, social, moral, political,
religious, and aesthetic. We can then use such a list to clarify the notion of all-things-considered value (it is some sort of
function on all the kinds of value in question), and point out the need for an additional kind of value as well. In addition
to practical concerns, there are purely theoretical ones displayed in the ubiquitous phenomenon of curiosity. Such a
purely theoretical value is different from any of the values listed to this point, and it is this kind of value involved in the
claim that knowledge and understanding have universal and unqualified value." (Kvanvig 2008, p. 201)
see that facile differentiation between the practical and the epistemic is fundamentally confused on the meanings of instrumental and final value. In fact, under both the Distinct Object and Distinct Value views, it is possible for an item to have final or instrumental epistemic value.

Under the Distinct Value view, it is clear that something can have final value of the distinct epistemic type. For example, say that my true belief that the blue whale is the largest living mammal has epistemic value. My painting of a blue whale may have aesthetic value, which is one of many kinds of value, and my belief has a different, epistemic kind. It is clear on this view that we can also divide up types of instrumental value based on the type of final value of the ends that they promote. So, my enrolling in a course on whale biology could have instrumental epistemic value in that it promotes epistemic ends (i.e. serves as a means to the true belief that the blue whale is the largest living mammal which has final epistemic value). Thus, on the Distinct Value view, there is both final and instrumental epistemic value.

On the Distinct Object view, the same is true. To claim that some object has instrumental value simply means that it serves some end. Saying that some object has epistemic value, on this view, means that it is valuable and is an epistemic item. This would mean that an epistemic item that serves as a means to some end would have instrumental epistemic value. For example, my belief that the art gallery is north of here serves an aesthetic end but is an epistemic item. Such a belief would have instrumental epistemic value.

One might object that on this construal, beliefs will almost never fail to have epistemic value, since they are nearly always at least potentially useful for some end, and are always epistemic objects. If this is the case the category of instrumental epistemic value loses its usefulness. If discussing instrumental epistemic value is just to discuss belief, then we have not illuminated much. On the contrary, if we consider a belief to be a brainstate or an element in a large set that composes a complex mathematical object, we are considering it as something other than an epistemic object, and not
evaluating it as a member of that domain. To treat a belief as an epistemic object is to consider it in the domain of reasoning and inquiry, and this domain is populated with many other diverse objects. To take it as a brainstate is to consider it in the neural functioning of an organism.\textsuperscript{17} From this angle, we may have no view as to the epistemic value of the belief. Therefore, the term 'instrumental epistemic value' retains its usefulness.

In the case of final epistemic value, any epistemic item that is valued as an end fits the bill. For example, if we suppose that deep understanding of physics has value without any consideration of what else it might help us achieve in terms of technological advancement, then we are speaking of final epistemic value. Therefore, on either the Distinct Value or Distinct Object view, the epistemic/non-epistemic value distinction cuts across the instrumental/final value distinction. We ought not casually contrast the epistemic and the practical, regardless of whether we think epistemic value is of a distinct type.

A notable feature of the Distinct Value view of epistemic value is that it strongly suggests a pluralistic view of value.\textsuperscript{18} It is certainly possible to be a value monist and still hold the Distinct Value view, but the resultant picture of the structure of value hardly seems tenable. One could claim that epistemic value is its own type of value, and also claim that all other purported types of value are illusory. On such a view epistemic value would be the lone real value type, which would constitute a monistic system. This seems farfetched enough to safely leave aside for now. Presumably, creating a poem has aesthetic value, and reading a sacred text has religious value. The list could go on. On such a view, there are many kinds of value that we strive to realize in our lives, one of which is the epistemic type. The Distinct Object view, on the other hand, is more easily compatible with a monistic conception.

\textsuperscript{17} This, of course, assumes that neuroscience can (and should) use the concept of 'belief.' This is a contentious point, and is not relevant to the example.

\textsuperscript{18} This is not to be confused with the contemporary epistemological debate concerning epistemic value pluralism. Monists in that debate (typically) hold that truth is the only item of epistemic value. This kind of monism is compatible with the broader value pluralism that I discuss here.
of value according to which claiming that something has either aesthetic or epistemic value is just to say that the object under consideration has value simpliciter, and that this object resides in some domain or other.

One question that might be asked regarding the Distinct Object view is what exactly it means for an object to be in a particular domain. While it seems uncontroversial that systems of beliefs are epistemic objects, when we consider instrumentally valuable objects, the issue of domain membership is not so clear. For example, it seems that a heavy encyclopedia can be used both for acquiring true beliefs and for self-defense. If this object can have both epistemic value and survival value, the Distinct Object view requires that we have a consistent explanation of how an encyclopedia can be both an epistemic and a survival object.

This example shows that, on the Distinct Object view, domain membership cannot be an intrinsic property of an object. The domain that an object belongs to for the purpose of evaluation depends on the activity under consideration. Since a book can be involved in the activity of throwing at an attacker as well as the activity of reading, it can be a member of the survival domain and the epistemic domain. When we claim that it has epistemic value, we claim that it has value *qua* object for reading, and when we claim that it has survival value, we claim that it has value *qua* object for throwing at an attacker. This means that, properly speaking, final value belongs to activities involving objects rather than the objects themselves. This ought not seem strange, however, as it just means that objects by themselves and independent of any activity by an agent do not maintain their final value, which is a perfectly defensible understanding of the structure of value.

With this understanding of what a domain of evaluation is, when we are talking about the epistemic domain, we are talking about objects characteristically involved with the activities of belief formation, investigation, belief revision, and, in general, inquiry. It would be a mistake to immediately conclude that we can easily see that the only thing with final value in this domain will be the generation
of true beliefs. First, this is a position of controversy in the literature (see, e.g., Brogaard 2009 and Riggs 2004), and second, it is completely possible that nothing in this domain has final value. It could be that the activities that characterize the epistemic domain are entirely subservient to the activities of some other domain. We do not need to be fully agree with the early Nietzsche that "[man] is indifferent toward pure knowledge which has no consequences" (Nietzsche 81) to at least understand the possibility that inquiry is only valuable for something else; a simple hedonistic view like Mill's makes extended room for inquiry but does not locate final value in its domain alone. For Mill, it is certainly true that "it is an unquestionable fact that those who are equally acquainted with, and equally capable of appreciating and enjoying, both, do give a most marked preference to the manner of existence which employs their higher faculties" (Mill 56). But it is the pleasure of knowledge here and not knowledge itself which bears value. It is also possible that truth alone might not be enough. If one takes the eminently plausible position that the truth of a belief is not transparent to the agent, then the conviction that some sort of assurance of having acquired the valuable object is part of the activity would require internalistic elements such as reflectively accessible justification. On a view like this, something like understanding, with its internalistically accessible inferential links and broad set of propositions, would be the bearer of final value.\[^{19}\] Since we do not want our conception of what value is to immediately determine the evaluations of particular objects, it counts in favor of both views that they are compatible with multiple angles on the structure of value in the epistemic domain, i.e., the objects associated with the activity of inquiry in our lives.

With these two views clarified I will move on to consider the effect that adopting either would have in a particular region of contemporary value-driven epistemology. One debate in which the concept of 'epistemic value' is utilized is that over the universality of the value of true belief. It is a commonplace that believing truly is a good thing. That is, it is a commonplace that true belief is

\[^{19}\] This is the line taken by, e.g., Kvanvig 2003.
valuable. This claim has some intuitive pull to it. It seems that many of our activities, from looking around a new environment, to getting an education, to reading the news, are aimed at forming true beliefs. In fact, some epistemologists claim that true belief is universally valuable, meaning that every instance of truly believing is valuable. This sort of view faces an obvious objection: what of trivial truths, such as knowing how many blades of grass there are currently on the White House lawn? They have ‘trivial’ right there in their name! It seems that there cannot be any value in believing these truly.\(^{20}\)

Faced with this objection, one way to defend the view that true beliefs are always valuable is to claim that so-called trivial truths do have value: a tiny but non-zero amount of epistemic value. With the positing of an ineliminable vestige of a particular kind of value reserved for believing truly, we can explain how even knowledge of the most trivial truths has worth. For example, when I am meticulously counting blades of grass after sneaking onto the White House lawn, and Secret Service agents draw weapons and start shouting at me to get down, I give up on my epistemically valuable pursuit, and go in for another pursuit with another kind of value (say, the value of survival). While this decision is reasonable, and there are many reasonable decisions to abandon pursuit of trivial truths, this does not mean that my investigation of the White House lawn was entirely valueless. It merely means that there was another value which trumped it at that time.

This sort of attempted defense of the universality of the value of believing truly in the face of trivial truths is an example of a Distinct Value use of 'epistemic value.' For example, when Kvanvig takes this line, he claims that:

\(^{20}\) For present purposes we can safely ignore the value that accrues to such truths by virtue of their usefulness in games of trivia, since we are concerned here not with their instrumental value, but their final value.
We first distinguish among different types of value: practical, social, moral, political, religious, and aesthetic. We can then use such a list to clarify the notion of all-things-considered value (it is some sort of function on all the kinds of value in question), and point out the need for an additional kind of value as well. In addition to practical concerns, there are purely theoretical ones displayed in the ubiquitous phenomenon of curiosity. Such a purely theoretical value is different from any of the values listed to this point, and it is this kind of value involved in the claim that knowledge and understanding have universal and unqualified value. (Kvanvig 2008, p. 201)

While my putting my hands on my head and laying down at the behest of Secret Service agents has survival value, counting blades of grass in order to believe a true proposition has epistemic value. Contrary to the first appearance, beliefs of this kind are not valueless. They have a little dash of a special kind of value all their own.

It is possible to defend the universality of the value of believing truly with the Distinct Object view, which permits (but does not require) a monistic view on the nature of value. On such a view, when I submit to the Secret Service agents, the object valued is something like bodily integrity. When I am counting blades of grass, the object valued is a future true belief about their number. The former can be called ‘survival value’ because it is value that accrues to an object dealing with my survival. The latter can be called ‘epistemic value’ because it accrues to an object dealing with forming an accurate picture of the world.

It may seem like this is a small difference. In both cases, we can say that we set aside the epistemic value in order to do something else. However, as I will argue in the next section, the pluralistic view forced by the Distinct Value view faces problems if we conceive the choice to turn away from the pursuit of trivial truths as reasonable.

1.2 Choosing Not to Know

As seen above, in some situations it seems like it is a reasonable choice to not pursue the truth. The above example of choosing not to risk one's life by counting blades of grass is extreme, but we can
think of more quotidian ways in which we, seemingly reasonably, choose not to know the truth about some matter. Nowadays opening a web browser is all that it takes to begin taking in information and forming new beliefs. With the checking of sources and careful selection of websites, it is possible to form a large number of new true beliefs in a short amount of time. However, many of us elect to pursue other projects which are not necessarily involved with forming new true beliefs. We do our laundry, go to work, interact with friends and family, play sports, etc. Doing these things instead of gathering new true beliefs frequently seems like a reasonable choice.

If we stop to reflect on why this is a reasonable choice, it seems that it is simply not valuable enough to memorize random facts. Getting a paycheck or advancing a career seem more valuable. We can abstract from this, and say that when we are going to choose between two objects of value to us, it is reasonable to choose the more valuable one. In the form of a straightforward principle:

(R) Given the choice between two objects of value, it is reasonable to choose the more valuable object.\(^{21}\)

Citing the superior value of something chosen surely would count as a valid reason if one were asked why one made a particular choice. This means that when we are in the business of choosing among multiple objects (in this case, true beliefs and a slew of other types of objects), making a reasonable choice means choosing the more valuable thing. This is a general structure that can apply as much to our picky selection of apples at the grocery store as our selection of career.

If we apply this to our above case, when I (reasonably) choose to obey the Secret Service agents and cut short my pursuit of truth, it is because getting out of this encounter without injury is more

\(^{21}\) This principle of reasonable choice is meant to only deal with choices between valuable objects. This leaves open the possibility that one might not choose to acquire or promote some object out of respect for the autonomy of another, which may not be explicable in terms of choosing valuable objects.
valuable than knowing how many blades of grass there are on the White House lawn. One object (an escape) is more valuable than another (a belief). Crucially, this involves the possibility of a value comparison. While we may not stop and consciously compare the value of objects whenever we make a decision, when pressed we can justify our decisions with claims of the form 'x is more valuable than y.' The 'is more valuable than' relation requires the commensurability of the two objects under consideration. In the example at hand, this requires that we can compare the values of escape and belief on the same spectrum of valuation.

When we choose not to know something, we judge that bit of knowledge as less valuable than some other object. As I have claimed, we do this every day. On the face of it, these constant decisions seem reasonable. Only one of the two readings of 'epistemic value' that I have discussed can make sense of these reasonable decisions not to know.

1.3 The Distinct Value View versus Reasonable Choices

If we suppose the Distinct Value view to be correct, then the view that truly believing is universally valuable demands that we suppose that even a trivial truth has some small amount of its own special kind of value. One reason for this kind of view is that it gives a straightforward vindication of the intuition that knowledge is always valuable, even in cases where one cannot or ought not pursue it. However, in the White House Lawn case, it seems that I make a reasonable choice when I elect not to pursue this piece of knowledge in favor of survival. The Distinct Value view cannot account for the reasonability of this decision.

On the Distinct Value view, there are two entirely different spectra of value operating in the White House Lawn case. On the one hand we have a piece of knowledge with its own kind of value. On the other hand we have bodily integrity with its survival value. The problem for this view is that this leaves these two objects incommensurable. If survival-related objects have survival value and
epistemic objects have epistemic value, we are left without a measure by which to compare bodily integrity and coming to know the number of blades of grass on the lawn in this case. The Distinct Value view leaves the choice to abandon this pursuit of knowledge in the face of clear and present danger seeming arbitrary.

A defender of the Distinct Value view might counter that, while there are two value-types operative in this situation, survival value trumps epistemic value. If one believes that survival is the highest or dominant imperative for an organism, then one might claim that both of these values exist independently, but that one is overriding the other.

It does not seem that, even on such a view, the value accruing to a survival object will necessarily trump the value accruing to an epistemic object. Imagine if the roles are reversed from the above example, and we have a relatively trivial piece of survival value weighed against something of significant epistemic value. It strains the imagination to claim that a very slight increase in overall fitness (achieved, say, by eating almonds instead of peanuts for a snack) can trump the value of an object of great epistemic value such as a deep and structured understanding of contemporary scientific theories. Even threatened with slightly reduced health, it seems reasonable to choose the latter.

Additionally, even if some value-types are taken to always trump other value-types, we have the further problem that the Distinct Value view is appealing to a higher level value for arbitration.

One might argue that, while epistemic and survival values are distinct, in situations such as these one invokes a higher level value to arbitrate between epistemic and survival pursuits. This would mean that one would claim that a true belief about the number of blades of grass on the lawn really does have epistemic value, and not getting shot really does have survival value, but when we compare them we have to ask which of these values is more valuable.

While this is one way in which the term 'value' is colloquially used, against this defense of the Distinct Value view I would argue that the only real value in such a system is the arbitrating value. It is
all well and good to say that something has some special 'value' all its own, but if this 'value' has no bearing on choiceworthiness, it is not value in the sense under consideration. If we appeal to a higher-level conception of value in order to choose which of the spectra of values counts more weightily, then the higher-level conception is the operative one in giving an account of our evaluations: it is the real conception of value.

I doubt that anyone would agree that abandoning the pursuit of a trivial truth for the sake of survival is an arbitrary decision. On the face of it, it is reasonable. If the Distinct Value view entails that choices of this kind are not reasonable (that is, that they do not involve the reasonable comparison and differential evaluation of two objects which requires a shared value-measure), then it must be rejected in favor of the Distinct Object view.

One might argue that we cannot abandon the Distinct Value view because it is essential to explain the value on one side of a classic distinction: the practical/theoretical. Some object can have practical value if it helps us reach some worldly goal. Some object has theoretical value if it helps us get to the truth. Focus on this distinction emphasizes the divided character of our lives: practical reason helps us navigate the messy spatiotemporal world we inhabit, and theoretical reason helps us believe the pure truth. On such a view, it seems natural to align epistemic value with the realm of the theoretical, holding that the only way to understand epistemic value is as something's ability to get us to believe things truly.  

This line of argumentation would hold that, while a piece of knowledge might have all kinds of uses outside of the theoretical realm, its epistemic value must have something to do with its connection to the truth. I think that we ought to abandon this notion of epistemic value. First, assuming that such a view purports to establish the structure of epistemic value purely with reference to the truth, it would require that truth (or truly believing) is the sole object of epistemic final value. Determining which

22 One might hold that epistemic value of this kind must do more than just conduce to true belief and argue that some form of justification or reliability is part of what epistemically valuable objects get us. This is immaterial to my present point.
objects have epistemic instrumental value would follow therefrom. But this removes the conceptual possibility of objects of epistemic final value besides truth, such as understanding. Now, one could reply that, whatever epistemic value is, it must be of a separate type dealing with whatever the end of inquiry is. This is perfectly fine, but if we want to use the concept of epistemic value to answer other questions like 'why choose to know things?' or 'is ignorance really bliss?' we will be at a loss if we use a narrow truth-conduciveness conception of epistemic value. Broadening the questions of the value of knowledge to anything beyond the differential value of true belief and knowledge will leave us wanting a more general conception of epistemic value. Since one of the strengths of value-driven epistemology is this power to open up new questions, I propose that a conception of epistemic value according to which it is something beyond truth-conduciveness is required.

1.4 The Distinct Object View on Trivial Truths

It is much more difficult on the Distinct Object view to appeal to the final epistemic value of trivial truths in situations like the White House Lawn case in order to defend the universal final value of true belief. On the Distinct Value view, it seems natural to ascribe some epistemic final value to all true beliefs. After all, we are discussing a rarified, specific kind of value that has to do with our activity of inquiry. Inquiry doesn't take up a great deal of many people's lives, so a triviality bearing some amount of this value that we so often ignore does not seem jarring. Also, if we assume that each domain gets its own kind of value, then it cannot be terribly committing to claim that, in this domain, all of the objects with a particular desirable quality (truth) get some of the value.

But on the Distinct Object view, we would have to ascribe some non-zero quantity of value to all instances of believing truly. This is a view according to which objects are compared in terms of their value, regardless of their object-type, and choices are made according to their differential value. Not all objects will be valuable. Since some will be disvaluable, it makes sense to assume that some will be
utterly neutral. Rocks can certainly play interesting roles in our lives, but once we consider rocks outside our light-cone, it is hard to see any reason to ascribe positive or negative value to them. With this view of the distribution of value (all of one kind), it seems natural to presume that there will be a very wide class of true beliefs that just don't have any value at all. Trivial truths are outside the light-cone of our choices and of our lives.

1.5 Implications

If we accept the Distinct Object view, there are several implications for the investigation of the value of knowledge. First and foremost, this undercuts a common defense of the universality of the value of knowledge. If we do not give knowledge its own special kind of value, it is much harder to claim that there is any value at all which accrues to each and every case of knowledge of trivial truths. Second, it shapes the way that we go on investigating what Pritchard calls the 'primary value problem.' We must be clear that we are looking for a kind of final epistemic value, rather than instrumental epistemic value. There is no problem in explaining how knowledge has instrumental epistemic value: it always helps to acquire other bits of knowledge. If epistemic value is simply value which accrues to epistemic objects, then explaining how knowledge has more value than true belief need not make reference to some special kind of value all on its own, having to do merely with truth-conduciveness. It opens up the investigation to broader explanations of value, not restricting us to the traditionally 'epistemic.' For example, one direction that epistemology has recently taken is the investigation of understanding as well as knowledge. With an eye to the history of science, an account

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23 In his "Recent Work on Epistemic Value," he writes that "Given that we clearly do value knowledge more than mere true belief, the fact that there is no obvious explanation of why this should be so creates a problem.3 We will call the issue of why knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief, the primary value problem." (Pritchard 86) This is to distinguish between investigation of this value differential and other possible problems such as why knowledge has more value than any proper subset of its parts. In this dissertation I will take 'the value problem' in the more general, primary sense: as the problem of determining whether and how knowledge has final value over mere true belief. Since I do not assume that knowledge has this final value, I use the term in a slightly different way from Pritchard, but this should cause no confusion. Investigating the value problem is investigating the final value of knowledge, if it exists.

24 It also seems that knowledge nearly always has many other kinds of instrumental value as well. It is power, after all.
of understanding might want to be able to explain how it is that, for example, Newton exhibited understanding in his *Principia Mathematica*. One might worry that, if understanding is to be considered a valuable state, one can have understanding by means of a network of beliefs all of which are substantially false. If truth-conduciveness is taken as the measure of value in things epistemic, then it is hard to see how there is value in complete, powerful theories that are nonetheless false. While one might claim that a theory like this gets its truth-related value in its true observation-language predictions, it seems odd to say that the language in terms of theoretical objects does not constitute an epistemically valuable object independent of its observation-language predictions.

Turning to the Distinct Object view instead of the frequently assumed Distinct Value view opens up questions about whether knowledge is in fact finally valuable, and also undercuts one of the easiest ways to defend its universal final value. Since these are common presuppositions in the literature, attention to what the term 'epistemic value' ought to mean already shows that value-driven epistemology can benefit from careful attention to the terms that they utilize.

With this established, I now turn to the examination of some particular accounts of the final value of knowledge that attempt to explain this value in terms of features of the agent's cognitive character. Since virtue-theoretic terminology is traditionally considered to be normatively laden, virtue epistemologists are mindful of the role of value in their theories. In my second chapter, I examine Zagzebski, Riggs, Pritchard, and Greco and argue that their virtue-theoretic epistemologies cannot ground universal final value for knowledge.
2. Virtue and the Value of Knowledge

2.0 Introduction

The recent epistemological discussion of the 'value problem' stems from the fact that many recent accounts of knowledge, particularly reliabilism, cannot account for the intuition that knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief. For example, process reliabilism holds that knowledge is a true belief that arises from a reliable process. However, it does not seem that such a belief has any more value than a true belief that one arrives at by accident. Theorists like Linda Zagzebski have argued that, just as a tasty espresso is valuable regardless of whether it came from a reliable machine, a true belief is good regardless of the process that gave rise to it (Zagzebski 2003 p. 14). The fact that reliabilism cannot account for the special value of knowledge over and above true belief is a problem for the theory. As Kvanvig suggests, an account of knowledge needs to explain both the nature and the value of knowledge, since "[a]n account of the nature of knowledge incompatible with its value would be problematic, as would an explanation of the value of knowledge that assumed an inadequate conception of the nature of knowledge" (2003 p. x). Since these dimensions of knowledge hang together to some degree, attention to potential shortcomings in reliabilism's explanation of the value of knowledge has pushed theorists towards other options.

25 In his book The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding, Jonathan Kvanvig goes so far as to argue that no account of knowledge can account for the value of knowledge over mere true belief, and instead argues that we look to understanding to find epistemic value.

26 Pritchard distinguishes between different value problems. For example, in his “Recent Work on Epistemic Value”, he claims that the ‘primary value problem’ is “the issue of why knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief” (86), while the ‘secondary value problem’ “concerns the issue of why knowledge is more valuable than any proper subset of its parts” (87). In this paper, I use ‘the value problem’ to refer to the primary value problem.

27 Note that I am not here endorsing the espresso machine argument against reliabilism to which reliabilist responses have been given (e.g. Goldman and Olsson 2003). I am merely indicating the reasons behind the shift to virtue-theoretic accounts of knowledge. Since it will become clear that I find the account of value in these theories unsatisfactory, their purporting to answer to the value problem means that they fail according to their own goals. If a reliabilist rejects the universal final value of knowledge, then the espresso machine argument will cause them no worry.
This problem has led many epistemologists to turn to the consideration of the cognitive agent herself for a solution. Accounts of knowledge which give a role to the agent’s cognitive character avoid the problem of the value of the additional components of knowledge over and above true belief being ‘swamped’ by the value of truth. For the reliabilist, the problem was that the presence of truth seemed to hold all the value. A theory which has a role for the cognitive agent, however, opens the possibility of value that accrues to that agent in cases of knowledge but not in cases of accidental true belief. For example, if beliefs that are a result of virtuous action are more valuable than beliefs that are not the result of such action, and knowledge necessarily involves some exercise of cognitive virtue,\(^28\) then we can understand why knowledge is more valuable than (mere) true belief.

While attention to valuable epistemic states and the investigation of the agent herself are both welcome, the appeal to cognitive character as it currently exists in the literature is insufficient to solve the value problem. In order to show this, I take up several recent agent-based accounts of the value of knowledge, indicate their problems, and explain what these problems suggest for further research. I first take up Zagzebski's motivational account of the value of knowledge. By showing the problems with finding this value in the love of truth itself, I turn attention to accounts of the value of knowledge in which not the motivation, but rather the end of cognitive activity plays a central role. In particular, Riggs argues that one 'deserves credit' for knowledge or that it is an 'achievement.' I argue that the 'credit' account is straightforwardly incorrect, and that the 'achievement' account is stronger, but still problematic. I then turn to Greco's view which locates the value in two different sources: the intrinsic value of the virtuous act and the act's contribution to human happiness. I first show that these collapse into the single value of human happiness, and then argue against explaining the value of knowledge with a unified eudaimonistic account. After discarding these options, I argue that realizing the problems

\(^{28}\) For example, Greco holds that “knowledge is a kind of success through virtuous agency” (Greco 2009 318). I will examine his view in detail below.
with a unified eudaimonistic account challenge the assumption that knowledge or understanding is of universal final value (i.e., that it is an end for everyone).

The reason that I call these accounts 'agent-based' is that they all call attention to the cognitive agent in their explanations of the nature and value of knowledge. Zagzebski points to the motivational features of the agent, Riggs asks whether the agent can be credited with the belief (we can understand 'achievements' as features of an agent), and Greco finds knowledge in the action of a virtuous cognitive character. Reliabilism, for example, is not agent-based because agency plays no role in whether a 'process' is reliable. That is not to say that the reliabilist and virtue-theoretic traditions in epistemology are fundamentally opposed. In fact, Sosa's early suggestion in his 1980 paper "The Raft and the Pyramid" is that we consider justification in terms of intellectual virtues, or "stable dispositions for belief acquisition, through their greater contribution toward getting us to the truth" (Sosa 1980 p. 23). This is an attempt to buttress a reliablist story about knowledge.

While process reliabilism holds that it is sufficient for knowledge that a true belief is the product of a reliable process, some virtue-theoretic accounts go further in claiming that the true belief must be attributable to the agent in some way. Baehr (2011) makes the distinction between 'weak' and 'strong' virtue epistemology. 'Strong' virtue epistemology holds that some form of virtue is a necessary condition on knowledge, while 'weak' virtue epistemology conceives of virtue as holding a secondary or background role in traditional epistemology due to its not being necessary for knowledge, epistemology's central concept.

In this chapter I will investigate the prominent 'strong' accounts according to which some positive aspect of the agent's cognitive character is necessary for knowledge. If an account of knowledge contains necessary reference to some valuable state of character, this seems promising for investigation into the value of knowledge.
2.1 The Motivation for Knowledge

In her book *Virtues of the Mind: an Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge*, Linda Zagzebski presents a general theory of virtues and then applies this theory to resolve contemporary epistemological concerns. On the way she details her view on the value of knowledge. According to Zagzebski, a virtue is “a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end” (137). For her, virtue has both a motivation and a reliability component. A motivation is “a persistent tendency to be moved by a motive of a certain kind” (132), and a motive is “an emotion or feeling that initiates and directs actions towards an end” (131). So, to have a virtue, one must persistently be moved by the right emotions and feelings towards the right ends (in this case, toward the end of knowledge).

Zagzebski holds that knowledge requires intellectual virtue. As she defines it, “Knowledge is a state of cognitive contact with reality arising out of acts of intellectual virtue” (270), where an act of intellectual virtue is as follows:

An act of intellectual virtue \( A \) is an act that arises from the motivational component of \( A \), is something a person with virtue \( A \) would (probably) do in the circumstances, is successful in achieving the end of the \( A \) motivation, and is such that the agent acquires a true belief (cognitive contact with reality) through these features of the act. (ibid.)

According to this view, hitting the truth reliably is not enough for knowledge. One must have the right motivations. In fact, it is in these very motivations that Zagzebski locates value.

The interesting move that Zagzebski makes is to claim that “the goodness of intellectual virtues is intrinsic and independent of any good not based on the agent’s motivations” (209). This is because

29 While it is controversial, I will not directly address the reliability component in this paper since that is more appropriate in an investigation of the adequacy of Zagzebski’s account of the nature of knowledge while I am interested in the adequacy of her account of the value of knowledge.
“the motive for knowledge is an intrinsic good that is not dependent for its goodness upon its relations to other goods, not even to the good of the possession of knowledge” (ibid.). Her defense of this position is based on an ‘appeal to experience’ where she points to the feeling one gets when one meets someone noble of character. She writes of the “‘glow’ of nobility or fineness of character” (83). She also explains that as she has “occasionally seen in a longtime member of a contemplative religious order, there may be an inner peace that can be perceived to be good directly, not simply because it can be explained on the theoretical level as a component of eudaimonia” (ibid.).

With this support for the idea of the intrinsic value of motivations in hand, she goes on to claim that the reliability component of virtue derives its value from the motivation. One argument for this position seems to be reference to a passage from Locke in which he indicates the pleasure inherent in the mere attempt to get knowledge (204-205). Zagzebski takes this to demonstrate that Locke sees the motivation for knowledge as valuable apart from knowledge itself. A more straightforward reading of the text locates the value of intellectual exertion in the pleasure that it causes, which is quite distinct from grounding this value in pure motivation. Given that the appeal to Locke does not seem to do much work, the support for the claim that the value of knowledge lies in the pure-hearted motivation boils down to the intuitive appeal that properly motivated individuals have. Consideration of the types of individuals with the suggested type of motivation is supposed to be sufficient to be reasonably sure that their motivational state has the final value that we have been seeking in value-driven epistemology.

While this is an interesting proposal, I think that locating the highest value of cognitive life in a motivation is problematic, and that the problems this view has outweigh the prima facie intellectual attractiveness of members of contemplative religious orders. It is entirely possible that our unanalyzed evaluations of these sorts of individuals is mistaken, and that something else besides their pure motivations can account for the value of their knowledge.
One way to see a problem with this sort of view is to consider the cognitive situation of a virtuous inquirer who has read Zagzebski’s book and is aware of the source of value. Such an inquirer would know that the motivation for knowledge is where value lies. It seems that awareness of this structure would eliminate that very motivation. On the plausible supposition that awareness of the final value of an object motivates an agent to achieve that object in lieu of others, awareness that the motivation is where the final value lies means that the agent will endeavor to achieve that motivation alone. If the internal state of being properly motivated is the end, then the end outside the motivation (i.e. the state of knowledge) cannot have final value. This means that it cannot be an end. If a motivation must be for something outside itself, it seems that treating a motivation as the source of final value renders that motivation inert, and no motivation at all. In the context of the motive under consideration here, if the inquirer realizes that the motivation is the primary object of value, then the importance of actually getting true beliefs fades, and the motivation to get them correspondingly dies. It seems that the virtuous agent should value the cognitive ends, as these are the reasons that motivations can be considered good.

To come at this from another direction, it seems that the reason that we want to cultivate good motivations is that we want to have better access to the ends of those motivations. Focusing on motivations as the source of value encourages passivity, and privileges the motivational state of the agent over that agent's actual level of cognitive interface with the world. Take two agents, one of which has a true, committed motivation for knowledge but who has mental blocks which restrain her from actually learning very much about the world. Take another agent with the same motivational state but who achieves a deep and broad understanding of the human condition and the workings of the physical world. It seems odd to say that both of these agents have equal claim to the true item of epistemic value.
These considerations cast doubt on the veracity of the impression that one might get when evaluating a pure-hearted monk and determining that his motivational state alone accounts for the value of his knowledge. If we take motives as justified by the value of their ends, then this sort of account seems to put the cart before the horse. So, if the motivation to get the truth is not the place to look for value, then the ends are the next reasonable place to look. What are the ends of our cognitive endeavors, and why are they better than mere lucky true belief?

2.2 Credit for True Belief

In an attempt to understand post-Gettier epistemology’s fixation with the exclusion of luck from cases of knowledge, Riggs concludes that the reason behind this epistemological project is our concern with whether or not the cognitive agent deserves credit for her true belief (Riggs 2007). He thinks that we should understand knowledge as true belief that the agent “sufficiently” deserves credit for holding truly. For example, if I see a sheep in a field and form the belief "there is a sheep in that field," I get credit for this belief because I arrived at it, truly, through my own action. However, if I am looking at Chisholm's, shaggy, sheep-like dog and form the same belief, while unbeknownst to me there is a sheep hiding behind a rock in the field rendering my belief true, I cannot be credited with believing truly. If I found out about the reason my belief was true, I would realize it was just a matter of luck, and I should not get any credit for being right.

Riggs argues that such an account can make sense of why knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief. The knowing agent ‘deserves credit’ for her true belief, whereas the agent who accidentally believes the truth does not. If, in all cases of knowledge, one deserves credit, and if deserving credit is a valuable state of affairs, then all cases of knowledge are more valuable than cases of mere true belief. This also neatly diagnoses our unease in attributing knowledge to the epistemically
lucky agents in all Gettier cases: while their beliefs are certainly correct, it seems odd to call them knowledgeable. This is simply not something for which they deserve in these kinds of cases.

Explaining the value of knowledge in terms of deserving credit is open to a couple of objections, one of which Riggs himself acknowledges. First, talking in terms of 'credit' seems to commit one to some sort of dependence of the value of knowledge on the recognition of the community. Many times objects are valuable but do not get credit. John Kennedy Toole tried and failed to get his work recognized, and in his depression killed himself at the age of 31. It would seem very odd to claim that his novel *A Confederacy of Dunces* only gained its value when it received the Pulitzer Prize 12 years after his death; it is much more natural to say that it was valuable the whole time, and merely undervalued during his lifetime. Credit is something that is given, correctly and sometimes incorrectly. If we are trying to find a value for knowledge that one gets in all cases, then credit seems a shaky foundation on which to build it. This is similar to Aristotle's insistence in Book 1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that honor cannot be the highest good: "[Honor], however, appears to be too superficial to be what we are seeking; for it seems to depend more on those who honor than on the one honored, whereas we intuitively believe that the good is something of our own and hard to take from us." (4) If we modify this to be a discussion of the highest cognitive good, it makes sense to say that cognitive honor cannot be the highest good because too easily taken away from the agent. The shifting opinions of those evaluating us ought not endanger our possession of what is of intellectual value to us.

One might counter that while given credit may vary, deserved credit does not. If a community incorrectly doles out credit, then this just means that they are insufficiently tracking desert. In response to the Toole case, one might say that while *A Confederacy of Dunces* certainly deserved a great deal of credit, the vagaries of the publication world never allowed it to be given what it deserved. This leads to the second problem with a credit account of the value of knowledge: that it does not actually explain
anything. To say that something deserves credit is to point out a *symptom* of a thing's being valuable rather than explaining the value itself. Credit ought to be given to those who deserve it. A natural reading of what it means for something to deserve credit is for that thing to be valuable in some way. If this is the case, then we have simply found a new way to make the same claim: "knowledge deserves credit" is synonymous with "knowledge is valuable." The circumference of this circle is certainly too small to be illuminating.

One might argue that the language of 'credit' avoids this objection, since we only deserve credit for things that we *bring about* with our own agency. This certainly has more content than if we assume that to deserve credit is to be valuable. On this supposition, 'S deserves credit for x' means 'x is valuable and S brought about x.' We must additionally assume that the *value* of x is in part explained by the fact that S brought it about. I will address this further below in my discussion of the value of achievements, but for now let us grant these assumptions to the credit theorist. If this is the case, then we deserve credit for a true belief only if we bring it about with our own agency, and this has more content than merely reasserting that knowledge is valuable. This would locate the value of knowledge in the fact that the true belief is something that we brought about ourselves rather than something that we were *given* by chance. However, it seems arguable that we can get credit for things that we did not bring about with our own agency. For example, it seems we can be praised for our 'natural virtues.' As Hume claims in the *Treatise*:

> Those, who represent the distinction betwixt natural abilities and moral virtues as very material, may say, that the former are entirely involuntary, and have therefore no merit attending them, as having no dependance on liberty and free-will. But to this I answer, *first*, that many of those qualities, which all moralists, especially the antients, comprehend under the title of moral virtues, are equally involuntary and necessary, with the qualities of the judgment and imagination. Of this nature are constancy, fortitude, magnanimity; and, in short, all the qualities which form the *great* man. I might say the same, in some degree, of the others; it being almost
impossible for the mind to change its character in any considerable article, or cure itself of a passionate or splenetic temper, when they are natural to it. The greater degree there is of these blameable qualities, the more vicious they become, and yet they are the less voluntary. (Hume 388)

A naturally quick wit seems like it is valuable, and its products even seem deserving of credit. This is in a large part not something that we act to bring about.

To return to the epistemic domain, it is clear that, for a large subset of our true beliefs, agency does not play a clear role. When someone, gifted by nature with 20/20 vision, sees a tree on a clear day and instantly forms the belief "there is a tree over there," she does not actively participate significantly in this formation. Such a belief isn't formed actively, it rather happens to one. Even so, such a reliably formed belief does not lack in value due to its automatic nature. Additionally, it still seems as if the person to some degree deserves credit for the belief. If so, then once again 'credit' does not seem a useful place to look for an explanation of the value of knowledge. In any case, even if we reject the idea that involuntarily formed beliefs (which constitute the majority of our belief-sets) can hold special value, the real philosophical weight is being carried by the concept of 'agency.' In this case we should turn to the language of 'achievement' as it better captures the concept to which we can attribute the extra value of knowledge.

2.3. Achieving Knowledge

Since discussion of 'credit' seems to be a false start, it is good that Riggs also uses the language of 'achievement' in discussing the value of knowledge. Merely true belief may be something that one gets by accident, through no use of one's own agency. Knowledge is a true belief that one 'achieves.'
Since achieving something is more valuable than merely receiving something accidentally, knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief. This is a view that is espoused directly by several theorists, including Riggs, Greco, and Pritchard. In his paper "Why Epistemologists are So Down on Their Luck," Riggs claims that "[I]f knowing that p always entails that one deserves credit for having achieved a true belief, then this introduces something besides true belief which is valuable. [...] deserving credit [...] is a further fact that confers additional value on the state of affairs of which it is a component" (15). In Greco's most recent articulation of his virtue-theoretic approach to knowledge, he claims that:

Regarding the value of knowledge, we may note that, in general, we value success from ability over mere lucky success. Our preference for knowledge over mere true belief may now be understood as an instance of this more general valuing. [...] Plausibly, we value knowledge (as we value achievement in general) 'for itself,' over and above its practical or instrumental value. (2012, p. 2)

Pritchard argues for what he calls the 'Strong Achievement Thesis,' according to which a genuine achievement "either involves the overcoming of a significant obstacle or the exercise of a significant level of ability" (Haddock et. al. 2010 p. 70). He claims that "[b]y tying our account of understanding to a conception of cognitive achievement, an epistemic standing which has been shown to be itself of distinctive value, we are able to go much further in this regard and offer a concrete explanation of why this epistemic standing is valuable in this way" (ibid. 83). These sorts of views seek to solve the value problem by appeal to some sort of pretheoretic preference for states of affairs that are 'achieved' through one's agency. While the focus on the exercise of the agent's cognitive abilities is a welcome shift and a fruitful direction for epistemology to take, I do not believe that appeal to the concept of achievement provides an adequate account of the universal final value of knowledge.
A first problem to raise with the achievement account of the value of knowledge is that achievement alone does not seem to add very much value. Consider Riggs' own example of saving a child from a burning building. Here is seems natural to locate the vast majority of the value in this situation in the saving of the child. The fact that it is an 'achievement' merely nets the savior a badge of courage, and we certainly wouldn't want to include the value of any social honors in our evaluation of the saving of the child itself as they are clearly external to it. If we take this analogy into the epistemic case, one might think that having the truth of the matter is the bulk of the value, and that achieving this truth is a thin achievement-icing on a thick truth-cake. Now, if the value problem merely requires us to find any amount of value at all for knowledge over and above true belief, then this would solve it. However, it would be an odd result that knowledge is just barely more valuable than true belief. On the face of it, a view according to which knowledge is just a bit more valuable than mere true belief does not seem to answer the value problem, which we took to be a major challenge to contemporary epistemology.

Pritchard has argued that the little added value of achievements does not threaten this account of the value of knowledge\(^{30}\) since "the claim is only that successes, \textit{qua} achievements, have final value -- i.e. it is is claim about prima facie or \textit{pro tanto} value, and not all-things-considered value" (Haddock et. al. 2010 p. 67). If this is the case, then, while knowledge's being achieved really does not add much over and above the value of believing the truth, if we merely consider the fact that is achieved we must admit that it is of \textit{some} positive value. This sort of response assumes that the condition of success in answering the value problem is finding any non-zero amount of positive value that knowledge has over and above mere true belief.

\(^{30}\) Pritchard argues that it is understanding, rather than knowledge, which is the bearer of 'distinct' final value, but this is immaterial to my present point. What is at issue is the account according to which a cognitive state gets final value due to its status as an achievement.
The issue with this line of argument is that it fails to explain why the value problem is itself a problem. If we are to take an account of the value of knowledge over and above true belief as a serious consideration when establishing our theory of the very nature of knowledge, then the intuition of value which drives this investigation must be a forceful one. It must strike us when reflecting on a great many paradigmatic cases of knowledge that these are valuable states in which to be, and the relative paucity of the value of corresponding states of mere true belief must be equally striking. It is hard to see what exactly could have started this major turn in epistemology if the intuitive value of knowledge over true belief can be so very thin. A solution as weak as Pritchard's is threatens to undermine the entire investigation by rendering its founding question trivial. That is, a result like this, that the thin value of achievement is all that knowledge bears over the value of true belief, threatens rather to undermine the intuition of knowledge's value than to validate and explain it.

One might try to claim that there is nothing thin about the extra value in the above example of rescuing children, since it requires courage to achieve the rescue. While locating the value in the courageous character of the savior may seem promising, this would be to move beyond the pure achievement view and into a happiness-based view, since it would involve claiming that it is not bare achievement that carries value, but some state of character that makes the achievement possible. To locate the value in the achievement itself would be to point just beyond the state of affairs of the saved children to the fact that the savior achieved this result using his own abilities. To locate the value in courage requires bringing further facts into the picture, including the stable dispositions of the individual under consideration. This requires attention to large patterns of behavior, the developmental history of the individual, and predictions of how the individual would behave in similar situations, all of which go far beyond the simple question of whether she achieved the rescue or did it inadvertently or by accident. In the case of knowledge, this would involve a claim stronger than Riggs' that
knowledge is valuable because achieved; it would require saying that knowledge is valuable because achieved *due to some special state of character necessary for knowledge*. We will see a view like this when we turn to eudaimonistic accounts below. For now, it suffices to note that such a move takes us beyond a pure achievement view of the value of knowledge since it is not merely the achievement itself, but rather the state of character of the agent, which provides the extra value for knowledge.

A further problem with an achievement account of the value of knowledge is that it also seems that there can be achievements with negative value. This explanation of the value of knowledge requires that we accept that achievements always have positive final value. In fact, in some cases it seems that an achievement can be even *less* valuable (i.e. more negatively valuable) than affecting the same result by accident. Allow me to show this by means of an example. While the value under consideration in this and the following examples is not epistemic, recall that in the first chapter I argued against conceiving of epistemic value as value of a distinct type. Therefore, investigation of the structure of value (understood in terms of the Distinct Object view) in these simple examples should be illuminating as regards epistemic achievement as well. Imagine that Reginald is a master of computer deception, and carefully plots to steal money from unsuspecting online bankers with a malicious program. He ends up with thousands of dollars that should belong to the innocent parties from which he has stolen. Intuitively, this is a disvaluable action. Now, imagine that Yusef, in using an online banking account, inadvertently stumbles upon an error and ends up with thousands of dollars that should belong to other innocent parties. Intuitively, this is a disvaluable situation. People are deprived of their property. However, it seems that this is *less* disvaluable than the situation in which Reginald achieves the misallocation of the money. If the former situation is more disvaluable, and the relevant difference is Reginald's achievement, then achievements can have negative value. The achievement account of the value of knowledge was relying on the intuitive judgment that achievements bear
positive final value, and examples like the above serve to invalidate this intuition.

One possible response to this sort of objection would be to once again fall back on the value of achievement *qua* achievement. If we use the distinction between prima facie and all-things-considered value, then we can attempt to salvage the achievement view in the face of examples like the above. While the situation in the Reginald example is intuitively worse than the situation in the Yusef example, Pritchard could claim that Reginald's purposeful acquisition of money is more valuable than Yusef's accidental acquisition of money *insofar as it is an achievement*. Even though it is an evil action, it is something that Reginald *achieves*, and if we ignore the fact that it is a theft we can locate positive value here. If we step back and evaluate the entire situation, the disvalue of the harms to his victims (and perhaps the relevant features of his character) will likely outweigh the positive value of the achievement, but this doesn't mean that the achievement itself was disvaluable.

Such a response pits the general intuition that achievement is valuable against the intuition that negative achievements are disvaluable. In order to arbitrate here, we need to go deeper than these first-blush evaluations. In his own work, Pritchard distinguishes between the Weak and Strong Achievement Theses. In his attempt to give an account of the value of understanding, he claims that, on the Strong Achievement Thesis, for an action to count as an achievement it must either demonstrate the exercise of a significant level of ability or involve the overcoming of a significant obstacle. We can safely leave aside the important and interesting questions of how exactly to read the term 'significant' here (significant to whom? significant in what way? how significant?), and focus instead on this deeper analysis of why exactly an achievement is valuable. In distinguishing strong achievements from weak ones, we can isolate the features of an action that can make it more valuable when (strongly) achieved. These features are skill and obstacle-conquering. To maintain the basic tenet of the achievement view of the value of knowledge that achievements bear positive final value, such an account requires us to
maintain that exhibiting skill or overcoming obstacles bears positive final value. This in turn gives us more nuanced tools with which to analyze the Reginald and Yusef examples above. First, it does seem clear that Reginald must demonstrate significant skill to plant his program and extract money from his unwitting victims. Not everyone has this sort of ability. Second, we can easily claim that Reginald overcomes obstacles in this action. Figures of authority purposely place barriers in the way of the sort of crime that he is committing. The question that arises is: do his action's status as skilled and obstacle-conquering clearly bear positive final value?

As regards his skill, it is entirely unclear whether we should call this positively valuable. Skill at deception does not seem at all to be a positive feature considered in itself. It is precisely Reginald's skill in deception which seems to render his situation more intuitively disvaluable than Yusef's. If this is the case, then under this more detailed understanding of what exactly an achievement is, the possibility of disvaluable skills casts doubt on the idea that all achievement is finally valuable. Skill is always skill at performing some task, and the value of a skill is going to be connected to the value of the task under consideration. An agent's being skilled at deception or murder, intuitively, are disvaluable states of affairs. To fall back on the response that these skills are valuable *qua* skills is to circle back to the intuition that achievements are finally valuable by themselves with which we started.

It should be noted that Pritchard himself seems to abandon this intuition once he distinguishes between Weak and Strong Achievements:

> [i]n order to see this, we just need to note that the easy 'achievements' in play could well be of great all-things-considered value and yet they would equally demonstrate the intended point. Perhaps, for example, there is a great practical value that accrues to raising one's arm in this context (e.g. one gets identified as the prizewinner, and so is awarded a prize that would have otherwise been missed through lack of identification). Still, there is no temptation to suppose that the mere raising of one's arm in normal circumstances, *qua* weak achievement, is of final value. The issue, then, is not that these 'achievements' are in themselves lacking in value
simpliciter, but more specifically that they are lacking in final value. (Haddock et. al. 2010, p. 71)

The intuition that any success must be finally valuable because it is brought about by the activity of the agent, at least insofar as it is so brought about, has clearly gone by the wayside here. Without such an intuition in play, it is hard to see what justifies the claim that any exercise of skill is finally valuable. Therefore, even such responses to the Reginald case as the claim that what is disvaluable here is merely the harms he is causing to his victims are beside the point. The view that wicked skill is still positively valuable skill remains unjustified.

One consideration in favor of the view that exercise of skill is always valuable would be a view according to which agential development or success is taken as always positively valuable. From the agent's perspective, becoming excellent and performing excellently might always be a positive good, though when we take wider values into consideration (such as possible harms to the agents around her), these might outweigh the positive value of the skilled activity. On this analysis, while Reginald certainly harms others, and the situation is a net negative in value, one might think that excellence in deception is still excellence, and that there is some positive value here, at least from Reginald's perspective.

This response would try to claim that all skilled activity is valuable, at least from the skilled agent's perspective. I do not think that this is the case. Such a view ignores the possibility of self-destructive skilled behavior. Take the adept and experienced methamphetamine addict who knows all of the best places to steal valuable objects, sell the stolen goods, and buy more methamphetamine. The addict is constantly exhibiting skill, but even from the addict's perspective it hardly makes sense to think of this skilled activity as valuable. One might respond that such an addict simply has a very skewed perspective, and values fueling her addiction more than maintaining her health and safety. But,
imagine a situation (likely more common than not) in which the addict does not endorse her addiction. She wants to cease to fuel it, but is still compelled to, and performs many skilled actions under this compulsion. In such a case we are hard-pressed to say that, from an agential perspective, this skilled activity has positive final value simply because it is skilled. From this agent's perspective, her skilful actions are clearly disvaluable. Even a perspectival view of value cannot save the universal final value of skilful action.

However, even if we cannot locate universal final value in the exercise of 'significant' skill, perhaps we can save the idea that knowledge has final value due to its status as an achievement by focus on the fact that achievement can also require the overcoming of some significant obstacle. If overcoming obstacles is always finally valuable, and knowledge-qua-achievement always involves the overcoming of some obstacle, then knowledge will always have this special kind of value that mere true belief may not have. The sorts of situations that justify the inclusion of the overcoming of obstacles into our understanding of 'achievement' are those in which the activity under consideration is not particularly skilled, but the performance of which is very difficult for the agent due to the particularities of her situation. For example, walking down the street is not a skilled activity for most of us, but can present a significant challenge for someone who is recovering from a serious spine injury. We would call such a person's walking an 'achievement,' but would not necessarily call it a skilled performance.

In the epistemic domain, obstacles can take the form of misleading evidence or difficult environments. My forming the simple true belief that there is a red apple on the table under normal conditions does not seem to involve the overcoming of any significant obstacles, but my forming the true belief that this apple which appears green to me is in fact red by using my knowledge of the colored lights in the room and inferences about wavelengths does appear to overcome difficult
epistemic obstacles. Note that, if we are locating the final value of knowledge in the fact that, as an achievement, it involves the overcoming of obstacles, then the latter and not the former belief has this final value. This would mean that not all cases of knowledge have the value under consideration. A defender of such a view could respond that automatic or 'animal' beliefs are not bearers of any special final value over and above mere true belief, but that only more 'reflective' knowledge carries this honor. This seems to be a perfectly fine response to the value problem, and the mere fact that perceptual beliefs are not supremely valuable doesn't invalidate the approach immediately. This line does, however, rely on the intuitive value of the overcoming of obstacles, and it is unclear if such overcoming is always of positive final value.

Consider first the Reginald case above. Figures of authority have constructed intentional obstacles to hamper the efforts of people like Reginald to acquire what is not theirs. Reginald overcomes these obstacles, thereby stealing the money of his victims. Intuitively, it does not appear that obstacles of this sort should be overcome. If one is skeptical of the intentions and effects of contemporary banking structures, we can instead take the example of a thief's stealing a bag of money from an innocent pedestrian. This involves overcoming the obstacle formed by the pedestrian's defensive struggles. Is overcoming this obstacle of positive final value? It is difficult to claim that it is. Just as above, we can fall back on the view that we ought to evaluate the overcoming of obstacles from the perspective of the overcomer to avoid the problem of wicked overcoming, but this agential perspective still falls afoul of the possibility of self-destructive obstacle overcoming.

One final problem with this approach to the value of knowledge is that is not clear that knowledge is always an achievement. Even if we take Pritchard's view, according to which it is understanding rather than knowledge that bears distinctive final value, it seems that we can have cases of genuine understanding, in which the agent has all of the seemingly valuable features of
understanding without having actually achieved this state. If this is possible, then it cannot be the state's being achieved which generates value for understanding. Since it seems, on the face of it, that understanding is more likely to require achievement than knowledge (since, for example, the knowledge that there is a red apple in front of me does not comfortably bear the title of 'achievement'), if we can give examples of valuable, non-achieved understanding, then we have raised a very difficult problem for this account of epistemic value.

I think that such an example can be vividly demonstrated. Take the example of Neo, the protagonist in *The Matrix*. In the film, he is plugged into a machine and various skills and bits of knowledge are uploaded to his mind directly. This is how he goes from being a mild-mannered hacker to a skilled fighter when he opens his eyes and murmurs "I know kung-fu." Now, in this situation, it is clear that he gains a great deal of knowledge about kung-fu. It also seems fairly clear that he attains the correct kind of inferential ability among his individual kung-fu beliefs that amounts to his understanding kung-fu. This seems to be a valuable state. However, he certainly did not achieve this state, as it was merely injected into his brain without any work on his part. He certainly did not overcome obstacles or demonstrate skill in his submitting to understanding-injections. If Neo understands kung-fu, and this understanding has the value that we typically associate with the state, and he did not achieve it, then any account of the value of understanding that leans on achievement either cannot explain the value of Neo's understanding, or must use a different account of the value of *his* understanding versus the account that they give for all other 'normal' instances of understanding. This leaves their theory either incomplete or conceptually unparsimonious, unable to give a univocal account of the value that accrues to instances of understanding.

Once we consider what exactly it would mean for achievements, considered as requiring either the exhibition of skill or overcoming of obstacles, to have positive final value, it is clear that such a
view is untenable. Proponents of an agent-centered solution to the value problem will have to look elsewhere. Some have proposed views according to which it isn't the achieving of knowledge itself, but the requisite character of the agent that bears the value over and above mere true belief. We turn to such views next.

2.4. The Flourishing Cognitive Life

There is a third way that agent-focused accounts of the value of knowledge have tried to answer the value problem. Instead of arguing that pure motivation or achievement itself bears this special value, some accounts see human cognitive excellence as valuable in its participation in human flourishing in general. If we can appeal to knowledge's constitutive role in something like a cognitive 'good life' (or 'the good life' in general), then we have found a special value for knowledge over and above mere true belief.

John Greco has argued that we ought to understand knowledge as “a kind of success through virtuous agency” (Greco 2009 p. 318). This means that, while mere true belief is something that one can possess with any sort of irresponsible cognitive activity, knowledge requires good cognitive character and action. It is important to note that in cases of knowledge, one believes truly because of one's cognitive character. This condition is not satisfied if someone happens to have good cognitive character and to accidentally stumble upon the truth or get Gettiered. For example, when the good detective determines the identity of the murderer, this is because of his skilled observation and careful abductive reasoning. In contrast, if a clumsy detective takes a wild guess and discovers the perp through dumb luck, the truth of the belief is not due to any cognitive quality of the agent. On this account of knowledge, the former detective would know who committed the crime while the latter would merely truly believe who the perpetrator was.
Greco argues that the requirement on knowledge that the belief arise from virtuous character and action shows how knowledge is more valuable than true belief. In fact, he argues that the extra value of knowledge on such an account is twofold:

But now an answer to the value problem falls out of this account straight away. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle makes a distinction between (a) achieving some end by luck or accident, and (b) achieving the end through the exercise of one’s abilities (or virtues). It is only the latter kind of action, Aristotle argues, that is both intrinsically valuable and constitutive of human flourishing. ‘Human good,’ he writes, ‘turns out to be activity of soul exhibiting excellence’ (*Nicomachean Ethics*, § I.7). In this discussion Aristotle is clearly concerned with intellectual virtue as well as moral virtue: his position is that the successful exercise of one’s intellectual virtues is both intrinsically good and constitutive of human flourishing. (2009 p. 318)

Here Greco is appealing to the concept of eudaimonia. In the *Ethics*, Aristotle claims early on that eudaimonia is the highest human good, since he argues that it is the only thing valued for itself. The Greek term 'eudaimonia' is notoriously difficult to translate, with the common 'happiness' bringing to mind incorrect connotations of a temporary feeling, while eudaimonia is supposed to be a long-term, stable, life-completing activity. I prefer 'fulfillment,' as this sits well with Aristotle's teleological metaphysics according to which achieving eudaimonia is fulfilling most completely what it is to be human. In any case, we should be completely clear that, in appealing to the Aristotelian notion of eudaimonia, we are well within a very particular theoretical framework, and should be cautious in reaching to terms like this offhand for support of our contemporary theories without further reflection on the baggage that may accompany them.

The first thing to note is that it is theoretically unparsimonious to hold that virtuous action has intrinsic value all of its own, while at the same time holding to an eudaimonistic framework. For Aristotle, all features of human life had value only in view of the 'highest good' (or ultimate end) of
eudaimonia. This is precisely the argument that he uses to *establish* that eudaimonia is the highest human good:

> Now happiness, more than anything else, seems complete without qualification. For we always choose it because of itself, never because of something else. Honor, pleasure, understanding, and every virtue we certainly choose because of themselves, since we would choose each of them even if it had no further result; but we also choose them for the sake of happiness, supposing that through them we shall be happy. Happiness, by contrast, no one ever chooses for their sake, or for the sake of anything else at all. (Aristotle, NE, Book 1, Chapter 7, Section 5)

Once eudaimonia is in the picture, it is superfluous to bring in other sources of value. In particular, on such a theory, to call the value of some action 'intrinsic' runs afoul of the very value-system upon which one is relying to solve the value problem. If eudaimonia is the highest human good, everything else is done for the sake of it. All other valuable things only have their value by means of a relation to eudaimonia. If we take 'intrinsic value' to be value possessed independently of any relations borne to other objects, then it seems that on an eudaimonistic account, nothing except for eudaimonia possesses intrinsic value.

As for the other features of the theory in which eudaimonia figures, Greco quotes from the beginning of the *Ethics*, in which we only get a sketch of Aristotle's view. We have to look much later to Book X to find his fleshed-out account of what precisely eudaimonia *is*. It turns out that:

> If happiness is activity in accord with virtue, it is reasonable for it to accord with the supreme virtue, which will be the virtue of the best thing. The best is understanding, or whatever else seems to be the natural ruler and leader, and to understand what is fine and divine, by being itself either divine or the most divine element in us. Hence complete happiness will be its activity in accord with its proper virtue; and we have said that this activity is the activity of study. (Aristotle, NE, X.7.1)
Since "[p]leasure completes [...] activities, and hence completes life" (X.4.10) and "each activity has its own proper pleasure" (X.5.6), we can be sure that "the pleasures that complete the activities of the complete and blessedly happy man, whether he has one activity or more than one, will be called the fully human pleasures to the fullest extent." (X.5.11) The highest human good is activity in accord with virtue, so this activity combined with the pleasure that 'completes' it is what Aristotle finally settles on as his understanding of eudaimonia. In particular, the activity of study is what Aristotle isolates as the most human of activities, so this completed with its appropriate species of pleasure is that at which all other human activity aims. The fact that knowledge is a constitutive part of this activity is an ample explanation of its value. Thus, we can collapse Greco's purported two sources of value for knowledge into this one: it is finally valuable because it is part of the characteristically human activity the performance of which is the goal of all human life. This is not a devastating problem with Greco's account of the value of knowledge, however, since we can simply abandon this talk of the intrinsic value of virtuous action and stick with the theoretically stronger account of value in terms of eudaimonia.

The eudaimonistic account of the value of knowledge holds that knowledge is more valuable than true belief because knowledge plays a role in the flourishing human life, while accidentally arriving at the truth does not. Eudaimonia will require that one has and exercises cognitive virtues, and that one arrives at the truth by means of one's own cognitive quality. Because eudaimonia is the highest good, and knowing is a part of eudaimonia, knowing has special value over and above mere true belief.

This raises the question of what sort of justification we have for reverting to this eudaimonistic framework. Aristotle sees the virtuously-charged activity of study as the highest human good. As philosophers, this certainly is bound to make us feel very self-satisfied. But self-satisfaction is a good
occasion for critical self-reflection. For one, Aristotle's reasons are not quite the sort that many of us today would agree with. He claims that, since "happiness is activity in accord with virtue, it is reasonable for it to accord with the supreme virtue, which will be the virtue of the best thing [...] and we have said that this activity is the activity of study." (X.7.1) His reasons for assuming that the activity of study is the best human activity are, for example, that "understanding is the supreme element in us, and the objects of understanding are the supreme objects of knowledge" (X.7.2), "it is the most continuous activity" (ibid.), "philosophy seems to have remarkably pure and firm pleasures" (X.7.3), "if understanding is something divine in comparison with a human being, so also will the life in accord with understanding be divine in comparison with human life" (X.7.8). Gesturing to Aristotle as the justification for our view of the value of knowledge doesn't do much work unless we agree with his framework, and his appeal to the 'divinity' of understanding, for example, will probably not carry much weight in contemporary epistemological debate. The best that defenders of the eudaimonistic view have going for them is the assumption that humans have a nature, and that the actualization or fulfillment or flourishing of that nature involves knowledge in some way that it does not involve mere true belief.

I want to object to this view on the grounds that it holds that there is a unified 'good life' that determines what is valuable for a person. Defenders of the eudaimonistic account of the value of knowledge hold both that humans have a nature, and that part of what it is to actualize this nature is to know (rather than merely truly believe). Here I will argue against the claim that there is a unified 'good life' that necessarily contains knowing as a constituent. This sort of view can take two forms: a more naturalistic form, and a neo-Aristotelian form. I will object to each in turn.

The naturalistic form of this view holds that there is a best way for the human organism to be, and looks to biology to give an account of what is 'good for us.' In such an account, it holds that there
must be a role for knowledge. That is, defenders of this view hold that knowledge (rather than mere true belief) is 'good for us' as human organisms. For example, such a view would claim that the explanatory role of knowledge in the survival of the human organism is more crucial than the role of mere true belief. Humans need to find food, remember safe places, and coordinate with other humans in order to make it. The view that knowledge is a marker of good information sources in other humans can also explain its value. If one wants to be cooperated with willingly by other humans trying to survive, then it is beneficial to have the reputation of a 'knower,' and therefore as a relatively reliable truth-teller. Such views will take a biological end to human life and attempt to explain why knowledge, and not true belief, fits into this value.

There are two problems with such a view. First, it does not seem that there is any way such an account can solve the value problem, since we can construct a world in which an organism survives well without ever achieving knowledge. Mere true belief seems sufficient for an organism to acquire nutrients and reproduce. If you put an organism in an environment in which it is constantly 'luckily' arriving at the truth, it seems that it will still navigate the environment well and get all of the goods it is wired to get. In contemporary epistemological parlance, an organism can be permanently Gettiered and still have its biological needs fulfilled. For example, imagine a person living in a carefully engineered environment in which she is presented with holograms of food and water exactly where her food and water are situated. When she sees the holograms, she forms beliefs like "hey, there is a sandwich over there!" or "it is a good thing this glass of water emerged from that feeding panel, I am parched!" Her beliefs are based on her seeing holograms, but they are true because the evil scientists who are keeping her always put sustenance where the holograms are. The subject always has justified true belief, but never has knowledge. Yet, her biological needs are met. If this is the case, then mere luckily true belief can do everything the human, as an organism, needs, and it is hard to see the distinctive value of
knowledge on this account.

One possible rejoinder is that knowledge is simply a better explanation of success in the actual world than mere true belief. When we construct an evolutionary history, we appeal to features of an organism that reliably produce success. 'Luck' is no explanation at all. While it might be the case that, in some far-flung possible world full of evil scientists and holograms, a human's needs are fulfilled in a Mr. Magoo-esque series of lucky epistemic coincidences, in the actual world humans need knowledge to reliably survive and reproduce. Such an account would discount evaluation of unrealistic worlds in favor of focus on the actual world.

One potential problem with such a response is that the best that it can deliver is the verdict that knowledge is contingently - rather than necessarily - more valuable than true belief. One might suppose that an adequate answer to the value problem ought to ground the judgment that knowledge has to be more valuable than mere true belief, in every possible world. The demand would be that we show that it is somehow in knowledge's nature to be the more valuable of the two states. I think that such a requirement is too strong. Consider, for example, possible worlds in which there are no cognitive agents. Demanding that we have an explanation for the value of knowledge in worlds in which there is no knowledge surely makes no sense. Even if we restrict our requirement to worlds in which both knowledge and mere true belief exist, asking that knowledge be more valuable than mere true belief in all of them seems antithetical to the biological approach in the first place: there are a great many ways that organisms can be arranged, and many diverse sets of requirements for their flourishing. Asking that a particular cognitive state be more valuable than another in every possible world will never be the case if we are paying attention to biology. If we are going to seriously investigate this option, we ought to grant to the naturalistic eudaimonistic theorist the contingency of the value of knowledge. So, if we are satisfied by an explanation of the value of knowledge that deems it merely
contingently - instead of necessarily - more valuable than mere true belief, then the defender of the naturalistic eudaimonistic view could claim that biology is the best that we are going to get on this front.

Even so, I believe that an opponent of the naturalistic view can make an actual-world case against knowledge as being valuable as part of human (biological) flourishing. In particular, the factivity requirement on knowledge doesn't seem to sit well with biological success as the source of value. Why should beliefs about the world be true rather than merely empirically adequate if all that we care about is surviving long enough to safely generate progeny? Forget about being permanently Gettiered! It seems that biological success is fully compatible with an organism's being systematically deceived. In some cases, in fact, it might be better for an organism (in terms of fitness) to have false beliefs. For example, one explanation of reckless behavior in young human males is that costly traits indicate to females that the male specimen is particularly fit, and can afford (in terms of fitness) to pay the cost of the behavior:

[T]hese and other handicapping male traits might attract a female because they are handicaps, signaling a mating advantage to females of the species. That is, young men who do crazy things are saying in one voice with the peacock and the buck that prances when the lion approaches, "Look at me! I have so much strength and skill that I am fearless, I will survive no matter how much I drink or how fast I drive"; the handicaps (which include substance use) convey the message that the male can support high costs. (Neil 77)

If this recklessness is accompanied by beliefs (which it certainly sometimes is, even if it may often be accompanied by no cognitive states at all), it would be beneficial for the biological fitness of the human male if he had the belief that he were invincible. On the assumption that this is indeed false and young males are indeed mortal, the biological flourishing of the human male is greatly benefited by his false
It might be objected that false beliefs like this are few and far between, and that, overall, knowledge has its distinct value over mere true belief because it is *very often or almost always* a part of human biological flourishing. Cases in which believing something false brings with it large biological fitness gains do not come up as often as cases in which the survival and reproduction of the organism depends on reliably identifying the color of a fruit or the size of a competitor. Because being right, and being *reliably* right is more central to the explanation of human biological success, we can safely discount the fringe cases wherein an organism is benefited by false beliefs.

It is unclear, however, why this must be the case. There is no conceptual connection between an organism's behavior resulting in successful procreation and the internal state of that organism including true beliefs. What the case of the reckless young male should really show us is that, if we take biological success as the source of value, it is very difficult to see why knowledge must be a part of this. There is no reason to suppose that true belief, let alone justification, needs to be a part of a life that seeks out successful reproduction. At best, in most situations we can claim that reliably hitting the truth is instrumentally valuable in that it can more reliably achieve biological success (barring cases in which the organism's believing something false will result in a more beneficial behavior, which may be more common than a defender of such a view would want to admit).

My second, more basic objection to such a view is that it straightforwardly commits the naturalistic fallacy. Biology can only tell us what has been good for the reproduction of our ancestors, and cannot tell us what we ought to do. Looking at an evolutionary history does not deliver us any 'oughts.' It merely tells us what usually conduces to survival and reproduction. It is entirely possible that the way that humans have evolved is antithetical to what makes for a good intellectual life. We would be hard-pressed to claim that the evolved risk-taking propensity of young males and the
attendant beliefs in one's own immortality are in service of an end that includes some sort of prima facie intellectual 'good life.' When faced with an evolutionary history, which is nothing but a series of births and deaths over many years, we must make additional assumptions to derive normative claims. If we add in the assumption that survival and reproduction are 'good' or 'right,' then these histories can be useful. But if we think of death or extinction as good, then we will read these histories in an entirely different way. This shows that the bare biological fact of an evolutionary history is insufficient to ground value claims such as that knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief. More needs to be done than to merely indicate human biological nature and infer epistemic oughts.

So, in the first, more naturalistic version of the eudaimonistic approach to the value of knowledge we have hit a dead end. First, it seems possible to fulfill biological 'goals' while attaining cognitive states that are inferior to knowledge. There is little reason to even think that the truth is valuable on a view according to which what is good is determined by our biological natures. Second, such an approach seems to need supplementation before it can even make normative claims, as an evolutionary history alone is merely a long line of facts, devoid of its own value.

The less naturalistic form of the theory avoids this basic mistake by holding that there is some ideal which we ought to approximate. Addition of some sort of ideal gives us a norm over and above the biological facts of our evolutionary history. Aristotle looked toward the strong leaders of the Greek polis to find an example of the flourishing human life. Through an examination of commonly accepted virtues, he paints a rich picture of the sort of life toward which we ought to strive. While this is a noble project, the problem is in the unity of this flourishing life. On this kind of view, virtue (and thus valuable action) is defined in terms of its participation in eudaimonia, which is conceived as a unitary ideal kind of life. There is one best way to be a human on this sort of view. The fact that such a view begins by describing a set of traits the possession and actualization of which constitute what it is for a
human to live well restricts the possible lives available to a person who aspires to live in valuable way. For Aristotle, the highest human good was instantiated in the life of study. On such an account, it is clear that knowledge will be especially valuable, but it remains to be seen whether we can simply assume that such a life is the one true bearer of final value.

In her book "Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View" Christina Swanton argues that eudaimonism's strict understanding of what makes a character trait a virtue is flawed. In particular, it seems that there can be multiple forms of life that we can see as good, even if they are not aimed at a 'flourishing' or 'healthy' life. She gives the following example

A number of great artists suffer from manic-depressive illness. Thought the depressive phase of the cycle is not conducive to creativity, the manic phase is perceived to be one of such creative energy that many such artists (and others such as scientists) refuse medication to relieve their disorder. Consider such an artist who struggles to realize her creative goals, constantly feels she has failed, and commits suicide having achieved no recognition. Nor, let us say, does she achieve recognition after death. Nonetheless, though she is afflicted at times with self-doubt, her creative drive is fuelled by a not unreasonable belief that she is talented enough to say something important. It would be odd, I think, to say that such a person has flourished. (Swanton 82-83)

A bipolar artist might have good reason to maintain her condition if it benefits her artistic achievement. If she is challenged that her life doesn't live up to a traditional conception of 'eudaimonia,' she seems justified in her rejoinder that study, Aristotle's assumed end of all human action, isn't her preferred end.

In fact, while her condition may well preclude her living a life of traditional intellectual flourishing (we can stipulate that her wildly erratic emotional condition precludes the formation of anything like justifications for her various beliefs, many of which are false), it better facilitates her artistic achievement. Here we have a life that does not privilege any activity to which knowledge is centrally constitutive, but that seems legitimate. A unified, external conception of eudaimonia does not seem to
have the justificatory standing to censure an alternative kind of life. Bare assertion that study is the highest human good and that this agent ought to change her ways in order to reflect this fact will get nowhere.

Swanton's example indicates that there are many ways that lives can go, and many projects that individuals can have that give meaning to their lives. This makes it hard to see how a singular concept of 'eudaimonia' can explain how each of them can go well. While the philosophers among us can certainly sympathize with the Aristotelian story (so long as we conveniently ignore certain features thereof, such as the fact that, for him, the primary meaning of 'courage' includes ineliminable reference to facing the fear of death in battle, which many of us conveniently avoid in our lives), we should be careful before universalizing our preferred activity as the end of all human action. A philosopher loves wisdom, and acting on this love will involve seeking after and contemplating the truth. In such a life, it is easy to see that knowledge will play a privileged role. But consider the life of a mountaineer whose project is to summit peaks. For her, flourishing will be the activity of achieving the summits of difficult peaks, the concurrent pleasure of the appropriate type, and perhaps the raw experience of being on top of the world after her struggle. In such a life, the intellectual virtue central to Aristotelian eudaimonia seems a mere side matter. Just as the pieces of gear on her harness are items of instrumental value, the instances of knowledge that she has of weather patterns, rock types, and avalanche conditions only serve to get the mountaineer to the top. The defender of the eudaimonistic account of the final value of knowledge can only censure such an agent by pointing out that her ideal differs from the Aristotelian one, and this is just to indicate that here we have two lives which are structured differently. An argument must be made that this particular account of flourishing to which cognitive excellence is central has pride of place over other ways to flourish in life. Aristotle himself had the aforementioned reasons of the divinity of the intellectual part of the soul, or the intrinsic
superiority of its objects, but we cannot avail ourselves to these.

It might be contended that, in any life, knowledge must play an essential role. After all, the bipolar artist cannot paint without knowledge of paints, and the mountaineer cannot summit without knowledge of rock types. One might even go so far as to point out that such a view gains strength in the face of the value problem, since mere true belief is insufficient to summit mountains, as one must, for example, be relatively assured and have some sort of subjectively accessible justification in order to have the confidence necessary to embark on an expedition. This would explain why knowledge, instead of mere luckily true belief, is crucial to all of these different kinds of life. However, to say that these lives need knowledge in order to attain their goals is precisely to fail to find a ground for final value for knowledge, which is why the eudaimonistic views were put forward in the first place. If we have to fall back to pointing out that knowledge is very useful in a wide variety of lives, then we have not successfully answered the value problem at all. This is mere instrumental value, and we have known from the beginning that knowledge has great instrumental value. The task in answering the value problem is to determine a ground for its final value. Just because a mountaineer needs knowledge to get to the top doesn't mean that knowledge has final value any more than her ice axe has final value.

One might attempt to defend the view from this objection by countering that 'eudaimonia' just means that a life is 'going well.' If, no matter what the structure of the life under consideration is, to achieve eudaimonia simply means for that life to be lived well, then the defender of this view can say that she does not need a unified, singular conception of eudaimonia to explain the values of particulars. Things have value in virtue of their participation in a life's being lived well, regardless of what exactly this looks like.

Such a view is problematic on two fronts: first, clearly, it falls afoul of the argument that there
are possible lives in which knowledge does not centrally figure. If eudaimonia is the ground of value, and eudaimonia needn't contain knowledge as a constitutive part, then we haven't found a solution to the value problem. Second, on such a view these theories lose what gives them content. Such a theory cannot say that 'eudaimonia' means 'doing well' and then define virtue as 'whatever is a part of eudaimonia.' If they do this, then their view is reduced to holding that one ought to have a character that helps one do well. The rough texture of the descriptions of the virtues only exists because they have an end toward which to aim: a definite, descriptively robust conception of what a good human life looks like. One of the supposed advantages of virtue ethics over traditional ethics is that its concepts are 'thick'. As Anscombe claimed in her 1958 paper "Modern Moral Philosophy," considered the beginning of the contemporary resurgence of research in virtue ethics,

The terms "should" or "ought" or "needs" relate to good and bad: e.g. machinery needs oil, or should or ought to be oiled, in that running without oil is bad for it, or it runs badly without oil. According to this conception, of course, "should" and "ought" are not used in a special "moral" sense when one says that a man should not bilk. (In Aristotle's sense of the term "moral" (ethikos), they are being used in connection with a moral subject-matter: namely that of human passions and (non-technical) actions.) But they have now acquired a special so-called "moral" sense-i.e. a sense in which they imply some absolute verdict (like one of guilty / not guilty on a man) on what is described in the "ought" sentences used in certain types of context: not merely the contexts that Aristotle would call "moral"-passions and actions-but also some of the contexts that he would call "intellectual."

The ordinary (and quite indispensable) terms "should," "needs," "ought," "must"-acquired this special sense by being equated in the relevant contexts with "is obliged," or "is bound," or "is required to," in the sense in which one can be obliged or bound by law, or something can be required by law.

How did this come about? The answer is in history: between Aristotle and us came Christianity, with its law conception of ethics. (Anscombe)

Using the descriptively rich terminology of virtue ethics is supposed to add more content than unjustified legalistic 'ought'-claims have on their own. If we define eudaimonia as merely 'doing well at what one does,' then the theoretically desirable thickness is gone. This isn't a killing blow to the
eudaimonistic account of the value of knowledge, but it certainly removes some of the theoretical reason to return to Aristotelian theory in the first place.

So, if there are multiple possible good lives, it at least seems possible to ask whether all of them must necessarily involve knowledge. One might wonder: if it is possible for one to lead a life that does not require lots of knowledge, then is it simply false that knowledge is always something valuable? What do we say of Hume's "honest gentlemen, who being always employ'd in their domestic affairs, or amusing themselves in common recreations, have carry'd their thoughts very little beyond those objects, which are every day expos'd to their senses" (T 1.4.7.14, SB 272)? What do we say of the willfully ignorant who will not read the news but nevertheless will passionately vote in each election? If the lives of the good earthy folk are not to be censured on the grounds that they do not match up to an Aristotelian, intellectualist conception of eudaimonia, then it seems difficult to argue for the final value of knowledge with the eudaimonistic view.

I believe that there still is a universal value for knowledge if we lose the eudaimonistic grounding of the value of cognitive character. In every life, one needs to have a general, stable view of what the world is like in order to generate a project. Notwithstanding the obvious extreme diversity in possible human lives, all of them that are autonomously taken up by the individual will require some basis of knowledge by which they establish the values which structure their actions. I will discuss this new direction for research into the value of knowledge when I turn to my own, preconditional value account. First, we must deal with an alternative account of the value of knowledge that doesn't rely on virtue, but rather what many perceive as a natural feature of human life: our persistent curiosity that drives us to investigate the world around us.
3. Curiosity and the Value of Knowledge

3.0 Introduction

We have seen that the notion of human virtue is insufficient to ground universal final value for knowledge. One of the reasons for this is that I argue that we ought to reject a view according to which humans have a univocal 'nature' which determines that knowledge is valuable to us. However, there is another way to ground this value which is more specific. What if humans are curious, where curiosity is understood as some sort of desire for the truth? If this is the case, then perhaps, instead of there being some sort of natural fact about knowledge's being part of the human good, a desire can be what we need to ground universal final value for knowledge. Perhaps people have a natural desire to ask questions of the world. Maybe the value of knowledge can be found in the scratching of this itch.

Curiosity has seen some discussion in the literature, with authors like Goldman and Lynch claiming that 'natural curiosity' explains the 'intrinsic value' of truth. First, since I take 'intrinsic value' to mean 'value irrespective of any relations an object bears,' I want to focus on the more germane notion of 'final value.' It is possible for something to have final value, albeit final value that depends on external relations. The standard example is Princess Diana's dress. This might have final value (its instrumental value as a dress is not particularly remarkable) to some, but this value depends on the relation that the dress bears to a past individual. As Korsgaard writes:

The distinction between a thing that is intrinsically good and a thing that is extrinsically good yet valuable as an end allows for the possibility that the things that are important to us have an objective value, yet have that value because they are important to us. Objective goodness is not a mysterious ontological attribute. The things that are important to us can be good: good because of our desires and interests and loves and because of the physiologi- cal, psychological, economic, historical, symbolic and other condi- tions under which human beings live. (Korsgaard 1983 p. 195)
So, I take these authors to be claiming that natural curiosity grounds the final value of knowledge, where final value is understood as non-instrumental value. According to such a view, all humans have a desire to know things. This is the sort of desire beautifully highlighted by Aristotle when he argued that sight was the most valuable of the senses, since:

All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer sight to almost everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things. (Metaphysics 1.1)

If every normal human (I take the 'natural' qualifier in the phrase 'natural desire' to restrict the relevant desires to those found in normally-functioning human beings, or something of the like) desires to perceive the truth, and desires that we all share ground final value, then we have the beginnings of an account of the value of knowledge.

While some take curiosity as an easy path to explaining the value of knowledge, there have been some prominent objections. In this chapter I take up three arguments against the view that curiosity grounds value for knowledge: (1) the Valued vs. Valuable argument, (2) the Babies and Cats argument, and (3) the Generality argument. I respond to each of these in turn, each time further clarifying the notion of curiosity that will do the work required to ground value for knowledge. After responding to these challenges, we will see that the concept of curiosity that can ground value for knowledge will not be universally shared by all epistemic agents. This means that, while curiosity can sometimes ground this final value, it need not always, and we will have to look elsewhere to give an account of universal value for knowledge.
3.1 Curiosity as a Natural Desire for Truth

People generally have a desire for social interaction with others. Conversation, intimacy, and shared activities help to satisfy this desire. We can all identify with it, and it seems that citing this desire helps to justify the general claim that social interaction is valuable. Similarly, some authors want to claim that all humans have a desire for truth. If we can all identify with it, then it seems that we have some justification for the claim that truth is valuable.

One problem that might arise when trying to use this line of thought to explain the value of knowledge is the fact that this cites the value of truth rather than knowledge. It seems possible that there could be a general desire for truth without there being a desire for the extra trappings required for a true belief to be elevated to the level of knowledge. In particular, if we assume that knowledge includes justification, then value for truth alone may not be enough to solve the value problem. If we take the value problem as requiring that we explain the distinctive value of knowledge over and above true belief, then curiosity alone will not help us.

I think that pro-curiosity writers can avoid this objection. While they may speak loosely of curiosity grounding the value of truth, this is a common occurrence when talking about the value of an object wherein one states that one values an object as shorthand for the claim that one values the state of affairs wherein one stands in a particular relation to the object.31 For example, when I say that I value shelter, it is not lean-tos in a void which I value, but rather my being sheltered by objects of this kind. In the epistemic case, we can treat 'curiosity grounds final value for truth' as shorthand for 'curiosity grounds final value for standing in the appropriate relation to truth.' The situation in which the subject has a mere true belief without any subjectively accessible reasons or justifications does not seem to be what we are valuing when we say that truth is valuable. If the objection to using curiosity to ground

31 This is in line with other philosophers' views on value. For example, Scanlon writes that "We commonly speak of desires for objects, such as my desire for a glass of water or for a new computer, but I take it that such desires are properly understood as desires for states of affairs in which I stand in certain relations to objects of these kinds."
final value for knowledge is that curiosity is merely the desire for truth itself, it seems plausible to claim that satisfaction of curiosity requires something more than truth, and that the 'something more' will involve something subjectively accessible so that the subject can have some sort of assurance that her curiosity is satisfied. It seems odd to claim that someone's desires could be satisfied without any in principle method for her being aware of the fact that they are satisfied. Further, as we will see below in my discussion of the Babies and Cats argument in section 3.3, I believe that attention to what human curiosity entails will show that more than just bare truth must be involved.

3.2. Counterargument One: The Valued vs. Valuable Distinction

In "Curiosity and the Value of Truth," Brady claims that:

there seems to be a strong reason to be sceptical about this line on epistemic value. For it is a general truth in value theory that, although the fact that I do desire or care about something might incline us to think that that thing is worth desiring or caring about, it does not guarantee that it is. There is always the possibility that I desire or care about something that I ought not to desire or care about, that is, something that is not worthy of my concern. In other words, there is always the possibility that one of my ends or goals is not a proper end or goal. (Brady 269)

To support this line he mentions Hume and Williams. What Brady has in mind is the idea that one's evaluative attitudes can be based on false beliefs. He then goes on to give three ways that truth can seem finally valuable due to our desire for it but fail to be: (1) unacknowledged practical goals, (2) a foundation in false belief (e.g. being curious about a witch's curse), and (3) urges for the truth that we do not endorse (e.g. compulsive counting). While Brady does provide particular examples of desires for truths that seem perverse and therefore incapable of providing the wholesome foundation that we want for the final value of knowledge, I think that attention to the basic assumption of his argument can show the way towards a more nuanced understanding of the value that curiosity can ground.

As Grimm points out in his paper "Epistemic Goals and Values," the kind of desire that one might use as an analogy to argue that curiosity can ground final value for knowledge is natural and
universal, like thirst:

According to this way of thinking, our curiosity about how things stand in the world is therefore importantly like the thirst we (characteristically, at least) feel when our body is dehydrated. When our body is dehydrated—when we experience thirst—satisfying our thirst is naturally thought to possess a kind of intrinsic value: it seems to be a good in its own right, quite apart from whatever further contributions it might make to our well-being. (Grimm 727)

The bare fact that everyone desires drink, and that this desire seems natural and unproblematic, seems to be enough to establish that drink is valuable to humans. The sorts of desire that Brady cites to cast doubt on the value-conferring capacity of curiosity are corrupt, perverse, and unnatural. The assumption here is that, regardless of the subjective state of an individual, there simply are things that are good or bad for her. This is the 'general truth in value theory' that he invokes.

As this is the decisive move in this type of argument, it is worth giving it closer attention. If the claim is simply that any old desire cannot 'guarantee' final value for its perceived object, then it seems unproblematic. There are the cases of deception or lack of complete information (or, even more vividly, mind-control) which can easily show that particular desire is insufficient to establish final value. Say, for example, that an evil scientist has modified my brain so that, when in the presence of a field of grass, I feel compelled to count the blades. This desire comes upon me forcibly, and I do not endorse it, but I nevertheless feel it strongly. In this case, we are hesitant to say that this malicious, implanted desire grounds any value for my knowing the truth about the number of blades of grass in the field. To say that this knowledge must be valuable for me because I desire it seems straightforwardly incorrect, and to license the actions of the evil scientist. To turn to an example more relevant to our contemporary lives, consider the effects that advertising has on us. We are bombarded, on a daily basis, with cleverly constructed images and slogans intended to render us more likely to purchase particular products. When we are in the store, we might feel an unreflective pull towards a particular
product. If we hold the view that bare desires ground final value for objects, then the product we are pulled toward is in fact valuable to us, sometimes unbeknownst to us. What may seem like an arbitrary decision from my perspective can in fact be a programmed response due to the compounded effects of commercials. This would give advertising agencies the power to establish the actual final value of their products by means of their manipulation. It would also mean that objects could be valuable to us without our having any awareness of their value. Anyone who wants value to have something to do with the autonomous desires of rational subjects should find this result deeply problematic. Most of us do not want to live in a world in which megacorporations and the market determine the worth of all things, or in a world in which we are entirely unaware of the structures of our own value sets.

What these considerations support is the core of Brady's argument: the mere fact that we value truth does not mean that it is actually valuable. If desire for an object is a signal that we value that object, then we have to take seriously the possibility that our desire could be mistaken. The distinction between what we value and what is in fact valuable seems to be enough to block the argument from curiosity to the value of knowledge. After all, curiosity killed the cat, and it could simply be a dangerous human compulsion that gets in the way of our other, more important desires and values.

While it is certainly true that not all desires can ground final value for objects, it would be an error - on par with the error of assuming that something is valuable because we feel a pull toward it - to reject a role for desire in establishing value outright simply because of the existence of coerced or corrupt desires. This would be to rule out a subjective theory of value tout court, and the attitudes of subjects being the ground of values in general is not obviously incompatible with the possibility of some problematic attitudes. Take the example of a subject's sincere desire to summit a mountain. If that subject indeed succeeds in her project, this seems valuable. Taken by itself, the activity of a human organism's scrambling up to a point of high elevation is not particularly special. It requires that we take the desires and projects of the individual into consideration to understand the value present in the
activity. Here, the desire plays a constitutive role in the value; if it weren't present, there wouldn't be any value at all to the ascent. If we are to leave room for this sort of model of the final value of an object, then ruling out desire-based valuation on the basis of some problem cases is clearly too hasty.

I propose that we take a subjective theory of value seriously, and at least that we keep it available as a live option for the value of knowledge. If we do so, then we should be open to consideration of what sort of curiosity could do the work of grounding this value. Clearly, some sort of coerced or corrupt curiosity would not ground final value for knowledge. A compulsive desire to know the numbers of things which is not even endorsed by the subject would not generate any value at all. However, the existence of coerced curiosity should not lead us to immediately reject all possible curiosity-attitudes as value-conferring.

One might object that, if we take a subjective theory of value seriously, then we are committed to the highly counterintuitive thesis that it is impossible for a subject's evaluative attitudes to be incorrect. After all, if the subject's attitudes ground value, then whatever the subject values, goes. This is a strong view which can easily be shown to be problematic. On this kind of view, every time a subject has a positive orientation to an object, it has value. From one minute to the next, wildly different objects will be valuable. Since, for one, we want our theory of what is valuable to be useful in making decisions, this picture is highly unsatisfactory. If the value-landscape is always radically shifting, then our value-language gives us no help in determining where to move on that landscape.\textsuperscript{32}

I do not think that a subjective theory need be committed to this result. There are three primary ways that one can be more precise about what sorts of desires can ground value: (1) whether the desire is reflectively endorsed, (2) the depth of the attitude under consideration, and (3) by attention to false

\textsuperscript{32}I will not go into detail about the possibility of such a view violating duties to others (e.g. the serial killer values the deaths of other people, therefore those deaths are valuable). Other thinkers who have defended the idea that value comes from subjectivity (e.g. Kantians like Korsgaard) have presented ways that such a view can avoid this consequence. Since my current project is concerned with the value of knowledge (and not, in particular, its social value), I can safely avoid discussing the intersubjective problems that arise for views that ground value in subjectivity.
beliefs about the object under consideration.

First, attention to whether the desire under consideration is reflectively endorsed can rule out cases of compulsion and advertising-manipulation. I might exhibit *behavior* according to which I desire to buy Tide over other brands of laundry detergent. However, if asked whether I value this brand highly, I might reflect on my actions, and realize that I do not actually have any reason to value this detergent over the others. I do not reflectively endorse this desire. There are many small ways in which we can be influenced to act in a certain way. Someone who holds that activity of the subject grounds value need not take all *behavior* as indicative of the structure of the space of values, but rather ought to pay attention to what that subject actually does endorse. If, when a subject is questioned, she realizes that she does not actually endorse her behavior, then we ought not consider this behavior as a reliable indicator of any value. There are bound to be some choices in grocery stores about which we are entirely unreflective, and if they are challenged, none of us would defend them by saying that they stand behind whichever unconscious behaviors are caused by watching commercials.\(^{33}\)

With this in mind, we ought to distinguish between reflectively endorsed desires and non-endorsed desires. Non-endorsed desires can either be unreflective desires - i.e. desires which have never been the object of reflection - or desires which survive reflection but which the agent nonetheless rejects. An example of the former is a behaviorally identifiable preference for a laundry detergent when the agent has never before consciously thought about laundry detergent. An example of the latter is the desire to harm another that can appear in a conscious, momentary flash of anger when the subject does not endorse the harm. Neither of these seem viable candidates for the grounding of values, so we can safely say that, if desire is to ground final value for objects, it must be reflectively endorsed desire.

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\(^{33}\)This account of the legitimacy of a desire in structuring the values of a subject should not strike us as unfamiliar. In fact, Frankfurt goes so far as to use reflective endorsement as the criterion of exhibiting a free will. To make arguments about the freedom of the human will would take us too far afield, but suffice it to say that utilizing reflective endorsement to differentiate from desires that ground value and those that don't should easily tie into an account according to which freedom itself grounds value.
This is a first step toward defending the view that desires can ground values. If the objection is that, on such a view, it is impossible to for one's evaluative attitudes to be incorrect, we can respond that unreflective desires can certainly be misdirected, while leaving open the possibility that reflectively endorsed desires provide a ground for value.

Another dimension of desire to which we ought to pay attention when considering its relation to value is the depth of the desire. It can seem counterintuitive to ground value with desire if we take temporary, shallow, or fleeting desires into consideration. If whims and fads are sufficient to alter the landscape of value, then which objects will have value will vary widely over time. Objects that are truly valuable are typically taken to maintain this status: their value is stable. If I pick up a newspaper, and am taken by an advertisement for some new, hyped-up product, I may form a desire for it. I may even, naively, reflectively endorse this desire. Certainly, I might tell myself, it makes sense to desire this object. Just look at all of its compelling features! As my life progresses, however, what seemed exciting and vibrant may fade. In the scheme of things, and outside the relatively shallow desire of the moment, the object will be revealed as not terribly valuable after all. We should not conclude from this, however, that subjective attitudes like desire play no role in the evaluation. This merely undercuts the value-conferring power of fleeting or shallow desires.

In fact, the inability of these shallow desires to ground value can be explained in terms of other, deeper desires. Upon consideration, I can realize that the popular product's virtues do not really have the same weight as other things in my life, such as e.g. knowledge, love, the flourishing of those close to me, peace between major world powers, etc. If we require that desires are somewhat deep for value to be grounded, then we circumvent the objection that such an axiological view renders the value-landscape too ephemeral.

A third, crucial response to the objection that subjective theories of value entail that whatever any particular subject says, goes, is to point out that it is entirely possible for the subject to have false
beliefs about the object under consideration. Consider the desire expressed by the demonstrative proposition "I want to drink that glass of liquid." Say that I, in general, desire beer, but that in this case I am erroneously indicating a glass of sparkling apple cider (which I in no way desire). Instead of claiming that I have a mistaken desire, we can analyze this situation by pointing out the implicit belief that "that is a glass of beer." Glasses of beer, in general, then, have value due to my desire. With this established, it is entirely possible for me to have particular false beliefs about my environment, yielding particular desires which are mistaken. If this is the case, then the objection that, under a subjective view of value, a subject cannot be mistaken about the values of objects is straightforwardly false. While it would not make sense to challenge the subject's evaluation of the general class of glasses of beer, it would make perfect sense to challenge the subject's belief about what exactly this particular glass is filled with and the particular evaluation that this belief entails. Particular desires can always fall prey to false particular beliefs.

To return to curiosity, if we require that the desire for knowledge be (1) reflectively endorsed, (2) relatively deep, and (3) not based on false beliefs, then it seems safe to say that it is not obviously problematic to claim that such a desire can ground final value for its object. The fact is that, if we take a subjective theory of value seriously, then on a deep level to be valuable just is to be valued. The surface problems of such a position can be alleviated with attention to exactly what sorts of attitudes ground value. A curiosity which the subject recognizes and of which she approves, which is a deep and stable feature of her life, and isn't directed toward particular items or sources of knowledge on the basis of false beliefs seems like a robust candidate to explain the value of knowledge. We ought not hastily rule out a subjective explanation of this value.

The story is not over here, however. Now we must turn to a counterargument due to Kvanvig.
3.3. Counterargument Two: The Babies and Cats Argument

In his book *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*, Kvanvig is not impressed with concerns about corrupt or perverse desires in the realm of curiosity:

For human curiosity seems to require that knowledge is an object of our desires, and there is no reason whatsoever for thinking that there is anything illegitimate in this desire (even if certain expressions of curiosity are objectionable). (Kvanvig 2003, p. 144)

If we take this desire as wholesome and widespread, then we should be comfortable thinking of it as grounding some value. While he thinks of curiosity as a universal and unproblematic desire, Kvanvig worries that, precisely *because* of this universality, it cannot be a desire for anything so complex as knowledge:

My concern here is with attributing complex intentional states to small children and nonhuman animals that lack the conceptual resources to be accurately characterized by those states and yet display curiosity and engage in inquiry. Given this concern, the concept of truth has advantages over those of knowledge, for knowledge is a more complex concept than truth: A cognitive being can have the concept of truth without that of knowledge, but not vice versa, because truth is a conceptual component of knowledge. (Kvanvig 2003, p. 145)

Babies look around at their environments with wide eyes, and 'curiosity' is what killed the proverbial cat. However, infants and cats do not have the concepts required to desire *knowledge* since they do not, for example, desire justification in a robust way. Thus, curiosity is't a desire for knowledge. This would mean that curiosity is, at best, a desire for apparent true belief. A desire of this broad and basic kind cannot serve as a foundation for the final value of knowledge.

While it is certainly true that babies exhibit behavior which looks very similar to curiosity, I think that with attention to the kinds of desires that can ground values, we can distinguish between the proto-curiosity behavior of babies and cats, and the robust, cognitively complex curiosity that can be
taken up by adult humans. While infants have the beginnings of the kinds of actions that will be used to ground values later in their lives, we do not want to grossly identify a baby's wide eyes in the face of a new, brightly colored object and the feeling that spurs a scientist to devise a new experiment. The latter can have the cognitive complexity required to ground value for knowledge, and still should be something that we count as curiosity.

With attention to the last section, we can draw a distinction between unreflective curiosity behavior, and a desire to know of which the subject is aware and endorses. Babies and cats exhibit the former, and the investigating scientist exhibits the latter. I think that we have reason to believe that satisfaction of the latter entails the cognitive complexity that Kvanvig denies to babies and cats.

One way to make the distinction between proto-curiosity and curiosity proper is to distinguish between what it takes to satisfy either of them. One can in some cases individuate desires by their contents, but it is difficult to determine the precise contents of a cat's conative states, and while some babies are talkative, they are notoriously difficult to interpret. Since we cannot use this method, another way to individuate desires is by their conditions of satisfaction. Proto-curiosity, I will argue, is satisfied by perceptual experience of a certain kind, while reflective curiosity (or 'curiosity proper') is satisfied only by the acquisition of a belief along with some sort of stable ground for it.

Take as a paradigmatic example of proto-curiosity an infant's hearing a noise to the left of it and turning its head to look in that direction. On the surface, this certainly looks similar to the behaviors that adult humans exhibit when they are struck by the desire to know something. But, for the infant, this desire will be satisfied if it simply sees what is to the left of it. Perceptual experience itself is enough to scratch the itch generated by the noise. We can say, for simplicity, that all that a baby or a cat needs to satisfy its proto-curiosity is an experience that generates an apparently true belief.

Contrast this with what it takes to satisfy the sincere desire of an adult human to know the truth of some matter of fact. First, take a case analogous to the baby case above. Say that I hear a noise in
the next room. I get up and walk in to see what caused the unexpected sound. So far this looks perfectly analogous to the infant's turning its head to the left. However, if I see something out of place, that alone will not be enough to satisfy my curiosity. I will want some sort of reasonable explanation for the sound that happened. If there is a pan on the floor, I will only feel satisfied if I am able to reasonably believe that the pan has slipped from the counter to the ground, generating a crash. This will involve background beliefs about the position of the pan, its weight, etc. In short, some sort of justification for the belief that I form will be necessary to satisfy my curiosity. This becomes even more obvious if we change to example to be curiosity about some matter of fact the truth about which is not easily determined by a simple perceptual experience. Say that I am struck by curiosity about scorpions. In particular, I want to know which scorpion is the most venomous. First, it should be apparent that it is difficult to conceive of a perceptual experience alone that could satisfy my desire. Seeing a scorpion kill a large animal would not be sufficient, as I would need to know how other scorpions stacked up to this particular one. A lineup of scorpions in order from least to most venomous wouldn't be sufficient unless I had good reason to believe that the person who generated the lineup were a good authority on the toxicity of arachnids. So perceptual experience is not enough to satisfy such a desire. It is also the case that more is required for the satisfaction of this curiosity than hearing a stranger walking down the street and yelling "the deathstalker scorpion is the most venomous!" even if this led to my inadvertently forming a true belief that this is the case. This shows that mere true belief alone is not what is desired when one is in the grip of reflective curiosity. I would need some sort of assurance that the person whose testimony that I receive has some standing by which to make the claim that the deathstalker is the most venomous scorpion. In short, I require not only a true belief, but some sort of basis or reflectively accessible reason to believe.

This consideration not only gives us our distinction between proto-curiosity and curiosity proper, it also provides additional support for the curiosity view of the value of knowledge. If curiosity
is desire for much more than just apparently true belief, if it requires some sort of robust justification, then this gives us positive reason to think that this account is a step in the right direction as regards the value problem: it is telling us that knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief because knowledge is what is required to satisfy one of our deep, common desires.

Even if we discount the argument that the curiosity-behavior of cats shows that the curiosity of the mature scientist cannot ground the value of knowledge, resistance still remains for the curiosity account. Brady argues that a thoroughly *particular* desire like curiosity cannot serve as the ground for the value of knowledge *in general*.

3.4. Counterargument Three: The Generality Argument

Another problem raised for curiosity is that the value of knowledge is supposed to be perfectly general, yet we are only curious about certain specific subjects. As Brady has argued, "curiosity, by its very nature, involves *selective* attention: when we are curious, we focus and attend to some things rather than others" (Brady 273). When we are looking for an account of the value of knowledge, we will not be satisfied by an account that merely explains the value of some specific bits of knowledge. We want an explanation of why knowledge, in general, is more valuable than mere true belief. If curiosity is only ever directed toward a singular topic or matter of fact, then, the objection goes, it is not the sort of attitude which can ground value for all instances of knowledge as a general kind.

There is some prima facie support for the view that curiosity involves selective attention. Most of the time, mature, deep curiosity strikes one about a particular *topic*. I might meet an interesting new person, and the desire that arises to know about her is very directed. It is not about any other person, it is not about any broader social matter, it is not about any physical matter. It is only about facts about her. This seems to follow straightforwardly from the fact that that curiosity is almost always about a subject matter, which means that curiosity is almost always desire to know about one thing to the
exclusion of others. Far from grounding final value for all knowledge, then, it appears that the phenomenon of curiosity undercuts the value of most possible items of knowledge.

The first step in answering this objection is to make a distinction between the particular direction of a desire as it is instantiated in time and the generality toward which a desire may be directed in the abstract. Many desires are perfectly general which, due to human finitude and our particular situations, are directed at particulars. For example, suppose (contrary to fact) that I desire the company of dogs. That is, I desire the company of dogs *in general*: any time that I am able to interact with a particular dog I eagerly take advantage of the opportunity because of my general desire to be with dogs. Now, since I will only be able to own a couple of dogs at a time, my love of dogs will only be directed at a handful of particular animals throughout my life. However, this does not seem to speak against my desire as grounding a general value for dogs. The value-conferring function of curiosity functions exactly analogously. Say that curiosity is a desire for knowledge. However, since I live in a particular environment and time period and am confronted with particular questions, my curiosity will be directed at (say) desert flora, housing prices in Irvine, the political situation in Syria, etc. These are all particular matters, knowledge of which is made valuable by my curiosity, but my interest in particulars does not speak against the value of the general class of items of knowledge. In fact, I would contend that desires are usually for *generalities*, and that particulars gain their value by being instances of these generalities. Thus, it is a mistake to infer from the particularity of the direction of the attention spurred by a desire to the non-generality of that desire itself.

It might be objected that there are certain classes of knowledge which are *never* the object of curiosity. Certainly one can have a general desire to be with dogs that extends to all dogs (excepting perhaps Cujos, but this can probably be handled by more precise description of the desire, i.e. that I desire to be with non-murderous dogs, or that I desire to be with dogs but also to persist in existence), but it seems more difficult to claim that one might have a desire to know all things. It is certainly true
that some try to argue that omniscience is the epistemic ideal, but if we leave theology by the wayside for now, we can recognize that we are finite, and that, as omniscience is unachievable by us, it ought not be our goal. As Hume says early in the Treatise, "nothing is more certain, than that despair has almost the same effect upon us with enjoyment, and that we are no sooner acquainted with the impossibility of satisfying any desire, than the desire itself vanishes. When we see, that we have arriv'd at the utmost extent of human reason, we sit down contented; tho' we be perfectly satisfy'd in the main of our ignorance" (Introduction 9, SBN xviii) Also, since there are infinite possible facts, even approximating omniscience fails to make any sense. Therefore, setting aside the view that omniscience is the epistemic ideal, it seems difficult to simply assume that one might have the desire to know everything. Surely facts like that the 2348th name in the Pittsburgh phonebook is Reginald P. Farthingworth are never the object of anyone's curiosity. If there are infinite possible truths to know, and curiosity is only ever directed at a subset of them, this creates some doubt for the view that curiosity grounds general value for knowledge. Even if we grant that desires can be directed toward particulars but still be general, it seems difficult to imagine a type of curiosity that is so general that it includes phonebook facts. If there really are such things as trivial truths, then there will be a great many items of knowledge whose value is not guaranteed by even general curiosity.

This challenge raises the interesting question of what exactly the object of humans' most general curiosity is. It seems safe to assume that, even when the agent has very broad curiosity and is oriented toward the world in such a way that she wants to most fully understand it, that this does not mean that she wants to know all facts. First of all, it is unclear whether this even makes sense as a goal. Due to the existence, for example, of infinite natural numbers, there are infinite propositions about these

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34 For example, Kvanvig claims that "We should ask ourselves, regarding possible individuals in such a cost-free environment, what the cognitive ideal would involve. Here the intellectualists have millennia of theological reflection on their side. Part of the cognitive ideal, whatever else it may involve, is knowledge of all truths; omniscience, for short. But for omniscience to be part of the ideal, no truth can be pointless enough to play no role at all in the story of what it takes to be cognitively ideal" (Kvanvig 2008 pp. 209-210)
numbers and their relations that one can aspire to know. Since our lives are finite and beliefs are extended in time (and not infinitesimally so), it is impossible to even approximate omniscience. This leaves the view that one ought to maximize the number of items of knowledge that one has. However, this can be satisfied by forming large disjunctions based off of one belief that one knows to be true. For example, if I know that \(5+7=12\), then I also know that either \(5+7=12\) or the winning lottery number is 52173950 (when the 'or' is inclusive). In this manner, one can generate arbitrarily many true beliefs. This, however, does not seem like the goal that we have in mind when considering the orientation and intentions of someone of very general curiosity. Someone who sat alone, forming larger and larger disjunctions based off of one certain belief in order to maximize the number of true beliefs that she could hold in her life is more likely to draw our epistemic disapprobation than anything.

It may help to consider historical figures who have exhibited curiosity in a very general form. The Aristotles and Newtons and Einsteins of the world certainly do not go around memorizing phonebooks or stacking up true beliefs about particular relations between particular natural numbers. Their pursuit is basic understanding of the world and how it functions. As Sellars claimed,

The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term. Under 'things in the broadest possible sense' I include such radically different items as not only 'cabbages and kings', but numbers and duties, possibilities and finger snaps, aesthetic experience and death. To achieve success in philosophy would be, to use a contemporary turn of phrase, to 'know one's way around' with respect to all these things, not in that unreflective way in which the centipede of the story knew its way around before it faced the question, 'how do I walk?', but in that reflective way which means that no intellectual holds are barred. (Sellars 1)

Perhaps the key to getting a robust picture of the most general kind of curiosity that can ground value for knowledge is in a term in the above: 'understanding.' While, since there are many ways that one can desire knowledge, there are many kinds of curiosity, it would seem that the most basic and general kind, the kind that would best serve to ground general final value for knowledge, is this yearning for
fundamental understanding of the world and how it works. Here, 'understanding' is to be contrasted with 'knowledge' in the manner current in epistemology: understanding, unlike knowledge, requires the ability to make inferential movements among a large body of related atomistic facts. While it is possible to say that one understands one mere fact (e.g. "I understand that it is raining"), here we will use the term to refer to a relation between a subject and an inferentially linked body of facts (e.g. "I understand biochemistry").

If we take this line, then we have a grounding for the value of understanding, but not necessarily for every individual piece of knowledge. This is a line that has been taken by some epistemologists in the face of the value problem. For example, Pritchard defends the view in his 2010 book, and Kvanvig turns to understanding after failing to solve the value problem for knowledge in his *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*. This result should not be too terribly counterintuitive, since it will certainly ground value for a large proportion of the individual pieces of knowledge that we typically think of as valuable insofar as those pieces figure into more general understanding.

So, we have arrived at a view of curiosity as a general desire that avoids Brady's objection that curiosity is always selectively oriented toward particular matters of fact or subject matters. First, it is a mistake to assume that the mere fact that a desire, due to spatiotemporal restrictions, has to be directed toward a particular, implies that the desire itself is not perfectly general. Second, very general curiosity, conceived of as a desire to understand the world's function in its entirety seems sufficient to ground value for a very wide set of items of knowledge, at least as far as they function in a network of understanding.

3.5. Conclusion

In sum, curiosity grounds a straightforward value for knowledge when properly understood. The objections to using a desire like curiosity to ground the value of knowledge are not so telling if we
do not let them rule out any and all subjective theories of value by stipulation. What these objections do reveal, though, is that the type of curiosity that can do the work that we need to solve the value problem needs better description. I have argued that, in order to ground value, curiosity must be reflectively endorsed, sufficiently deep, and not undermined by relevant false beliefs. It also must be more than a mere animal urge, and, in order to ground value for knowledge in general, must be directed at very general understanding of the world. This moves away from the way that most defenders of curiosity speak, as they reference 'natural' desires. I think that, in order to ground value, curiosity must be something that one recognizes and consciously takes up.

However, note that this type of value for knowledge is merely 'for the most part'. Since one must consciously recognize and actively, reflectively endorse this desire, it is a contingent matter whether subjects are curious and thus whether knowledge has this sort of value. While I believe that curiosity is a fairly ubiquitous part of subjects' lives, this may seem to be a lackluster result for epistemologists seeking a defense of the value of knowledge. We began this task in search of some sort of defense of the universal final value of knowledge. On the account of curiosity that I have given here, since a subject must actively take up general curiosity toward the world, it is completely possible for a subject to entirely lack this kind of curiosity. In fact, a world is possible in which there are only a few subjects, and they are all trying to survive and have no interest in understanding the world as it is. In such a world, knowledge would lack the sort of final value for which we have been searching.

I think that any view which holds that some activity of the subject is necessary for an object to have final value must be open to the possibility that knowledge can lack this value. However, I do not think that this is the end when searching for an account of the universal value of knowledge. In fact, in the next chapter I will argue that there is a role for knowledge in every life in that one must have some knowledge (or understanding) of the world in order to form a value-stance on it at all. I will argue for what I call the 'preconditional value' of knowledge.
4. The Preconditional Value of Understanding

4.0. Introduction

If the sort of curiosity that would ground final value for knowledge is not universal, and if the
virtue-theoretic accounts of the value of knowledge do not succeed, then we are left with no real
contender for a defense of the universal final value of knowledge. If it is not a product of our basic
desires and it is not in our 'natures,' then it seems that knowledge need not have final value in our lives.
While it is possible to hold a conception according to which there are objects of objective final value
whose value we know from 'intuition,' I cannot address every possible way to structure value here. The
closest to such a view that we have considered is Zagzebski's above, but such a view boils down to the
intuitive claim that knowledge is especially valuable. Since this is how we began exploring the value
problem, our extended investigation into different failed accounts of this value should have, by now,
cast some doubt on the 'intuition' view. Thus, after the investigations of the last two chapters, we are
left without justification for our pretheoretical belief that knowledge is especially valuable, and in
particular more valuable than mere true belief. While the beginnings of value-driven epistemology
took it as a given that knowledge has final value and took epistemology's task as that of finding an
account of the nature of knowledge that met with the restriction that it account for this value as well,
we have concluded that this starting place was already incorrect.

But this does not mean that we should throw up our hands in accounting for knowledge's value.
In this chapter, I want to examine what is necessary for the establishment of values. In determining
what must be in place for an agent to project a value structure onto the world, I will argue that some
sort of cognitive achievement is necessary to even take part in the process of valuation. Since, as I will
argue, this cognitive achievement is necessary for the process of valuing to even get off the ground, we
have here found the universal value that we began our investigation searching for. Since it is a
precondition for the other objects in the domain to have final value themselves, I will call this
'preconditional value' rather than 'final value.' I will then go on to argue that it is understanding, rather
than knowledge, that has this universal preconditional value, and that the search for the final value of
knowledge has been off from the start (though I diagnose this intuition as a result of knowledge's role
as a part of understanding). My final view will be that neither knowledge nor understanding has
universal final value, but that understanding (and not knowledge) has universal preconditional value.

4.1. An Outline of a Subjective Theory of Value

A consequence of the rejection of the eudaimonistic line on the value of knowledge, and of
suspicion of resting some judgment of the objective value of knowledge on the widespread 'intuition'
that is it distinctively valuable, is that we are left with a subjective story of the ground of value. As we
saw in Chapter 3 above, it seems that desire alone is not enough to ground value, but that this does not
preclude a subjective theory; if we require that desires be reflectively endorsed, then we can have a
more reasonable (and reason-guided) view of how value is generated. In fact, those reflections on how
a curiosity-based account of the value of knowledge can respond to some basic objections have cleared
the ground for a subjective theory of value in general. Such a view should require that the attitudes
which ground value be reflectively endorsed, relatively stable, and not based on relevant false beliefs.
These are the most general restrictions that we ought to put on a subjective theory of value in order to
meet these most basic objections.

The first and most basic feature of a subjective theory of value is that the activity of a subject is
required for there to be value in the world. A world devoid of subjects is just a collection of mere
objects, and there is no differential value among them. A barren planet outside the light-cone of all
subjects has no value of its own on such a view. Without the intentions, desires, and projects of an
agent, a rock is just a rock. It has no value since it cannot be used for any purpose, let alone serve itself

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as an object of final value in a value set.

It will first be helpful to classify the different possible accounts of the value of knowledge that we have seen thus far using the value terminology that I clarified in section 0.1 above.

4.2. Alternative Accounts of the Value of Knowledge Classified

With attention to the distinctions in value terminology that I presented in section 0.1, we can classify the views of the value of knowledge in the literature that we have seen so far.

The eudaimonistic views of the value of knowledge hold that knowledge is of objective final value. This value is objective because it is based either on the biological facts of what the subject is, or on the facts about what sort of life is good for the subject. These facts establish what is valuable for the subject quite apart from anything that the subject herself does. If the subject couldn't care less about knowledge, then this just indicates a kind of defect in her. The value is final because knowledge is supposed to be part of the flourishing that is central to accounts of this kind and which serves as the goal of a human life. Whether this value is intrinsic or extrinsic is a more difficult question that we cannot fully address here. On the face of it, it seems that such a value for this cognitive state is extrinsic because it depends on the nature of a human. If such a state were instantiated in a very different organism, it might not have the same value. However, if we identify cognitive states partially by reference to the functional whole in which they are integrated, then we might be able to make the case that human knowledge as a state can only be instantiated in a human life, and that therefore it is, on these accounts, a bearer of intrinsic value. In either case, it is clear that the value of the state under consideration is of objective value since it does not depend on any actions by the subjects.

With this terminology on the table, we can see my arguments against the eudaimonistic account as being directed against their objective view of the human 'good life.' That is, considering eudaimonia as an objective final value is problematic. If biology is used to describe this 'good life,' then the
account either cannot explain why knowledge is valuable because biology in particular does not seem to ground value for truth, or it straightforwardly commits the naturalistic fallacy. If some normative eudaimonistic ideal is instead posited, then the account conflicts with the fact that a subject's attitudes and actions affect what counts as a flourishing life for her.

The achievement-based views of knowledge seem to also classify the value of knowledge as objective and final. Achievements are seen as having final value, full stop. It is not assumed that some sort of attitude toward achievements is necessary for their having final value. This is especially apparent in the arguments over whether negative achievements are disvaluable. If the defenders of views like this held that achievements were merely subjectively valuable, then they could distinguish between valuable and disvaluable achievements by distinguishing between the attitudes of the subjects in relevant examples. Since they prefer to take the route of defending the final value of achievements \textit{qua} achievement in situations of prima facie disvaluable achievement, I take it that this is not their view. That is, since Pritchard attempts to explain away any purported counterexamples to the final value of achievements as ignoring their value \textit{qua} achievement, it seems that he considers this value to be universally present, and not to depend on the activities or attitudes of the subjects doing the achieving.

The curiosity-based views that we have discussed are clear examples of subjective theories of the value of knowledge, since they ground this value on the basis of a human desire or attitude. Now, if they allowed any basic desire to ground value, and they held that the desire for knowledge was a necessary part of being a human, then theirs would be an objective theory of value. However, as I showed in Chapter 3, any plausible desire-based theory of value will have restrictions on the sorts of desires that can ground value, and in particular must require the endorsement of desire. With endorsement in the picture, it is clear that any plausible curiosity-based account of the value of knowledge will be a subjective theory. While I agree with the subjective quality of these views, as I
have argued, the kind of curiosity that would do this grounding is far from universal.

With this clarified, we can see my view as an attempt to show what sort of universal value knowledge has on a subjective theory. I grant that curiosity, in some cases, can ground final value for knowledge. However, with this sort of curiosity not necessarily showing up as a feature of every life, the question remains whether knowledge has value of any kind in all lives. It certainly seems that knowledge has some role to play in every complete human life, but it is not yet clear what that role is.

4.3. The Basic Theory

My view is that value is subjective. This means that for anything to be valuable subjects must do something which confers value on that thing. I will use the verb 'to prefer' to refer to the action that a subject performs in order to confer value on something. Thus for an object to have value it must be the case that a subject prefers it. A preference is a standing relation which can be designated by a phrase of the form 'S prefers x'. I will call the totality of all objects which a subject prefers that subject's preference set.

As stated above, this view entails the rejection of intrinsic value. Since a subject must do something to bring value into the world, no object has intrinsic value. A dissertation, considered in itself as a series of marks on paper, has no value in itself. My activity is necessary to confer final value on it. This, of course, does not entail the rejection of shared values. It may be the case that a something is preferred by everyone, and thus has 'objective' value in the sense that its value is shared and intersubjective. However, this does not change the fact that its value depends on the preferences of the subjects.

As regards the instrumental/final distinction, this theory has room for both. A subject prefers the ends, and the means gain their instrumental value therefrom. A good way to determine the structure of a preference set is to establish the final values and determine what the means to those final values
are. For example, the final value of my dissertation means that my computer has instrumental value for me since it aids in the composition of that dissertation.

A 'preference', as I take it, is something that a subject actively takes up. As argued in Chapter 3 above, I do not consider unreflective tendencies like unconscious biases to be what confer value on objects. Simply because the bombardment of commercials has made me probabilistically more likely to buy a certain brand of laundry detergent over others does not mean that I prefer that laundry detergent in my sense. This means that preferences require reflection and decision to be established. As established above, a subject's preferences must be reflectively endorsed, sufficiently deep, and not undermined by relevant false beliefs in order to ground value.

In order to get the structure of a subject's preference set, the first place to look is those basic objects which the subject has chosen as finally valuable, e.g. knowledge, a luxurious home, a position of power, the wellbeing of a family, etc. These give us the fundamental final values in a preference set. From here we can discover what will be of instrumental value to the subject. For example, for all of the aforementioned final values, a bachelor's degree can serve as a good instrument (since it can help achieve knowledge, or a position of power, etc.). Note that this means that the same object (e.g. a bachelor's degree) can have a variety of different kinds of instrumental value, depending on the final value preferred by the subject.

So, the domain of objects gains its value-structure based on an action of the subject. We can understand this in terms of a relation that the subject bears to the domain. Before this relation is established, there is not value structure. Once the subject's activity establishes final value for some crucial objects in the domain, the whole value structure follows from there. Instrumentality-relations between members of the domain can be discovered once final values are in place. While final values are projected, instrumental values are discovered.

The objects of final value that give value structure to the whole domain of objects are the sorts
of things that give structure to the practical reasoning of a whole life. Aristotle thought that there must be one thing for which all other things were chosen:

Suppose, then, that the things achievable by action have some end that we wish for because of itself, and because of which we wish for the other things, and that we do not choose everything because of something else - for if we do, it will go on without limit, so that desire will prove to be empty and futile. Clearly, this end will be the good, that is to say, the best good. (NE I.2.1)

In such a system, every human action can only make sense by relation to the supreme good, since without such a rationale, our desires would be 'empty.' Now, passing over his optimistic rejection of the possibility that our desires are empty, it does not seem that one unitary good is necessary to avoid this conclusion. A domain of objects can have multiple items of final value, and a life can be complex in terms of objects valued. Still, it seems true that final value is generally projected on a few objects in the domain to the exclusion of the others. If this were not the case, and subjects exhibited true, pure love for all objects, it would be difficult to see how they could take reasonable actions. When one is pulled in all directions at once one remains motionless.

This should make clear why I prefer the verb 'to prefer' over other terms like 'desire' or 'value.' For one, these are very general terms, and mine will engender less confusion. 'Desire' is used very broadly, and we can just as easily say that we desire world peace as that we desire a cold beer. 'Value' is not very useful here as 'S values A and this grounds the value of A' reads awkwardly. For another thing, use of the term 'to prefer' brings to the fore the fact that a subject's preference for the primary objects of final value in the domain is to the exclusion of the others. A subject prefers the flourishing of her family to the exclusion of other objects that she could achieve or promote.

For example, let's say that Reginald prefers the summitting of mountains. Considering a world full of mountain summits, without any subjects they have no value. This is merely an implication of working in a subjective framework. However, once we introduce Reginald and his relation to the
summitting of mountains, value is in the picture. This is a largescale project that structures Reginald's life. Because of this final value that he has projected onto the world, other objects like crampons or ice axes gain instrumental value for him. These values, both instrumental and final, provide a ground of reasons for his actions. When asked why he is training, he can answer that he wants to be able to hike faster. When asked why he wants to hike faster, he can answer that he wants to be able to summit mountains without dying. At this point he has reached an end: such a state of affairs has final value for Reginald, and this is due to his preference. Nothing more can be given.

This is the basic structure of the theory. To understand whether and which cognitive achievements play a role in it, we should be more precise about what exactly the relation between subject and domain of objects must be in order to establish final values.

4.4. To Prefer, v

If we can be clearer about the exact relation that a subject bears to a domain of objects by which that domain gains value-structure, then it will be easier to determine the role of knowledge (or perhaps other cognitive achievements) in establishing this relation. In this section I will argue that preferences, first, must have all of the features that I have already established as necessary for a subjective theory of value to avoid the most basic objections. In addition, I will claim that preferences must be stable and must take into account relations between objects.

It is clear that preferences must be reflectively endorsed in order to ground final value for the central objects in the domain. If clever advertisement manipulates someone into exhibiting behavior that seems to be a preference for some product over others, this does not seem to be the basic relation that grounds the central values of a human life. It is possible to distinguish between a subject's behavior and the objects for which that subject's attitudes actually ground value. Besides the prima facie resistance to a theory according to which advertising agencies can establish the actual value of
their products through manipulation, we can now be more specific about the problem with such a faux 'preference.' If we are operating within a subjective theory of value, then whenever we are talking about the value of an object, then we must be clear to whom the value under discussion is indexed. On an objective theory, saying something like 'biological success is valuable' is complete in and of itself. On a subjective theory, saying something like 'achieving political power is valuable' is underdescribed, and requires a 'to X' clause, where X is the subject to whom achieving political power is valuable. We cannot say (merely) that summitting mountains is valuable. To be precise, we have to claim that summitting mountains is valuable to Reginald. When we add this qualification, we have to pay attention to whose action is establishing this value. In the case of clever advertisement or more science fiction forms of mind control, it is not this subject whose behavior we are observing whose subjective action established the preference; her activity is not determined autonomously, but rather by some other subject external to her. If some subject A manipulates another subject B into exhibiting preferential behavior toward an object, this is no evidence of B's valuing the object, but is rather evidence of A's own values. This is because we are not concerned with mere behavior on a subjective theory: we are concerned with the autonomous evaluations of the subjects. When manipulation affects the behavior of a subject unbeknownst to her, it is not an activity of the subject herself that determines the preferential behavior, and thus the behavior is no indicator of value. At most, such behavior is a part of a larger state of affairs preferred by the manipulator (for example, an advertising firm) which includes the subject, the object, and the behavior (for example, purchasing) all together.

It is also clear that a preference must be sufficiently deep to ground values. The central objects of final value in a domain give the entire value structure of the world. This value structure provides the instrumentality relations and the goals which provide the rationale behind individual actions. For example, making sense of an action frequently requires reference to the final values for the subject. The same behavior for two different subjects can mean very different things with very different
preference sets. Reginald might go for a walk in order to train for summitting a mountain. For him this action only makes sense as having instrumental value. Yusef could go on a walk that is exactly the same in every detail, but for him, experiencing the wind on his cheeks and the sounds of the birds on a sunny afternoon have final value all their own. In this case, this action makes sense in a very different way. In general, for a life to make sense through time, the basic preferences which provide reasons for actions need to remain somewhat static. If shallow or fleeting attitudes grounded value, then the shifting would render actions diachronically unintelligible. Thus, we should think of the basic preferences that ground value in a life as the major, largescale goals and projects of that life. We are not talking about fads here, we are talking about commitments like that to family or country or the advancement of human knowledge.

Preferences also must be understood as excluding the presence of relevant false beliefs. If Reginald has a preference for summitting mountains, then this grounds final value for the activity of summitting all of the mountains in the domain of objects. This is fully compatible with the possibility of his mistaking a hill for a mountain, and incorrectly believing that summitting it would have final value. It is even possible for a subject to believe that a class of objects has value of a particular kind and to be completely mistaken due to a false belief about a property of that class of objects. For example, it is possible for Reginald to prefer, above all, very cautious and safe approaches to the summits of mountains which, with proper preparation, present very little risk of death. He may also erroneously believe that there are safe approaches to all of the summits in the Andes. In this case, he will prefer summitting all of the peaks in the Andes, but this apparent preference will not ground final value for these activities due to a deeper preference that he does not know is being violated here.

Note that here I used the term 'apparent preference.' I will reserve the use of the term 'preference' for that relation which actually does ground final value for its relatum. When push comes to shove, an agent will reveal her actual preference when false beliefs come to light. If Reginald
discovers that the peaks under consideration are wildly unsafe, then he will admit that he never actually preferred their summing after all. Actual preference grounds final value, apparent preference may not.

The preferences which establish the final values for a subject must be somewhat stable in order to count as preferences. The goals toward which one works or around which one structures one's life are what makes one's life unitary. In fact, identifying with the actualization or acquisition or participation with one's objects of final value are part of what makes one who one is. This calls to mind the way that Williams conceptualizes projects and commitments in his criticism of utilitarianism:

The point is that he is identified with his actions as flowing from projects or attitudes which in some cases he takes seriously at the deepest level, as what his life is about (or at least this section of his life -- seriousness is not necessarily the same as persistence). It is absurd to demand of such a man, when the sums come in from the utility network which the projects of others have in part determined, that he should just step aside from his own project and decision and acknowledge the decision which utilitarian calculation requires. It is to alienate him in a real sense from his actions and the source of his action in his own convictions. It is to make him into a channel between the input of everyone's projects, including his own, and an output of optimific decision; but this is to neglect the extent to which his projects and his decisions have to be seen as the actions and decisions which flow from the projects and attitudes with which he is most closely identified. It is thus, in the most literal sense, an attack on his integrity. (Smart and Williams 1973, pp. 116-117)

Note that one's projects need not remain the same throughout one's whole life in order to count as projects. This would require most Americans to have the jobs as firefighters or astronauts about which they dreamed as children in order to maintain authenticity. However, the sorts of things to which one can be deeply committed should not vary wildly, lest one cease to be the same person from one action to the next. The argument is simple. On the assumption that one remains the same person for large swathes of one's life along with the assumption that the basic preferences which structure the value of the domain of objects determine the points and meanings of one's actions, then one's preferences must be stable over time to the degree that one remains the same person over time.
This means that, for a relation between a subject and an object to count as a preference, it needs some amount of diachronic stability. This is not the sort of quantity that one can establish precisely, but it is clear that, if preferences make sense of an entire life (if they are the equivalent of Williams's 'projects' or 'commitments'), then they must have some stability. Let's say that, if Reginald is reading the morning paper, reads about a particularly impressive first ascent of an imposing peak, and forms a heretofore nonexistent preference for summitting mountain peaks, but that after a long day of work in the office abandons this idea in favor of his previous preference of working hard in an office chair so that he can eventually retire and play golf, then this didn't constitute a preference in my sense. If he undergoes a radical shift in his attitudes in the middle of his life, and abandons his office job in order to better serve his new goal of summitting mountains, and this new goal would not be easily shaken by new information or future goals, then this would constitute a preference in my sense, even if it didn't arise until well into his middle age. A crisis generates a rupture in the sense of a life, but the fact that they do not exist for the entirety of a life does not mean that the evaluations that emerge from a crisis are illegitimate.

Note that stability does not require that a preference continue to exist for some determinate quantity of time into the future. It is entirely possible that a subject die in service of her stable preference, even if that preference has not been in existence for a long period of time. If Reginald's commitment to the summitting of mountains is deep, reflectively endorsed, not based on false beliefs, and not easily shaken, then even if he fails on his first attempt and dies on the approach to the summit, his preference can be deemed genuine. It is not the case that a subject's dying in the service of the things that she values undercuts this value in any way.

It is also the case that preferences must involve value-relations between objects. It is the nature of preferences that they give value-structure to the domain. This requires that some objects be valued to the exclusion of others. A preference for providing for the health and flourishing of one's family in
particular means a preference for this provision and not the provision for the health and safety of other families. Without a comparison to other people and without in-group and out-group reasoning, the idea of provision for the health and flourishing does not even make sense.

Preferences are involved in decisions, and decisions with multiple possible outcomes are made by reference to which objects have final value. If one action will acquire one object and another action will acquire another, arbitration is achieved by comparison of the final value of these objects. Thus, preferences must be attentive to relations between objects. This does not mean that they must make reference to value relations between objects. This cannot be the case, since preferences establish the value-relations between objects. Rather, preferences must be able to distinguish among objects on the basis of relevant properties. For example, one basis of the preference for the provision of health and flourishing for one's own family could be that one's family is constituted by those that one loves. Here, the relevant difference between these persons and other persons is the fact that they are loved by the subject. This difference is crucial in one's forming the preference for one person's flourishing over another's.

So, in sum, a preference is a relation between the subject and an object such that this object has final value for that subject. This relation must be reflectively endorsed by the subject, must be sufficiently deep, must be free of relevant false beliefs about the object under consideration, must be somewhat stable, and must take a wide view and pay heed to the relations among the objects in the domain.

4.5. Preconditions for Preferring

It remains to be asked what exactly must be in place in the cognitive machinery of the subject in order to establish the preference relation. With the rough features of the relation on the table, it should be apparent that more than simple awareness that there is a domain of objects is required. For there to
be value in the world, the subject must do something, and this action cannot be arbitrary or
directionless. Since this action must be directed at certain objects in the domain to the exclusion of
others, demands are made on the cognitive apparatus of the subject in the establishment of value in the
world.

First, since the relation must be reflectively endorsed by the subject, it is clear that it cannot be
simply given to the subject or discovered by her. It cannot be the case that she discovers the
preference-relations that obtain between her and the central objects of final value in the domain in
exactly the same way that she discovers the objects or their properties themselves. If we take a
subjective theory of value seriously, then, as I have argued, we have to allow that some reflective action
by the subject is necessary for an object to have value. Since the subject must do something, she
cannot passively encounter an object's value. Ultimately, this value will be based on her projection.

Now, we might in some cases say, speaking in a non-technical manner, that we find out that
something is valuable. Indeed, the PBS television program *Antiques Roadshow* holds all of its appeal
based on the fact that viewers can vicariously experience the excitement of unwitting trinket owners
who discover that their objects are worth far more than they thought. One might argue that this is a
clear case of discovering the value of something. After all, the day before the Roadshow, Reginald
believes that his decorative porcelain pony is worth five dollars, but at the Roadshow he is informed by
an expert that it is worth half a million dollars. He seems to change his belief about the value of this
object in the face of this new information. It isn't as if Reginald is projecting value differently after
hearing from the expert. This looks as if it is a levelheaded counterexample to my view.

I do not think that this case if we more carefully analyze what is happening between Reginald
and his pony here. First, we are talking about the monetary value of the pony. Money is a
paradigmatic example of instrumental value. Thus, the monetary value of the pony can only be
understood by reference to its utility in bringing about some other object of final value. Let's say that
Reginald will use any money he gains from the selling of his trinkets to provide for his family, and that his family's flourishing is what, for him, bears final value. Then it is obvious that we don't have a case of Reginald's discovery altering the landscape of final value here. He is merely discovering that his pony had far more instrumental value than he had at first thought. Instrumental value is perfectly compatible with discovery, but the case we have examined says nothing about final value. Finding out that something is worth more cash is merely finding out that it will better serve one in promoting the real objects of value in that subject's domain.

Even in a case in which Reginald discovers that an object has previously unknown final value can be interpreted according to my view. Say that Reginald values summitting mountains. He attempts to reach the summit of Mount Rainier in Washington, and thinks that he nearly makes it, but is turned back by whiteout conditions. He and his team take some time at their high point, a bit chagrined, but reveling in their near achievement. When he returns to basecamp, say that another climber informs him that his party was indeed on the peak of the mountain, they simply could not tell due to the bad visibility in the rough weather. Reginald then discovers that his experience up there, battered by wind and snow, really was an item of final value: he did, contrary to his initial belief, achieve something of final value. In this case, he is discovering that a previous experience has final value. This may seem to contrary to my view since he isn't newly projecting value on that experience, but is rather finding out that it is valuable.

I think that my view can accommodate this example as well. For Reginald, it is the case that any instance of summitting a mountain has final value. All possible states of affairs that include him reaching the top of a mountain through his own physical effort are valuable to him. In the example above, he had acquired an item of final value, and was not aware of it. Once he discovers that he was at the summit, he does not discover a new instance of final value, as it was already the case that all instances of summitting were finally valuable due to his preference for them. Rather, he discovers that
an item which he already had was one of the already finally valuable objects. The value structure of
the world has not been altered by his discovery. Here Reginald has not learned anything about value
per se, he has learned that something is valuable.

It is clear that the preference relation, which grounds the final value of objects, is established by
the agent. In order to make this move and structure the values that make sense of one's life, one must
have some level of cognitive contact with reality. Value cannot be established by preferential shots in
the dark. Without some view about what sorts of objects there are and what relations they bear to one
another, a subject cannot form a consistent or stable view about what is valuable.

This consideration indicates that a subject should at least have a large collection of true beliefs
about the domain of objects in order to establish a preference set. This collection of true beliefs will, at
minimum, include beliefs about which objects exist and the relations between these objects. As
humans typically live in society with other humans, it will include beliefs about how other people
participate in society with the subject, their roles, and their relations to the subject. It will include
beliefs about human life and the sorts of events that can happen therein. For example, when Reginald
establishes his preference for the summitting of mountains, this will require a slew of beliefs about
what mountains are, their distribution in the world, the limits of human endurance, and the experiences
that one might have in achieving a mountain's summit.

These will have to be true beliefs, since if Reginald discovers that he was radically mistaken
about an essential feature of an object on which he projected final value, then he will revise his value-
scheme accordingly, concluding that the object under consideration did not have final value after all.
If, say, Reginald has some false beliefs about the local hills, thinking that they are in fact much taller
than they are, he may think that they have final value when they do not. He will not be successfully
preferring their summitting without having true beliefs about their altitude.

At a deeper level, Reginald cannot project value onto the activity of summitting mountains
unless he has an accurate view of what this is. Say that Reginald prefers an activity which is dangerous, involves being outdoors, involves achieving altitude, and involves experiencing all of these things far from human civilization. Assume that Reginald lives in a world in which the tops of all of the large mountains have been blown off for mining purposes, and suburban neighborhoods have encroached on all previously wild areas. In that case, even if he thinks that summitting the tallest formations in his world would have final value he is mistaken, as nothing in the domain exists which satisfies all of the properties to have final value for him.

In many cases, when we revise our beliefs about whether an object has final value it is because we learn something about the properties of the object. If someone values getting a certain kind of job on the assumption that it will bring her power and fame, and later discovers that the job will do no such thing, she revises her belief about that job. What she was really valuing was being powerful and famous. In this sort of case, the preference of the individual grounds final value for power and fame, and in this way at least requires a set of true beliefs about what power and fame are. At some level, once we dig past a subject's false beliefs about particular objects, we will find out what types of objects or which properties of objects she values, and she cannot accurately project value on these things without knowing what these properties are, which would amount to not knowing the meanings of the terms involved.

However, more seems to be required for establishing a preference than merely having a set of true beliefs about the objects in the domain, however large this set may be. Mere true beliefs can come in a variety of less-than-ideal forms. Even a lucky guess can count as a true belief. If a subject happens to have a large set of true beliefs about the world, but formed these beliefs at random and has no reason to believe them, then this does not seem sufficient for her to confidently decide which objects in the domain have final value. Since forming a preference for an object provides the ground for the actions which structure the subject's whole life, it seems that more is required than a guess. The subject
should have reason to be confident in her beliefs in order to perform an action so crucial as structuring the entire value of the domain.

One reason that a subject needs to be reasonably confident in her beliefs is that she must be assured that she will remain correct into the future. If preferences are formed off of guesses, then there is no assurance that one will remain correct about the objects under consideration. If a preference is supposed to establish a central object of value in an individual's life, then forming that preference is a serious commitment. When I am talking about preferences, I am talking about the most sober establishment of what makes one's life matter at all. This is not to be confused with the oft-shifting attractions that subjects might have to individual objects. If Reginald picks up the accordion for a week and attempts to learn to play it, but quickly abandons the instrument in favor of other pursuits, we would not want to call this an attitude which grounds final value for accordion-playing in Reginald's life. Since preferences require serious commitment, then the beliefs that one has about the objects under consideration must be relatively stable. Since these beliefs must be stable, it seems that we have reason to believe that, over and above the requirement that we have true beliefs to establish preferences, we need justifications for these beliefs.

One of the advantages of knowledge over mere true belief that Socrates cites in the *Meno* is that knowledge is 'tethered.' This stability of knowledge is a clear difference and benefit, and it is precisely what it seems we need to establish our preferences. If one has a collection of beliefs, even if they are true, from the agential perspective, it is very risky to project value onto the world on their basis without the backup of justification. When one has a network of beliefs that fit together well and have their own justification, then this gives one sufficient assurance that one is correct, and that the world in the future will resemble the world as one sees it now. This seems necessary to reasonably make the significant move of selecting the objects in the domain which bear final value.

Note that I am not here arguing that one must be *certain* about the structure of the objects in the
domain in order to project value onto them. This is far too stringent a requirement, as certainty, at least about external objects, is impossible. However, there is some threshold of justification between mere capricious guessing and complete certainty that one must have in order to confidently commit to a value-structure for her world.

Here it seems that we have arrived at something approximating a defense of the value of knowledge over mere true belief, the goal with which value-driven epistemology was originally tasked. In order to establish value, mere true belief is not enough. The justification that is a feature of knowledge is necessary. However, there are two further questions to ask at this point: (1) is knowledge really necessary for the establishment of value, or will mere justified true belief accomplish this goal? and (2) is justified true belief by itself sufficient for the establishment of preferences? Even if the answer to (1) is negative, and the fourth condition (beyond justified true belief) on knowledge is not necessary to establish the preference relation, it can still be the case that something beside this fourth condition is required, and justified true belief alone is not sufficient to establish a preference.

4.6. Is Knowledge Necessary for Preference Establishment?

I will argue that knowledge, conceived of as justified true belief with the addition of a fourth condition designed to solve the Gettier problem, is not necessary for preference establishment. For my purposes, it is not essential which solution to the Gettier problem is considered. The reader may substitute the relevant piece of her favorite account of knowledge in whenever I reference the 'fourth condition.' The crucial question here is not which purportedly Gettier-proof account of knowledge is correct, but whether Gettiered knowledge claims can serve for the establishment of preferences.

An example that Kvanvig uses to argue that objectual understanding can be Gettiered is that
[T]here is no analogue for the Gettier problem regarding objectual understanding. The argument for this latter claim comes from consideration of cases in which it is plausible to attribute understanding but which constitute classic Gettier cases. For example, one can have historical understanding of a particular period of time and place partly as a result of having one’s dyslexia correct fortuitously for errors in one’s sources. One’s understanding is displayed by the capacity to answer correctly (from information one possesses) any question about the period in question, including explanatory questions about why events happened in that period in the way they did. Such cases fit the model for classic Gettier cases, but do not threaten objectual understanding. About such understanding, we might find quite a bit of luck in the existence of such understanding, but such luck does not undermine understanding as it undermines knowledge. (Kvanvig 2009, p. 311)

Say that Reginald goes to a used bookstore and picks up a book that ostensibly treats of the French Revolution. Through it, he gains a large number of true beliefs, and, since they originate from a book full of mutually supporting true claims, his true beliefs are justified. In fact, this book goes so far as gaining him understanding of the French Revolution (the relevance of which we will discuss below). However, unbeknownst to Reginald, this book was written by a roomful of drunk chimps wildly mashing the keys of a series of typewriters. It is pure luck that what they wrote happened to be true. In fact, every other book in the used bookstore was written by them, and every other book is total gibberish. Since it is only by extreme luck that his justified beliefs are true, contemporary epistemologists would agree that Reginald does not have any knowledge claims about the French Revolution.

However, it seems that in a case like this Reginald does possess what he needs to establish preferences. He can with stability and confidence evaluate the objects in the domain in relation to one another. If the book by which he gained understanding were instead a book about mountaineering, it seems clear that Reginald could successfully form the preference for the summitting of mountains therefrom. He can form a reflectively endorsed attitude about which he can have stable confidence with sufficient cognitive contact with the objects in the domain and their relation, and this is what is required for the establishment of preferences. Understanding is not the same thing as justified true
belief. The former requires a large set of true beliefs and the ability to move among them. The latter is atomistic. And the understanding provides everything necessary for the establishment of preferences even while Gettiered.

If one can form preferences while Gettiered, then knowledge is not necessary for the establishment of value. It remains to be seen, however, whether justified true belief alone is sufficient.

4.7. Is JTB Sufficient for Preference Establishment?

It seems that, in the case of Reginald in the bookstore, he achieves the sort of cognitive contact with reality that he needs to establish preferences. This is, at least, a set of justified true beliefs about objects in the domain. However, it is not clear whether a set of justified true beliefs alone is sufficient for the establishment of preferences.

First, the size of the set of beliefs must be taken into consideration. One justified true belief about one object is not sufficient for one to establish a preference for that object. This is because, as I have claimed before, forming preferences requires establishing the value of some objects to the exclusion of others. Given a large domain of possible pursuits for a life, forming a preference requires picking which of all of them to pursue. This means that one must have true beliefs about the existence and properties of a large proportion of the objects in the domain in order to project value. It is not merely about having justified true belief, but about having the right quantity of justified true beliefs.

Note that it will be very difficult to specify precisely what 'a large proportion of the objects in the domain' is. A subject in an isolated corner of the world who will never interact with a foreign society and will live a quiet agricultural life will need a much smaller number of justified true beliefs in order to master the relevant domain than someone living in the contemporary information age. This threshold must be left vague, but I believe that, intuitively, we should have sufficient understanding of 'a large proportion' to realize that it is certainly true that more than a handful of justified true beliefs
about the domain are required for a subject to project value onto that domain.

Merely possessing a large number of true beliefs about the existence and properties of the objects in the domain, however, is not yet sufficient to be able to establish the preference relation. In order to do this, one must know about the relations between the objects. This is because, since value is supposed to, among other things, ground choices between many objects that can be realized, then establishing a value-spectrum among objects will involve being able to place those objects relative to one another.

This means that one cannot have a series of atomistic, unrelated justified true beliefs about individual objects in the domain to project value on them. What one needs is the ability to see connections among objects, and the ability to make inferences between beliefs about the objects in the domain. In short, one needs some level of understanding of the domain in question in order to establish value. Knowledge alone is cognitive contact with individual objects or facts. Understanding is cognitive contact with the domain, and a view of the objects as they relate to one another, and as they cause effects and persist into the future. Having understanding of the world is having a view, and my claim is that one must have a view of the relevant portion of the world in order to project a value structure onto it.

4.8. The Preconditional Value of Understanding

A subject must understand the domain, to some degree, in order to prefer some object and thereby cause there to be value in the world. Note that it isn't that understanding is particularly useful in establishing final value; it is not an item of instrumental value here. Without understanding, there could not be any evaluation of the domain at all. Just as much as a subject is a precondition for there to be value in the world, an understanding subject is such a precondition.

Note that I have been explaining the interaction between a subject and the domain of objects in
simplified terms. The picture according to which a subject first understands the domain and then projects final value onto the appropriate objects, fixing the value structure for the future is helpfully accurate in a certain sense, but in another is as misleading as the frictionless surfaces of elementary physics. In reality, a deeper understanding of the world can be achieved once the subject values regions of it. Love of the stars can draw a young astronomer to work hard and understand the universe even more fully, which in turn can help influence how she values in her domain. However, the simple claim is that projection cannot get off the ground without there first being a wide picture of what there is for the subject to project values onto. The actual phenomenal world will be messier and more historical than this, but the basic logical picture remains the same.

This means that, for the whole of the value turn in epistemology, writers have been looking too logically high up for the value of knowledge. Because in the literature it is commonly presumed, in a largely Aristotelian fashion (and likely aided by professional philosophers' own life commitments to understanding the world), that knowledge itself must be worthy of pursuit, the possibility of lives that value different objects like artistic production or extreme experiences or merely care for another has been left by the wayside. However, closer attention to all of these possible lives reveals that they all must share a similar structure: for stable, autonomous evaluation of the domain to get off the ground, there must be some understanding on the part of the subject.

From the beginning of the value turn in epistemology, writers have attempted to explicate the final value of knowledge or understanding. We have seen views according to which the cognitive character of a knowing subject bears final value on its own, and views according to which a natural desire for the truth grounds value for all knowledge. I have argued that it is not the case that these cognitive states, achievements though they may be, always have final value. However, on a subjective view of value, it is the case that understanding always has preconditional value. Any legitimate, stable, sincere evaluation of the domain made by a subject will require that the subject has some understanding
of the domain and how its objects behave and interact. Without understanding, there is no value of which to be spoken.
Works Cited


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