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Intellectual Virtue and Human Flourishing: An Explanation of the Intrinsic Value of the Intellectual Virtues

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Intellectual Virtue and Human Flourishing:
An Explanation of the Intrinsic Value of the Intellectual Virtues

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Philosophy

by

Jeremy Vethan Gomer

Committee in charge:

Professor Georgios Anagnostopoulos, Chair
Professor Saba Bazargan
Professor Nicholas Christenfeld
Professor Paul Churchland
Professor Christine Harris

2015
The Dissertation of Jeremy Vethan Gomer is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2015
It is debated whether virtue is real or ideal
but my wife whom I find most dear
proves to me that virtue is most real.

It is with gratitude that I dedicate this work to Mizu,
whose virtues of love, loyalty, devotion, and kindness
have blessed me with an abundance most ideal.
The branch of philosophy we are dealing with at present is not purely theoretical like the others, because it is not in order to acquire knowledge that we are considering what virtue is, but to become good people – otherwise there would be no point in it.

Aristotle
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page.............................................................................................................................. iii
Dedication.................................................................................................................................... iv
Epigraph....................................................................................................................................... v
Table of Contents....................................................................................................................... vi
Acknowledgments...................................................................................................................... vii
Vita................................................................................................................................................ ix
Abstract of the Dissertation..................................................................................................... x
Introduction................................................................................................................................. 1
Chapter 1: Virtue Epistemology.............................................................................................. 19
Chapter 2: Accounts of the Intellectual Virtues................................................................... 48
Chapter 3: Flourishing.............................................................................................................. 124
Chapter 4: A Eudaimonistic Virtue Epistemology.............................................................. 181
Conclusion................................................................................................................................. 221
References.................................................................................................................................. 224
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Intellectual Virtue and Human Flourishing: An Explanation of the Intrinsic Value of the Intellectual Virtues

by

Jeremy Vethan Gomer

Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

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Professor Georgios Anagnostopoulos, Chair

The intellectual virtues, excellent character traits as they concern the objects of epistemic concern, are usually thought to be intrinsically valuable or worth possessing in themselves because of the role they play in the human epistemic enterprise. Contemporary virtue epistemology, a branch of virtue theory that deals with epistemological issues, has had difficulty lately in explaining what makes the intellectual
virtues intrinsically valuable. I argue that two of the primary reasons for this occurrence have to do with the fact that modern virtue epistemologists incorrectly try to utilize intellectual virtue for the sake of solving contemporary problems in the theory of knowledge in a manner that is not plausible, as well as the fact that they do not connect intellectual virtue to important supporting theoretical concepts, such as human flourishing, that ancient virtue theorists rely on in their exposition of virtue. In light of this, I look to Aristotle for inspiration in articulating what I term a eudaimonistic or Neo-Aristotelian virtue epistemology, one that explains the value of the intellectual virtues in a deep and systematic way by making a substantive connection between virtue and flourishing. In doing so, I ultimately defend the conclusion that intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable because it is a partial constituent of a flourishing human life.
Introduction

1. The Importance of Virtue

There is no shortage of information today on how to improve one's life. We are given a plethora of advice on how to lose weight, save more money, and find true love, among many other recent favorites. However, it's eminently reasonable to assume that no one has been bombarded by advice lately on how to become virtuous. Even the word “virtue” will strike many as antiquated, assuming they know what it means at all. However, virtue was discussed routinely and was an important part of ancient Greek philosophical culture. This isn't to say that the everyday people of the era were more virtuous than their counterparts today; far from it, as philosophers, including Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, frequently criticized others for failing to cultivate virtue in their lives.

With that said, virtue was a part of ancient Greek thought in a manner that is not paralleled today. Thousands of years have passed between then and contemporary times; some may wonder, then, whether virtue faded from the collective consciousness because it was an outmoded or irrelevant concept.

But I would like to make a case for the importance of virtue today. Far from being an outmoded concept, virtue is intrinsically valuable and helps us live flourishing lives. Now there are many different classes of virtue, moral virtue being the most commonly discussed, so an explanation of why the virtues are important depends on what type of virtue is being examined. In this dissertation, I will examine the value and benefit of virtue across the epistemic dimension of human life; alternatively stated, I will
investigate the value of and benefit from acquiring intellectual virtue.

In the introduction, I would like to accomplish a few simple goals. Because the term *virtue* is not one with univocal meaning, it will be helpful to get clearer on at least a preliminary working definition to prevent some potential misapprehensions. I take up this task in section 2, which is immediately upcoming. In section 3, I indicate what projects my dissertation will *not* attempt, especially given some recent discussion of virtue from an empirical standpoint. Finally, in section 4, I state the precise claim that I will be arguing for and why. I also present a general road map that the dissertation will go through as I argue for the truth of my main thesis.

2. A General Sketch of Virtue

A virtue in its most general, ancient Greek sense means an excellence. It was not uncommon for the Greeks to attribute virtues to all sorts of things in this manner, including various and unrelated items such as swords, horses, tools, parts of living things, and of course, human beings. A virtue was a characteristic or feature that when added to an object made it excellent in some sense. Thus, a virtuous sword is one that cuts well; a virtuous eye is one that sees well; a virtuous bucket is one that holds water well. But what exactly does a virtue in the case of a human being look like? In what follows, I detail the central, paradigmatic features of possessing a virtue, not the necessary and sufficient conditions for the instantiation of virtue.¹

¹ It may in fact be impossible to give necessary and sufficient conditions for the exemplification of virtue for reasons that I will indicate in a later chapter. For now, I will say that the main drawback of providing such conditions is that concepts, such as virtue, are often pigeonholed and don't accurately represent the corresponding real phenomenon. That is, a definition of virtue in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions might not correspond well to all the major instances of virtue. However, it must also be emphasized that most philosophers in the virtue tradition, especially Aristotle in the
A human virtue, understood in the classical Greek sense, is an excellent character trait of an agent. Some common virtues include that of courage, honesty, justice, wisdom, temperance, and generosity, to mention some of the more famous ones. These states of character were considered to be important and defining aspects of a good person, and it would not be accurate to simply think of them as mere attitudes or beliefs that came into and out of existence periodically. As such, the virtues were considered to be persisting character traits. One might engage in a particularly courageous act out of the blue and out of one's normal character, and such an act surely deserves some praise, yet if the act didn't stem from a consistent and lasting state of character the person himself wouldn't be labeled as virtuous. Rather, this person would have taken a step toward acquiring virtue. Virtue almost always could not be acquired quickly; instead, it was thought that a long span of time, usually several years, was required to cultivate a virtue.

Related to the previous issue is the difference between performing an act consistent with virtue and acting from virtue. Consider the difference between two individuals who both decide to tell the truth after accidentally destroying something of importance. The first person tells the truth out of fear of the punishment he will receive, whereas the second tells the truth because he considers honesty to be good. While both people have acted in a manner consistent with honesty, it is only the latter person who has performed his actions virtuously, as he is the one whose action issued forth from virtue, that is, from a specific state of character, whereas the first person's action came from a state of fear of punishment. Virtue is not simply a matter of doing
the right thing, as virtue requires doing the right thing from the right state of character.

Partially composing the classical profile of virtue is its cognitive aspect, which was probably the most celebrated aspect of virtue in antiquity. The virtuous person is a rational person; she is able to reason well about the particular demands of a situation, other agents, and even herself. In the circumstance that she is forced to take action immediately without deliberation, she would be able to give an account of her action, explaining to others why she chose the particular actions she did and why she thought about a scenario in a particular way. It has frequently been misunderstood that virtue merely is a matter of habit, but that is an oversimplification as such a habit is not blind; one must know why she plans to pursue a certain course of action or at least be able to give an account of why such a plan was undertaken in the first place.

Another chief aspect of virtue is one's ability to express emotions well. The person who exercises the virtue of generosity not only donates resources to those in need; he feels delighted to be able to donate in the first place. In contrast is the person who donates money because he thinks it's the right thing to do but feels hesitant or pained at the thought of depriving oneself from useful funds. Such a person is definitely not a bad person but would not have been regarded as virtuous either. The thought here is not that one has direct control over one's emotions. Rather, the idea is that through training, one is better able to control the antecedent conditions that produce positive emotions. In the case of generosity, the virtuous person feels positive emotions from the good that the beneficiaries of virtue will receive rather than on the potential negative emotions he could feel in the process of donation.

Not only does the virtuous person think and feel in a virtuous manner, but she
also engages in behaviors that manifest her virtue. It would be incorrect to label a person as having the virtue of justice if she only appreciated justice as an ideal but never undertook actions that promoted justice in the world. A person who has a virtue has a characteristic tendency to perform actions that are related to that particular virtue. Though the behaviors that a virtuous person chooses to perform might exactly resemble those performed by the non-virtuous on external observation, the behaviors of the virtuous come from a virtuous state of character whereas the actions of the non-virtuous do not come from such a state.

Finally, it must be noted that the decision to become virtuous is chosen; it isn't generated automatically without volition. While several virtue theorists have observed that some people have been particularly gifted and are naturally talented at being compassionate, generous, or brave, it is only the virtuous person who has thought about her goals and chosen them because she regards them as good. The basic idea here is that natural ability or skill does not equate to virtue. Those without virtue are able to cultivate virtue through a series of repeated choices such that their habit of choosing becomes inculcated and a part of one's nature. Though not every aspect of being virtuous is directly chosen (such as controlling one's emotions, which are indirectly controlled), one must express choice at the level of deciding which character traits to build up and manifest.

In brief summary, the classical ancient conception of virtue can be thought of as a good character trait that involves the excellent use of reason, expression of emotion, and production of behaviors that stem from an underlying and voluntarily cultivated persistent state of character; going severely wrong in one or all of these aspects may
result in having an undesirable state of character—a vice. A vice generally is not merely the opposite of a virtue but usually involves some defect stemming from extremeness. For example, there are at least two ways of going wrong in regard to the virtue of courage; one might express foolhardiness, as when one needlessly charges into dangerous and unimportant situations, but one might also go wrong by expressing cowardice, shying away from conflicts that should be engaged in. One of the chief differences between a virtue and a vice is that the latter usually develops through some type of inattention or laziness, as it is a rare individual who chooses to engage in malice simply for the sake of evil. Though discussing the vices is important and interesting in its own right, my project in particular seeks to examine the value and benefit of virtue, rather than the disvalue or loss stemming from vice. Due to this focus, I will not attempt to further characterize a vice, though at times I will make points that can be more readily understood through comparing virtue to vice.

The particular examples of virtue provided above may lead one to the conclusion that the primary goal of being virtuous is to benefit others, not oneself. This is true to a large extent, especially as it concerns such other-oriented virtues as generosity and justice, but it doesn't tell the whole story. All the ancient virtue theorists believed that one should acquire virtue because it benefited the agent directly. It is important not to confuse the beneficial nature of the virtues with egoism; the virtuous person acts for the sake of the good, not for the sake of benefiting oneself. For example, the first thought in a generous person's mind is not how he can become a more excellent human by donating money but rather the thought that someone's suffering or bad fortune can be relieved. Though it might sound odd, even the altruistic virtues were thought to benefit oneself
Another aspect of the value of the virtues that has frequently been discussed and criticized is the idea that the virtues are intrinsically valuable, or worth having in themselves. For example, the virtue of honesty was thought to be worth cultivating for its own sake. This is not to deny that the virtue of honesty has no value insofar as it enables an agent to acquire other goods, such as in advancing in a job (because one is thought of as honest) or in being a good spouse (because one can be trusted in a relationship); in many cases, virtuous agents will reap many a reward due to the effects of exemplifying virtue. In fact, since ancient times it has been thought that the virtues are valuable in two senses; to paraphrase Aristotle, virtue has value in itself and because of the goods an agent could gain via exemplification of it. However, even if virtue were to financially ruin someone, or get them killed, or deprive them of other goods in some way, it was still thought that virtue had intrinsic value—that is, it would be worth having even if the agent were unable to secure subsequent goods with it. Of course, it hardly needs to be said that this is idea is controversial; nevertheless, I am in agreement with it and it features prominently in my primary thesis which I will indicate soon.

Before proceeding further, it is now a good time to explain in more detail what I mean by stating that something has intrinsic value, as in stating that the virtues are intrinsically valuable. The term *intrinsic* features in two different distinctions commonly made in philosophy, and the fact that the term appears in both is liable to cause some confusion. The first dichotomy involves the difference between instrumental and intrinsic value and indicates a contrast between the valuation of means to an end versus ends in themselves. To give perhaps an oversimplified example for the sake of
illustration, consider the following. Money is typically used to buy things, such as houses, cars, and various other purchasable items. Most agents, consciously or unconsciously, purchase these items because they think they will feel happy upon obtaining these things. In this case, money, and the things purchased with it, are typically thought of as having instrumental value; they have value only insofar as they enable an agent to obtain something of intrinsic value, happiness in this instance. The intrinsic-instrumental dichotomy highlights a relational distinction in the valuation of goods, one contrasting ultimacy (goods worth having in themselves) versus intermediacy (goods worth having insofar as they enable one to procure other goods).

The second contrast made in philosophy concerns the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic value. In this dichotomy, the focus is on the source of goodness and the distinction made is a metaphysical one—that is, one that makes an ontological claim about reality. For instance, one could state (rather simplistically, only for the sake of demonstrating a distinction) that a human life derives all its value from the fact that human beings have souls whereas all other living creatures do not. This amounts to making a metaphysical claim, namely, that a person's soul is what imparts a human life with value. In this example, the soul of a human being has intrinsic value whereas a person's life has extrinsic value because the latter metaphysically derives or depends on the former for its value. If human beings were to cease to have souls then they would likewise cease to have value as well.

Thus, and perhaps unfortunately, intrinsic value features prominently in two very different types of valuation. Different naming conventions have been proposed to take the place of intrinsic in the instrumental-intrinsic value dichotomy, such as in replacing
the term *intrinsic* with *final*, so that there is a contrast between means-to-an-end value and final value. Such proposals are well-motivated, but nevertheless, I will continue to use the traditional convention because it is very much entrenched in philosophy; virtually all of the literature that I interact with in the upcoming chapters utilizes this traditional terminology. So, for the sake of consistency with the works I interact with, will continue to use the term *intrinsic value* to indicate something as having *value in itself* or *final value* (as differentiated from having instrumental or means-to-an-end value). It is important to recognize that though I will make metaphysical claims and assumptions, such as presupposing the real existence of persons and their actual ability to acquire excellent character traits, I will *not* make any claims about what the ultimate metaphysical source of the goodness of virtue is and will remain agnostic on this issue.

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2 This proposal originates from Christine Korsgaard, “Two Kinds of Goodness,” in *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 249–73. Korsgaard actually argues that philosophers may have subconsciously equated the intrinsic-instrumental distinction with the intrinsic-extrinsic distinction, leading to the formation of various preconceptions.

3 To avoid even further potential confusion, I will understand something as having *value in itself* as equivalent to having *final value*. I say this because the phrase *in itself* may imply that something has value completely and totally independent of the existence of other things, such as saying that happiness has value *in itself*, even if nothing else were to exist. Of course, I do not mean to imply this at all because the idea that something has value in itself almost always presupposes the existence of several other things, such as an actually existing world containing people who are capable of experiencing things. All I mean to indicate in saying that something has value in itself or final value is that it has ultimate value, as opposed to means-to-an-end value.

4 What exactly would taking a stance on the metaphysical source of the goodness of virtue look like? This is a topic in the metaphysics of value, and as such, would involve a broad commitment to realism about value (that facts about value are real) or anti-realism regarding value (that facts about value are not real in some way). Though this division is generally made regarding *moral* value, it can be cast in terms of general value in the way I have just done. Realist theories could include, for example: a supernaturalist metaphysics of value, which holds that God metaphysically imparts value to objects in some manner; or a naturalist account, which commits itself to the view that natural facts (psychological states, situations, etc.) provide metaphysical value to certain things. In contrast are the anti-realist metaphysics of value: for example, these include cultural constructionism (value is derived from cultural constructs); subjectivism (value is created from personal preference or willing); or nihilism (value doesn’t exist at all). These examples are far from exhaustive, but I provide them as popular examples of the metaphysics of value. Hopefully, one can see from these views that a research project studying the ultimate metaphysical source of the goodness of virtue is a radically different project than one that tries to understand why virtue has value in itself or final value as opposed to merely instrumental or means-to-an-end value. The metaphysical project is probably best studied in metaethics, or the branch of philosophy that concerns the metaphysics and epistemology
From the prior discussion about the valuation of the virtues, it might also be thought that the virtues have to do solely with ethical considerations. Indeed, in the history of philosophy, the virtues were primarily considered in the context of ethics, and as such the main topics of discussion involved the moral virtues: autonomy, honesty, temperance, justice, courage, generosity, etc. But there was another class of the virtues that were originally mentioned alongside the moral virtues, albeit receiving far less attention than them. I am referring here to the intellectual virtues, with perhaps the best known intellectual virtue being that of practical wisdom, which is a master, regulatory virtue that enables one to live her life well. Strictly speaking, the ancients did not recognize the intellectual virtues as excellent character traits, but that opinion has changed among modern virtue theorists for reasons that will be explained in the upcoming chapter. Today, it is thought that there are intellectual virtues that in may cases parallel their moral brethren, traits such as attentiveness, open-mindedness, intellectual courage, inquisitiveness, intellectual integrity, intellectual humility, thoroughness, self-awareness, etc. Beyond the intellectual virtues, the case has been made for virtues irreducible to either the moral or intellectual domain, such as the aesthetic and spiritual virtues. For the sake of focus and specificity though, my project revolves around the intellectual virtues and is primarily geared toward understanding what the nature and value of an intellectual virtue is.

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5 The reader might be wondering why these particular traits are intellectual virtues because perhaps they appear to be haphazard and only loosely related. I take up this issue in chapter 4 and propose a method for determining what traits are in fact intellectual virtues.
3. Empirical Challenges and Responses to Virtue

Throughout my description of the virtues above the assumption has been that the virtues are real and that they exist, at least in some individuals. However, it should be noted at least that the reality of virtue has been subject to critique lately, especially from the angle of psychological experiments that purportedly reveal that virtue doesn't exist or is so rare that it would be better not to place significant theoretical emphasis on the virtues.  

According to situationism, it is not character traits that primarily determine good or bad behavior. Instead it is the situation, or the environment, that mostly is the cause of a person's actions. What this means for virtue theories is that virtue can't function as an explanation for behavior, either because virtue doesn't exist or because virtue is so weak in a causal sense that it couldn't possibly be a significant cause of someone's action. For example, it is not the virtue of honesty that causes one to be honest, but rather the situation, including things such as social structures and institutions. Likewise, the vice of dishonesty doesn't explain why someone might choose to lie. Instead, there are some facts about the situation, such as an oppressive regime or lack of resources, that causally contribute to an agent's dishonesty.

These challenges to the idea of virtue are indeed very serious and have prompted many thoughtful responses. Some counter-replies point out that the empirical methodology employed by situationists in critiquing virtue is inadequate, in addition to pointing out that the value of virtue doesn't simply reduce to the behavior it prompts.

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Other responses don't confront the situationist critique head on, but rather engage in a project of showing how the virtues can be developed in an empirically robust manner and attempt to adduce empirical evidence in support of the existence and effects of virtue. Some philosophers have also argued that the virtues, far from being relics of the ancient past, are indeed neuroscience's best hope for explaining how the brain makes moral decisions.

Thus while empirical discussions and defenses of virtue are important and interesting, it is no part of my project to defend the reality of virtue, as I assume that the intuitive case for talking and thinking about excellent character traits is solid enough to proceed without pausing to defend their existence in the first place. This is akin to how a philosopher of religion might explain God's divine attributes without first justifying God's existence, or how a scientific realist may explain the implications of string theory without first justifying the idea that science is capable of revealing objective truths of nature. Of course, there are places in philosophy to question God's existence or whether science can make real truth claims, just like there is room to question the existence of the virtues. However, I take the responses to skepticism regarding the virtues as having been rebutted, which is to say that there are good, substantive reasons for believing in the real, actual existence of the virtues even if such skepticism can't be conclusively disproved.

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4. Virtue Theories in Ethics and Epistemology

Virtue theories have been mainly developed in two areas of philosophy, ethics and epistemology, and corresponding families of views have been labeled as virtue ethics and virtue epistemology, respectively. When it comes to recent research in virtue, virtue ethics has definitely attracted the lion's share of attention, as research in virtue pertaining to epistemology is dwarfed in comparison. There are a few good reasons for this occurrence, which will be explored later, but it is interesting to note that virtue theorists for thousands of years have recognized the existence of both the moral and intellectual virtues. One might think because of this that equal amounts of research into both types of virtue would have occurred in the past, yet this has not been the case. Due to this disparity, virtue ethics has been more extensively developed than virtue epistemology, and the latter encounters issues that were solved or at least minimized due to more overall thought given to the virtues in the context of ethics, one of which I will immediately discuss.

In virtue ethics, the moral virtues are generally thought to be intrinsically valuable character traits. As was mentioned previously, this is to say that the moral virtues, such as honesty, justice, etc. are valuable in themselves, not only or merely instrumentally valuable because of what they may further bestow upon an agent. Even if, for example, the virtue of courage cost one's life on the battlefield, it was still considered as worth having because of the intrinsic value of virtue. The vast majority of virtue ethicists throughout time have affirmed the idea that the moral virtues are intrinsically valuable and have generally rejected valuing the virtues solely along instrumental terms. While the
reasons given in support of the intrinsic value of the moral virtues have differed, the ancient general consensus is that the moral virtues partially constitute a flourishing life. Since a flourishing life was considered intrinsically valuable, and since the moral virtues partially constituted such a life, the moral virtues were also considered intrinsically valuable. Thus, one general strategy for understanding the intrinsic value of virtue is to somehow relate it to the concept of an intrinsically valuable flourishing life. At this moment the reader may be wondering what exactly a flourishing life is. This is an important and deep issue that cannot be answered in a short amount of time and for that reason chapters 3 and 4 of the dissertation substantively develop what a flourishing life is. The term is a technical one when discussed in the context of virtue theory but still retains its original meaning of being a well-lived or successful life. So for now the reader may think of flourishing along these lines with the promise of further discussion to come.

Contemporary virtue epistemologists, with few exceptions, generally insist that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable; in this manner, virtue epistemology parallels virtue ethics. However, the reasons given in support of this idea are usually very thin at best and nonexistent at worst. Sometimes these virtue epistemologists do attempt to spell out how the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable, but they do so in logically problematic ways. When comparing virtue epistemology to virtue ethics, it is clear that the former group's theorists have not had enough time to reflect about and tie together the various concepts they utilize. Important related ideas that make claims

10 In saying that the virtues partially constitute a flourishing life, room is left open for other elements to also compose a flourishing life, perhaps things such as health, wealth, family, good luck, etc. It was vigorously debated among ancient virtue theorists as to what else (if anything), along with virtue, completely constituted a flourishing life.
more plausible in virtue ethics are often completely missing in discussions in virtue epistemology. There are also other important features of contemporary virtue epistemology that prevent these issues from being resolved easily.

Virtue epistemology can be improved, and this is precisely where my dissertation enters the theoretical fray. I will defend the position that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable, though in a way that has not been previously attempted in virtue epistemology. But what is so important about my view? Why does it matter to think of the intellectual virtues as intrinsically valuable? Though a more thorough answer awaits, initially I would like to point out that there is a common intuition that excellent character traits are intrinsically valuable. This isn't to say that the average person is aware of philosophical reasons for assigning intrinsic value to the virtues, but rather that people intuitively think of the virtues as being intrinsically valuable. Parents, for example, take great pains to raise their children with excellent character traits. The virtue of honesty, for instance, is frequently taught to others as having value in itself, not in deriving value from other good outcomes that may emerge from possessing the virtue. Thus, one important goal of my project is to philosophically validate an intuition that most people have regarding the virtues. Another reason that I have for embarking on such a project is that there should be good, positive reasons for acquiring intellectual virtue. On the assumption that the intellectual virtues do in fact have intrinsic value, it doesn't simply follow that a typical person would want to cultivate those virtues. Even if there is a set of goods that are indubitably intrinsically valuable, it wouldn't be the case that agents would want them because they, at minimum, need to understand why or how having those goods would be good for them. This has been a rather neglected aspect of virtue
epistemology. Part of my proposal in showing how the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable is to explain how they benefit a person who chooses to cultivate them. My strategy for explaining how the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable involves appealing to how they could improve the quality of life of a person who chooses to cultivate them.

Thus, I wish to advance the view that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable because they partially constitute a flourishing life. There are a few reasons for this particular thesis. First, tying the intrinsic value of a good, such as intellectual virtue, to a flourishing life opens up an avenue for explaining the intrinsic value of that good provided that there is a plausible link between that good and a flourishing life. However, to say that something is intrinsically valuable and leaving the claim at that makes it very mysterious as to why that thing is intrinsically valuable. Many things throughout the history of philosophy have been labeled as being intrinsically valuable, but if no further justification is offered for such claims, they appear to become brute and potentially arbitrary facts. And although of course there are brute facts that human beings must simply accept because we can't justify everything (at least non-circularly), this should be done only out of necessity—only because the thing being studied admits of no further explanation or justification. But I believe that I can offer an explanation of what makes the intellectual virtues intrinsically valuable via the concept of flourishing. Second, the vast majority of virtue epistemologists don’t explain why an intellectual virtue should be thought of as intrinsically valuable; for most, it remains simply an assumption or the justification offered is alarmingly thin. It would indeed be an embarrassment to virtue epistemology to work with the assumption that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically
valuable only later to find out that no solid philosophical reasons for that claim could be
adduced. However, I believe my dissertation functions as a theoretical buttress of sorts
in that it explains why virtue epistemologists are justified in thinking of the intellectual
virtues as being intrinsically valuable.

My research project can be viewed as an answer to both a why-question and a how-
question. Why are the intellectual virtues intrinsically valuable? The short answer is that
they partially constitute a flourishing life, which itself is intrinsically valuable. Perhaps a
more important question that follows from the first question is how do the intellectual
virtues partially constitute a flourishing life? To say that the intellectual virtues are part
of a flourishing life might sound platitudinous or tautologous to some critics of virtue
theory as it is frequently insisted by virtue theorists that by definition virtue is part of a
flourishing life. My project takes things a step further and shows how, substantively, an
intellectual virtue partially constitutes a flourishing life. Most virtue epistemologists have
not attempted to answer the why-question, and none have attempted to answer the how-
question. But my dissertation provides an answer to both questions.

In fulfilling my task, I am significantly influenced by Aristotle's thoughts about
the relationship between virtue and flourishing because it contains much theoretical
power in its ability to explain what makes the virtues intrinsically valuable. However, no
one has attempted to deploy his general approach into virtue epistemology, presumably
because they see his original ideas as loaded with insoluble problems and implausible
implications. I take this as an opportunity though to modify some of Aristotle's basic
concepts while still utilizing the general structure of his theory to ultimately formulate a
robust virtue epistemology, one that is able to deeply explain the value of the intellectual
virtues. Though I take issue with Aristotle's conception of the intellectual virtues in chapter 1, I am greatly in support of his general idea about the relationship between virtue and flourishing, so much so that I classify myself as a Neo-Aristotelian in that regard. Of course, the reader is free to determine how much of an Aristotelian I turn out to be in the end.

With that said, I will address the tasks that I have set for myself in the following order, which represents the sequence of the dissertation. In chapter 1, I explain issues surrounding modern virtue epistemology and some of its commitments that prevent one from seeing how the virtues fit into epistemology. I question some assumptions of typical virtue epistemology and epistemology in general and advocate a new approach to using the virtues in epistemology. Chapter 2 contains my chief negative project in which I consider all the major recently proposed virtue epistemologies and critique them, highlighting problems and setting goals for my own account of intellectual virtue. Transitioning to chapter 3 begins my positive project; here I articulate what flourishing is and address some worries related to the concept. I then explain how and why the value of the intellectual virtues need to be understood in terms of flourishing. Finally, I conclude my research project with chapter 4, and develop my own account of intellectual virtue. In this final chapter, I explain how the intellectual virtues partially constitute a flourishing life, and thus how they are best regarded as intrinsically valuable character traits. Each chapter ends with a brief summary, so if something is not immediately clear it will hopefully be so by the end of the chapter.
Chapter 1: Virtue Epistemology

1. Ancient Virtue and Modern Epistemology

My goal in this section is to explain why it is that current virtue epistemologies face great difficulties in explaining the intrinsic value of the intellectual virtues. Interestingly, a large part of the problem is that modern epistemology is committed to an epistemological paradigm that obscures why the virtues are necessary at all to epistemology in the first place. My ultimate goal in this chapter is to question, criticize, and modify the current epistemological paradigm to better include the intellectual virtues and thus to ultimately pave the way to understanding how the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable.

To briefly preview what is upcoming in this chapter, there are a few major points of conflict between virtue epistemology and the commitments of modern, mainstream epistemology worth highlighting. First, one goal of modern epistemology revolves around giving necessary and sufficient conditions for the instantiation of knowledge. It is frequently argued that knowledge is true belief plus a third and/or fourth condition, such as justification, warrant, or even virtue (in the case of some recent virtue epistemologists). However, utilizing virtue in this kind of context is problematic on many different levels, as I will shortly show. Second, another commitment of modern epistemology is the elucidation of the structure of knowledge and justification. It was suggested by some earlier virtue epistemologists that virtue could help with some theoretical problems relating to these issues, but it has since been pointed out that virtue
makes for a very unnatural fit when using it to solve problems related to the structure of knowledge. Both of these problems stem from virtue epistemologists committing themselves to an epistemological paradigm hostile to intellectual virtue. To further understand the difficulties of importing virtue into this framework, it’s important now to further explain the nature of it.

One of the defining features of the modern epistemological paradigm stems from many epistemologists’ quest in the past few decades to analyze the concept of knowledge. More recently, the project has been of considerably less concern but still remains a task for many epistemologists. *Analysis* in this context is a technical term, and a philosopher engaging in analysis attempts to break down a concept into its component parts. The ultimate goal of analysis is to produce necessary and sufficient conditions for the instantiation of a concept so that it is optimally clarified. This devotion to clarity through analysis has been and remains one of the hallmarks of analytic philosophy, the dominant method of philosophy in the English speaking philosophical world.\(^ {11}\) Epistemologists trained in the analytic tradition sought to use analysis to clarify concepts that were in need of further insight, such as knowledge. One classical analysis of knowledge has been that of identifying the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge as justified true belief, which for some time garnered a rough consensus in epistemology.\(^ {12}\) However, after Edmund Gettier pointed out that such an analysis was faulty because it was possible to come up with cases of justified true belief that failed to

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11 By analytic philosophy, I mean to indicate a type of philosophical writing style that emphasizes clarity and logical rigor and should not be confused with many of the previous substantive commitments of analytic philosophy, such as empiricism, logical positivism, etc.

be knowledge (because of luck), an industry of responding to this shortcoming was born.¹³

Another paradigmatic tendency of recent and contemporary epistemology involved focusing on structural issues in epistemology. For example, one of the dominant epistemological disputes of the last few decades concerned the debate between the foundationalists and the coherentists. The former argues that knowledge and justification must have a foundation or base that itself needs no justification (because it was either self-evident or was not capable of being justified), whereas the latter insist that knowledge and justification are like an interlocking web, with different items of knowledge justifying others in a largely circular pattern. A somewhat related debate occurred between the (epistemic) internalists and externalists, with the former arguing that in order for a belief to be justified, an agent must be able to consciously access her reason for having that belief, while the externalists deny that one must have cognitive access to such a reason for having a warranted belief. Though there are a plethora of reasons epistemologists had for engaging in both of the aforementioned disputes, a primary one involved them responding to (hypothetical, in many cases) skeptics who denied that agents possess knowledge. That is, many epistemologists thought that if they knew the correct structure of knowledge and how the justification of beliefs operated, they would be able to successfully answer skeptics who denied that we could have genuine knowledge or justification of our beliefs. Thus, it was and still remains the

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case for epistemologists to be concerned about structural issues in epistemology.

As it turns out, some of those epistemologists are virtue epistemologists who think that the concept of intellectual virtue could prove to be fruitful in structural epistemology. Though the concept of an intellectual virtue is itself very old, analytic epistemology rarely, if ever, utilized the concept until Ernest Sosa famously re-introduced it into contemporary epistemology. According to him, the concept of virtue shows promise in adjudicating between foundationalism and coherentism, as well potentially solving the impasse between internalism and externalism. Sosa himself advocates a virtue epistemology that integrates virtue in some way with all four aforementioned theories, and he also believes that virtue is a concept that is helpful in analyzing knowledge. One sees here though that the virtues were imported into an epistemological paradigm that already had established commitments, namely, to analyzing knowledge and clarifying the proper structure of knowledge and justificatory claims.

The conclusions that Sosa argued for some decades ago have had a momentous and lasting impact on virtue epistemology. John Greco, a student of Sosa’s, also advances a virtue epistemology along similar lines; one of his main goals involves analyzing knowledge using the concept of virtue. Linda Zagzebski, though advancing views differing from Sosa’s in many key respects, nevertheless subscribes to many of the same paradigmatic commitments that he does, especially in that one of her primary goals

is to elucidate the concept of knowledge via intellectual virtue.17 Other virtue epistemologists follow along in the same vein.18 This type of virtue epistemology can be described as conservative in the sense that it works within an existing epistemological paradigm, and the main purpose of the intellectual virtues is to solve some already existing problems.

But does it make sense to insist that the intellectual virtues have a vital role to play in relation to such things as the analysis or structure of knowledge? Intuitively speaking, it appears to be a great stretch to think that excellent character traits have much to do with these issues. For example, Zagzebski argues that intellectual virtue is a necessary condition for having knowledge and that virtuous true belief is sufficient for it.19 More in-depth criticisms point out and defend the insufficiency of this approach. For instance, Jason Baehr argues against Zagzebski, successfully in my opinion, that virtue is neither necessary nor sufficient for obtaining knowledge.20 According to him and others, intellectual virtue isn’t necessary for some types of knowledge, like simple perceptual knowledge (such as having a belief that grass is green). Infants and small children acquire perceptual knowledge all the time in spontaneous and automatic ways, and they certainly don’t possess anything as sophisticated as an intellectual virtue. The conclusion drawn from these types of examples indicates that virtue is not necessary to have knowledge. Also, having a robust set of the intellectual virtues (along with true

19 Zagzebski, Virtues of the Mind.
beliefs), is not sufficient for having knowledge; an agent may possess perseverance, autonomy, temperance, etc. but could still fail to have knowledge. These excellent character traits, while probabilistically increasing the chance of acquiring knowledge, don’t guarantee it, as that frequently depends on the specifics of situations and circumstances, sometimes with a good bit of luck too. Contemporary epistemology is committed to the analysis of knowledge, but from these considerations, it’s clear that intellectual virtue doesn’t play a suitable role for that purpose.21

Some perceptive virtue epistemologists have noticed that the reigning epistemological paradigm of the moment prevents the intellectual virtues from being useful in epistemology. For example, the virtue epistemologist Jonathan Kvanvig argues that there are four main aspects of epistemology, which he refers to as the structural, fundamental, social, and genetic branches of epistemology.22 Recent epistemology has been dominated by the first two categories—the structural and the fundamental. Structural epistemology, as I have noted above, is concerned with the structures of knowledge and justification; one sees this primarily exemplified in the foundationalism-coherentism debate. Fundamental epistemology revolves around the individual as a knower in specific time-slice moments of his life, and is exemplified chiefly in the

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21 It must be mentioned at this point though that perhaps Sosa and Greco may have objected to my criticisms on the ground that their definition of virtue is immune to the problems I mention. That’s because their understanding of virtue is more general than some other virtue epistemologists’ conceptions; on their view, a virtue, generally speaking, is an excellence of an agent and typically includes excellent faculties, such as eyesight and reasoning. However, I maintain that my objections hold against them because their definitions of intellectual virtue formally include excellent character traits. After their initial works, both philosophers eventually acknowledged that it was legitimate to view the intellectual virtues as character traits as well, so it would only be on the basis of their prior, not current, positions that they could object to my criticisms. I discuss this matter in more detail by examining their actual definitions of virtue near the beginning of chapter 2.

internalism-externalism debate because the justification of a belief is almost always viewed as an isolated moment, with virtually all context and narrative continuity removed. Social epistemology pertains to the sharing of knowledge across generations and cultures, and genetic epistemology involves thinking about the acquisition of knowledge through the narrative sequence and framework of one’s entire life. For the most part, social and genetic epistemology have either been completely ignored or have been thrown to the sidelines as issues of peripheral interest (though that situation has started to change).23

According to Kvanvig, since contemporary epistemology is dominated by fundamental and structural aspects of epistemology, there is simply no way that one can perceive the importance of the intellectual virtues, especially as they relate to epistemology. If epistemology is mostly characterized by analyzing structures of knowledge and focusing on the justification of beliefs as they occur in individual time slices of an agent’s life, then the intellectual virtues have no role to play at all. One chief advantage of employing virtue theory in ethics is that since the virtues are thought of as persisting character traits, there is some continuity in the explanation and genesis of a person’s moral character over time; virtue epistemology can share a parallel advantage, as the concept of an intellectual virtue provides for continuity in appraising an agent’s epistemic character, as opposed to isolating singular moments in time.24 Another virtue epistemologist, Lorraine Code, makes similar points; traditional epistemology is arid, and

23 Alvin Goldman’s work in social epistemology is one notable exception.
is obsessed with providing the correct structure and analysis of knowledge at the expense of other important epistemological research; the intellectual virtues need to be considered in their own right, rather than through the lens of the current epistemic paradigm.\(^{25}\)

Given all the considerations described so far in this section, there are a few potential options. First, one option involves retaining the use of intellectual virtue in epistemology but jettisoning the current epistemological paradigm and replacing it with a different one. This process would involve providing substantive reasons for thinking that the paradigm is incorrect in the first place for focusing on structural and fundamental issues. Furthermore, a completely new paradigm would have to be articulated, along with a rationale for accepting such a paradigm. Such a project would be a tall order, given that contemporary epistemology’s paradigm exists for at least some good reasons. Option number two would involve aborting the current project by conceding that indeed intellectual virtue has no place in contemporary epistemology and accepting the current epistemological paradigm as is. However, I hope that it’s obvious by the existence of my project that I intend to take no such path! On a more serious note though, most if not all epistemologists would concede that the intellectual virtues have some value in some paradigm, even if it’s not the current one. It would then be rather implausible to entertain this option seriously. This leads to option three, which involves enlarging the current epistemic paradigm with additional considerations by showing that there is a necessity for such an enlargement. Since option number one is rather extreme,

and option number two would shut down my current project, my preference is to
investigate the possibility of option three, which is what I will immediately proceed to
do.

A frequent synonym given in philosophy for the branch of epistemology is *theory of knowledge*. It is a common occurrence to see books, articles, and classes labeled under that heading. This practice is understandable in that epistemology literally means the study of knowledge (in Greek, *episteme* just means knowledge). But this might lead one to conclude that epistemology just involves giving a theory about knowledge as such or in itself. For the most part, analytic epistemology of the last several decades has analyzed knowledge in itself. However, one must be on guard to resist the reduction of epistemology to merely studying knowledge as such because knowledge doesn’t just happen; it’s not a natural kind existing in the world, ready to be discovered in a way that some other resource would be. Knowledge occurs in the minds of *knowers*, and epistemology ought to be concerned not only with knowledge as an abstract concept in itself but with those agents themselves who engage in the process of knowing. This should be a rather obvious and uncontroversial fact, but it surprisingly can be forgotten in the midst of focusing on analyzing knowledge as such.

What this means is that epistemology—the theory of knowledge—must presuppose alongside it a theory of knowers because they are the ones who generate, possess, and transmit knowledge. Knowers, of course, don’t merely participate in the process of knowing in some one dimensional sense—they utilize, interact with, and aim at a host of epistemic goods related to but not necessarily reducible to knowledge, including truth, coherence, importance, relevance, evidence, motivations for truth,
justified assumptions, working hypotheses, and any other good that is paradigmatically epistemic in character. In articulating a complete theory of knowledge, epistemologists must consciously be aware of examining knowledge in itself versus examining those who engage in knowing—human beings qua epistemic agents; epistemology can in principle never be complete if epistemologists only focus on the former at the expense of the latter.

In thinking about how to provide a theory of knowers, important questions stand out that demand an answer. For example, who should want to have knowledge, or justification, or evidence? Everyone? Just the wise? Just adults? Just the morally responsible? Another important issue: how can one be an optimal knower? Given that human beings have a personality and can develop different character traits, what are the optimal character traits that one should possess in pursuit of the epistemic goods, such as truth, coherence, etc.? Talking about optimal character traits relating to the epistemic enterprise just is a conversation about the intellectual virtues. Thinking through the matter in this way reveals that the intellectual virtues are indeed important to epistemology since knowledge requires knowers and knowers are agents with personalities; this would indicate a need to develop an epistemology of character, which I submit should be regarded as an additional and important part of epistemology. Conceiving of epistemology as, strictly speaking, a theory about knowledge as such obscures the need for answering the above questions because the traditional epistemological paradigm views the concept of knowledge itself as having central importance. What I call for though is not the rejection of developing a theory about knowledge in itself. There are many good, valid reasons for such a pursuit and
epistemologists in that line of research are not working on something of no consequence. Instead, what I maintain is that epistemology is not exhausted by analyzing knowledge as such. A more complete epistemology would have a theory of knowers to supplement a theory about knowledge as such. Within the theory of knowers would exist the sub-branch that I have identified as the epistemology of character. It’s in this sense that I call for enlarging the current epistemological paradigm by supplementing it with an epistemology of character. My account of the value of the intellectual virtues is situated within the epistemology of character and is only plausible when viewed from this enriched epistemological paradigm.

Other virtue epistemologists have proposed different but related ways of dividing epistemology as well, which I regard as initially useful but ultimately inadequate when compared to my previously outlined approach. Christopher Hookway proposes that there is a narrow and broad way of understanding epistemology, the former being merely the theory of knowledge versus the latter being that of epistemic practice. While his division is helpful in suggesting that epistemology involves more than just examining knowledge as such, epistemic practices in themselves don’t call for reflection directly on intellectual virtue, that is, on intellectually excellent character traits. The virtue epistemologist must make a direct case for why the intellectual virtues are a necessary component of epistemology though. Robert Roberts and Jay Wood, both virtue epistemologists, contend that there are two areas of epistemology, analytic and regulative. Analytic epistemology involves conceptual analysis, which as we’ve already

seen, involves breaking concepts down into their component parts and ultimately providing necessary and sufficient conditions for the instantiation of a concept. Regulative epistemology, on the other hand, is concerned with providing normative action guidance, including ways of utilizing the intellectual virtues for good purposes. This division is useful as well, but there is a descriptive component of epistemology that Roberts and Wood need to emphasize more. A frequent distinction in philosophy involves a contrast between the normative and the descriptive, a distinction that is made for good reason, but Roberts and Wood seemingly oppose conceptual analysis with the descriptive. Yet surely there is room for a descriptive epistemology that does not rely on conceptual analysis, as description is not exhausted by conceptual analysis. In the upcoming chapter, I criticize Roberts and Wood in more detail because they fail to characterize the nature of intellectual virtue in substantive depth, and one is left wondering what exactly an intellectual virtue is.

Thus, what I call for is an enlargement of the traditional epistemic paradigm; we should, along with traditional epistemological concerns, work on developing an epistemology of character, and that project could be seen as part of a larger overall project that involves developing a theory of knowers. I believe that my proposal is not as drastic as that advocated by other virtue epistemologists in that it doesn’t call for the complete repudiation of a paradigm but neither is it so weak that one is left wondering where the intellectual virtues could possibly fit. Furthermore, my distinction between a theory of knowledge and a theory of knowers makes sense given that knowledge is possessed by knowers, and we ought to ultimately aim to have a theory of both. This

Oxford University Press, 2007), 20–21.
isn’t to suggest that epistemology ultimately divides into just these two branches, but it does provide solid reasons for embarking on a project involving an epistemology of character because one is better able to see where an account such as mine fits into the overall epistemological landscape.

Though I believe that the changes I call for are important and intuitive, some philosophers might question my use of the intellectual virtues in my so-called epistemology of character on the grounds that the intellectual virtues, historically speaking, were never thought of as character traits. This objection is reasonable, as these historically minded philosophers would be right that ancient virtue theorists didn’t conceive of the intellectual virtues as we do now. But it would be incorrect to think that contemporary virtue epistemologists have re-defined concepts without good reason. In the upcoming section, I respond to this objection by describing older conceptions of intellectual virtue and why it is advantageous to think of the intellectual virtues as excellent character traits.

2. Categories of Intellectual Virtue

This section deals with what type of entity an intellectual virtue is. I have insisted that an intellectual virtue is an excellent character trait, but up to now, have given no reason for preferring this conception over the ancient one. In considering the classical conception of intellectual virtue, I take Aristotle as representative because he made the most systematic effort to characterize the nature of intellectual virtue and distinguish it from other types of virtue, dwarfing the work of other ancients in this particular matter. Furthermore, it is solely Aristotle’s conception of intellectual virtue that continues to
significantly influence contemporary virtue epistemology. Once his account is adequately described, I will then critically examine it and propose reasons for understanding the intellectual virtues in terms of character traits. Though all contemporary virtue epistemologists recognize the existence of the intellectual virtues conceived of in this manner, there is some debate over the type of these excellent character traits, with a strong push toward understanding the intellectual virtues as just moral virtues. This, I eventually argue, is incorrect; I ultimately defend a new way of distinguishing between the moral and intellectual virtues. Thus, this section of the chapter can be thought of as an answer to two questions. First: generally speaking, what type of entity is an intellectual virtue? Second: specifically speaking, assuming that there are good reasons to think of an intellectual virtue as an excellent character trait, what kind of character trait is it?

In considering Aristotle’s understanding of virtue, it is instructive to begin with a representative list of the virtues, both moral and intellectual, that he recognized. A sample of the moral virtues he accepted include: temperance, generosity, patience, honesty, courage, modesty, friendliness, etc. There are a few that we would be hesitant to accept, such as the virtue of magnificence, which is a virtue that only a wealthy person can exemplify because it requires the giving of large amounts of money for good causes as the giving of small amounts is not sufficient for having that virtue. But for the most part, a contemporary list of moral virtues would share much in common with Aristotle’s list. Recall that modern virtue epistemologists, including myself, conceive of the intellectual virtues in parallel with the moral virtues, which would include such excellent

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character traits as intellectual modesty, inquisitiveness, intellectual temperance, etc. However, Aristotle’s list of intellectual virtues fails to parallel his recognized moral virtues. Instead, he states that there are five intellectual virtues: art, scientific knowledge, intuitive reason, philosophical wisdom, and practical wisdom.\textsuperscript{29} Most of these virtues are not simply different ways of designating an excellent intellectual character trait; they are radically different than how intellectual virtue is conceived of today. For example, scientific knowledge involves having knowledge about eternal and necessary truths, and intuitive reason involves grasping first principles. Aristotle doesn’t think of the intellectual virtues as character traits at all, but rather sorts them out based on the type of knowledge that the virtue generates.\textsuperscript{30}

What is the reason for such a drastic difference between the moral and intellectual virtues? And more importantly, what reason does the contemporary virtue epistemologist have for rejecting Aristotle’s classic division and accepting a different conception of the intellectual virtues? The first question can be answered by appealing to Aristotle’s conception of a human being’s psychology. According to him, there are two classes of virtue because there are two aspects of an agent’s psychology that can be improved: the rational and the irrational. The rational aspect of ourselves involves pure thinking and cognition, whereas the irrational part involves emotion. The intellectual virtues improve and make excellent the former aspect of ourselves whereas the moral virtues perform the same function for the latter aspect. Aristotle believed that the rational element is the superior aspect of a human being and consequently believed that

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., chap. VI.
\textsuperscript{30} See James Montmarquet for a further explanation of how Aristotle categorizes the intellectual virtues, \textit{Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility} (Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), 19.
the inferior element in us—the irrational, emotional part—can be brought under the control of the rational part. He believed that the virtues can be separated on the basis of the part of an individual’s psychology they improve, and thus, the categories of the moral and intellectual virtue emerge, corresponding to the irrational and rational aspect of ourselves, respectively.\(^{31}\)

On Aristotle’s view, it is a requirement for emotion to be present to count as a character trait. That in itself is a very compelling view, as it is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine a character trait—an aspect of someone’s personality—to be completely devoid of emotion. From this thought it follows that an intellectual virtue can never be considered a character trait because it is not directly connected to the emotional part of ourselves. Only a moral virtue can be considered a character trait because it improves the emotional, irrational part of an agent. It is a common theme in Aristotle’s description of the moral virtues that the morally virtuous individual possesses an excellent ability to deal with the ebb and flow of his emotions; if someone has a moral virtue, that means that he has a superior way of dealing with his emotions along some dimension of experience. For example, an individual with the moral virtue of courage reacts well to fear and related emotions by neither being overly afraid nor extremely bold to the point of foolhardiness. However, there are no emotions that the intellectually virtuous person needs to conquer or manage because the intellectual virtues only improve the rational aspect of ourselves.

Aristotle’s division of virtue follows naturally from his division of an agent’s psychology. But such a view of a person’s psychology is no longer plausible because of

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contemporary research in psychology and neuroscience. Though Aristotle possessed good reasons at the time for thinking that a person’s psychology divides into a rational and irrational branch, it is quite indefensible to drive a wedge between emotion and cognition, as if there were no overlap between the two. Aristotle’s sharp distinction has been appropriately labeled by Linda Zagzebski as a “purified view of the intellect,” and it doesn’t appear possible to separate the moral from the intellectual virtues on such a tenuous basis. Emotion and cognition bleed into each other, perhaps inextricably, and as such, there is no simple division of the moral virtues understood as character traits and the intellectual virtues as non-character traits. On this basis, Aristotle has failed to distinguish between the moral and intellectual virtues. Since emotion and cognition are plausibly thought to at least partially compose most, if not all, character traits, there is at least some initial ground to think that the intellectual virtues can be character traits as well, just not ones that are completely devoid of emotion.

Aristotle also offers another set of considerations for thinking that the moral and intellectual virtues are distinct, though as will be pointed out, his second argument presupposes the first one being correct. He argues here that the moral virtues are distinct from the intellectual ones because the former are not teachable, instead only being acquired through habituation, whereas the latter can be learned through instruction. On first glance, this assertion appears to emerge without basis, as it’s initially plausible to suppose that both moral and intellectual virtue can be learned

32 In particular, no specific region of the brain has been identified that corresponds only to the emotional aspect of a person and likewise for the cognitional part. Even structures such as the neocortex (more associated with reasoning and cognition) and the limbic system (more associated with emotion) do not simply divide into mutually exclusive functions but rather have blended features.
33 Zagzebski, Virtues of the Mind, 138.
34 Aristotle, NE, 1103a.
through good teaching. But in actuality, Aristotle’s remarks follow from the exact same commitments that underlie his first argument. Moral virtue can’t be taught because one can’t teach someone the proper emotions to feel during the cultivation of a virtue. In considering a moral virtue, such as honesty, one can teach someone why she should be honest, but one can’t make her feel the emotions she should be feeling by directly teaching her. On Aristotle’s account, someone may know everything there is to know about the virtue of honesty but still lack it because they haven’t acquired the disposition to experience the proper emotions that are a necessary part of having that virtue. Thus, the moral virtues are only learned through habituation, not teaching. The intellectual virtues, in contrast, can be learned through teaching because they involve no emotions, only pure cognition. Aristotle’s ultimate error here is not in supposing that the moral virtues are not teachable while the intellectual virtues are, but rather in committing himself to a compartmentalized view of an agent’s psychology between the rational, cognitive part and the emotional, irrational part. But as I have already noted, though cognition and emotion are separable on purely conceptual grounds, it is indefensible to think that an actual person’s psychology involves completely separate cognitional and emotional parts because of what we know from modern psychology and neuroscience. Thus, Aristotle’s distinction between the moral and intellectual virtues does not succeed because of his erroneous picture of an agent’s psychology.

The fact that Aristotle’s division fails paves the way for re-conceiving of the intellectual virtues as character traits.\footnote{Just as well, it may be asserted that, given my prior reasoning, the moral virtues are not character traits because Aristotle’s distinction between the two has now been collapsed. However, what I have shown is that \textit{both} moral and intellectual virtues are best thought of character traits since emotion and cognition are inextricably linked together in producing a personality trait.} On the intuitive basis that cognition and emotion
bleed and blend into one another, there doesn’t appear to be any substantive difference between the moral and intellectual virtues. The intellectual virtues involve emotion, just like the moral virtues, and the moral virtues can be learned via teaching, just like the intellectual virtues. Consequently, to conceive of the intellectual virtues as being involved with purely cognitive states is unrealistic. A better way to think of the intellectual virtues is as an answer to the considerations I brought up near the end of section 1 of this chapter, namely, that there is a pressing need to develop a theory of knowers, especially a sub-branch that deals with the epistemology of character because it’s important to know what the optimal character traits are for being an epistemically successful agent. Since a large element of personal character involves cognition and emotion in a tangled and inextricable linkage, and since there is a need to develop an understanding of personal character as it relates to epistemic concerns, there is good reason to think of the intellectual virtues as character traits, rather than as modes of acquiring different types of knowledge in the manner that Aristotle did.

Now that I have provided an argument as to why the intellectual virtues should be thought of as character traits, another issue remains: what types of character traits are they? This is another contentious area in virtue epistemology and is worth investigating. It has been put forward that the intellectual virtues are actually types of moral virtue.\(^{36}\) This claim might sound very plausible as well, given the previous conclusion that moral and intellectual virtue are actually far more similar than Aristotle supposed. Is intellectual virtue best thought of as a type of moral virtue? In answering that question,

I will pay special attention to Zagzebski’s account as she was the first to advance the view and defend it at length, as opposed to others who accept her position without providing any unique rationale.

Zagzebski argues that the intellectual virtues are types of moral virtues because an intellectual virtue requires its corresponding moral virtue in order to exist. This amounts to saying that a moral virtue is a necessary condition for possessing a corresponding intellectual virtue. To give an example of her view, she states that for an agent to have the intellectual virtue of integrity, which she defines as remaining true to one’s own beliefs, the agent must also already possess the moral virtue of integrity, which she understands as having a positive self-evaluation. If an individual lacks these positive thoughts about himself, he can’t be true to himself because he would think that he isn’t worth being true to in the first place.\textsuperscript{37}

Despite Zagzebski’s argument for claiming that intellectual virtue just is a type of moral virtue, there are good reasons to suppose it to be incorrect. Specifically, it is possible to generate a case of an agent who exemplifies an intellectual virtue without the corresponding moral one. Consider a case of a professor who exemplifies intellectual courage in that he defends a wildly unpopular theory that nevertheless, he has thoroughly researched and has excellent reason to accept. We can also further stipulate that his belief makes him the subject of mockery by his colleagues and even threatens his tenure, but this professor resolutely stands firm for the sake of truth. However, this courageousness doesn’t translate to other aspects of his life, such as his inability to stand up for his family members when others try to take advantage of them, not even uttering

\textsuperscript{37} Zagzebski, \textit{Virtues of the Mind}, 162.
a single word for their sake. If we were to label the professor’s character trait as it relates to his inability to defend his family, cowardice would be very apt, as he is surely very far from possessing the moral virtue of courage. Recall that on Zagzebski’s view intellectual virtue is a type of moral virtue because in order to possess the former, one must possess its moral counterpart first; on her view, it’s a necessary condition of having an intellectual virtue that one first cultivate its moral counterpart. However, we can clearly observe in this scenario that one can have an intellectual virtue without first possessing a moral virtue. In general, it’s quite easy to come up with counterexamples to Zagzebski’s view because intellectual virtue does not require an agent to initially possess a corresponding moral virtue. Thus, her conclusion that intellectual virtue is simply a type of moral virtue is incorrect.

Other virtue theorists, cognizant of the difficulty in separating moral from intellectual virtue, attempt a much stricter separation between the two. Julia Driver has defended the view that the moral virtues benefit others whereas the intellectual virtues benefit oneself.38 This suggestion has some decent preliminary force. For instance, the paradigmatic moral virtues of justice and generosity appear to have a primary aim of benefiting others in some way, whereas the intellectual virtues of autonomy and perseverance seem to be aimed chiefly at benefiting oneself in some epistemic way. Thus, as Driver explains, the moral virtues confer a different kind of benefit than the intellectual virtues.

In response to Driver’s claim though, I would like to point out that she offers no

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explanation for some paradigmatic moral virtues that are chiefly self-regarding, such as the moral virtue of temperance, which involves regulating one’s behavior for the sake of a positive homeostasis. Perhaps she would insist here that temperance isn’t actually a moral virtue but rather some other type of virtue (or not a virtue at all). But denying temperance the status of a moral virtue goes excessively in the direction of saving a theory just for the theory’s sake, ignoring some ground-level data. Another response to Driver could involve explaining how the intellectual virtues don’t have to be understood in an egoistic, self-regarding manner. Rather, there are some intellectual virtues that fundamentally involve benefiting others. It has been argued, for example, that the intellectual virtue of generosity might simply involve sharing one’s knowledge with others for their own benefit in a manner that can’t be reduced to egoistic motivation on the agent’s part. Finally, partitioning the moral from the intellectual virtues on the basis of other-benefit versus self-benefit, respectively, may be impossible because sometimes a virtue can benefit everyone without exception. For example, Plato classically argues in The Republic that a ruler with the virtue of wisdom benefits everyone, both the ruler and the ruled. Driver, to her claim’s detriment, does not consider this possibility and so is not very convincing in separating moral from intellectual virtue.

What we have seen so far is that virtue epistemologists face considerable hurdles in explaining the similarities and differences between moral and intellectual virtue. This might not strike one as problematic, but given the way that I construe the intellectual virtues as a central concept in the epistemology of character, it’s important to at least

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figure out what genuine epistemic (as opposed to moral) contribution they can make to this area. Though Zagzebski’s and Driver’s proposals ultimately don’t work because of the difficulties just discussed, they do point the way to a better solution. Reflecting on Zagzebski’s idea that intellectual virtue always presupposes a corresponding moral virtue reveals at least that there oftentimes is a close connection between a moral virtue and its intellectual counterpart. It’s not far-fetched to think that a virtue closely blends aspects of the moral and intellectual; an example might include the virtue of autonomy, as an agent’s autonomy involves epistemic components of her psychology, such as belief, justification, evidence, etc., but her overall reason for being autonomous could be moral, perhaps to protest some injustice. What exactly would the difference between the moral and intellectual variant of this virtue be? No clear division seems obvious. However, reflecting on a proposal like Driver’s leads one to believe that, at least some of the time, an intellectual virtue purely concerns an agent’s own good, whereas a moral virtue concerns the good of others. Perhaps an intellectual virtue, such as open-mindedness, is meant to aid the agent in discovering a greater stock of truths than he otherwise would have possessed had he been closed-minded; the chief benefit of such a virtue would under many circumstances accrue to the agent himself. In any case, there are considerations for and against construing the intellectual virtues as more or less similar to the moral virtues. Is there any solution to this problem?

In my view, the primary source of confusion when it comes to disentangling these two classes of virtue has to do with the fact that there sometimes is considerable overlap between the psychological states and behaviors of both types of virtue, whereas in other instances there is little to no overlap. When there is not as much in common
between a moral and intellectual virtue, a stronger criterion for separating these types of
virtue can be developed, whereas when two virtues are very similar the line between both
classes of virtue gets blurred. Virtue theorists have drawn conclusions about how to
formulate a categorization scheme when comparing certain moral virtues to other
particular intellectual virtues, but their claims are only plausible if other comparisons
between these two types of virtue that do not fit neatly into a proposed grouping scheme
are left off the table. This itself is problematic as it disregards the amount of variety
there is among the virtues, but a bigger problem has been ignored—why is it that in
some cases moral and intellectual virtue appear to be indistinguishable whereas in other
instances a line of demarcation can be easily drawn? Having an answer to this question
will be immensely informative in having a reasoned position regarding the difference
between moral and intellectual virtue.

A very helpful starting point is found in an idea advanced by Robert Adams, who
develops the notion of the modularity of the virtues.\(^{40}\) The original context of the
origin of this idea comes from a response Adams makes toward situationists, who argue
that there most likely isn’t any character trait like a virtue in the first place (see section 3
of the introduction). The idea here is that people have put the label of virtue on a very
broad set of psychological states and behavioral dispositions. These states and
dispositions share some similarities with each other but can occur in very different
domains and is easily demonstrated in the case of the virtue of courage. That is, one
could have courage in a battlefield, courage in a classroom, courage in having a necessary
but unpleasant conversation, and/or courage in going skydiving among many other

domains in which courage can be exemplified in. Labeling a virtue as courage, for example, groups together many different sorts of mental states and behaviors and puts them under a very general heading, when in fact more depth and structure is to be found. Adams calls this fact the “modularity of the virtues” because specific virtues are best understood as units, parts, or aspects of a more general virtue. Having a module of a virtue means that one has a particular part of a more general virtue and that one does not necessarily possess the other related kinds.

My suggestion here is to deploy the concept of the modularity of the virtues into the debate of distinguishing between the moral and intellectual virtues. The moral virtues just are those modules (units, parts, aspects, etc.) of a virtue that are concerned with what are typically considered as moral goods, such as being altruistic, taking care of others, and taking care of oneself; the intellectual virtues just are those modules of a virtue that are concerned with what are typically considered epistemic goods, such as being motivated to acquire truth, forming coherent ideas, utilizing evidence well, etc. The more general a virtue is the more it subsumes features of both moral and intellectual virtue, whereas the more specific a virtue is the more distinctive each class of virtue is. The modularity of the virtues accords with our initial thought that moral and intellectual virtues are similar in one way and different in another.41

Thinking of the moral and intellectual virtues in modular terms works very well in describing and categorizing the virtues. Consider an example of a bookworm who reads voraciously. He reads intellectually challenging and time-consuming books in a

41 By specific virtues, I mean to indicate things like the moral virtue of generosity or the intellectual virtue of inquisitiveness. Though more will be said in chapter 4, I use the term general virtue to refer to very encompassing virtues, such as practical wisdom.
steadfast manner because he wants to acquire as much as knowledge as possible. A virtue that describes this state of character would be intellectual perseverance. Now, it turns out that this bookworm is actually physically out of shape and can't be bothered to exercise for more than a few minutes per week, even though he knows it’s good for him. We may further stipulate that this individual has a few dependents who need him to live if their lives are to continue in a non-impoverished manner. Though the bookworm has the intellectual module of the larger virtue of perseverance, he surely lacks the moral module of this virtue because he gives up all too easily when it comes to taking care of his health, especially when his poor health endangers the well-being of others. From this example, we can now clearly differentiate between moral and intellectual virtue in modular terms. From now on and for the sake of convenience, I will label an intellectual module of a more general virtue that is paradigmatically associated with epistemic goods simply as an intellectual virtue and a moral module of a more general virtue that is paradigmatically associated with moral goods simply as a moral virtue.

One of the theoretically advantageous aspects of thinking about the moral and intellectual virtues in modular terms is that it does justice to the intuition that we think of the moral virtues as being separate from the intellectual virtues in some way. That is, we wouldn’t necessarily expect a person who had the moral virtue of perseverance also to have the intellectual virtue of perseverance or vice versa. However, there can be a considerable amount of overlap between a moral virtue and an intellectual one, especially if their modular aspects largely coincide with one another.

A second advantage of thinking of the intellectual virtues in modular terms is that it is compatible with a theoretical need that I indicated earlier, namely, that there
needs to be some way of understanding the intellectual virtues so that they can play a central role in the epistemology of character. The virtues that paradigmatically respond to the needs of this sub-branch of epistemology would be the intellectual virtues, as they are concerned with epistemic goods, and of course, the epistemic goods are important to epistemology. Thus, we have arrived at a new way of conceiving of the distinction between the moral and intellectual virtues in the wake of previous failed attempts. More questions remain of course: in what manner do the intellectual virtues relate to the epistemic goods? What makes the intellectual virtues conceived of in this way intrinsically valuable? I have not lost sight of these questions, but it was important to clear up any potential misconceptions about what intellectual virtue generally is before proceeding to a more specific characterization. Before I provide my own proposal though, I turn first to other proposed ideas regarding the intellectual virtues, especially as they relate to their valuation, intrinsic or otherwise, so as to learn from previous mistakes and guide the development of my own account.

3. Summary and Conclusion of Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of the dissertation functioned to set the stage for showing how my main thesis is true. Recall that the idea I am defending is that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable character traits because they partially constitute a flourishing life. Section 1 explored the reasons why contemporary virtue epistemology has had such difficulty in explaining the intrinsic value of the intellectual virtues. Broadly speaking, the difficulty stemmed from the fact that it has been unclear for some time now why the intellectual virtues were necessary to epistemology at all. Specifically, I noted that
analytic epistemologists were chiefly concerned with providing necessary and sufficient conditions for the instantiation of knowledge. Also, their focus on structural problems pertaining to knowledge obscured the need to utilize the intellectual virtues in epistemology. In response to this problem, I argued that the virtue epistemologist can’t introduce the intellectual virtues into an epistemic paradigm that can’t recognize them. Not wanting to jettison the traditional paradigm but also not wanting to conservatively adopt it, I proposed that the virtue epistemologist ought to work with a larger, modified epistemic paradigm; alongside the theory of knowledge should be a theory of knowers, with a sub-branch involving the epistemology of character. The end result of this paradigm enlargement was that the intellectual virtues were now situated in the overall epistemic landscape. Since room has now been made for the intellectual virtues in epistemology, the more advanced and specific project of understanding the intrinsic value of the intellectual virtues can commence.

The goal of section 2 was to address two chief questions: first, what type of entity is an intellectual virtue? Second, assuming that there are good reasons to think of an intellectual virtue as a character trait, what kind of character trait is it? I answered the first question by arguing that an intellectual virtue is an excellent character trait. But before that, I had to provide reasons for not adopting the ancient conception of an intellectual virtue. This first involved criticizing Aristotle’s view that the intellectual virtues were simply modes of acquiring different types of knowledge on the ground that his division of an agent’s psychology into a rational, cognitive part and an emotional, irrational one was indefensible because of our current understanding of psychology and neuroscience. In light of the failure of Aristotle’s distinction, I instead suggested that we
should view the intellectual virtues as central concepts in the epistemology of character and to properly do so would involve conceiving of them as character traits. Once I had presented an argument that the intellectual virtues should be thought of as character traits, I examined a contentious debate within virtue epistemology that sought to characterize the type of character trait an intellectual virtue is. Since moral virtue is similar to intellectual virtue in many respects, virtue epistemologists spent a great deal of effort trying to distinguish between the two. I argued that sometimes moral and intellectual virtues can overlap in terms of the psychological states and behavioral dispositions that compose them and that the confusion in separating moral from intellectual virtue is primarily due to this. To solve this problem, I relied upon the idea of the modularity of the virtues and suggested that the moral virtues should be considered the modules of a more general virtue that paradigmatically have to do with moral goods, while the intellectual virtues be thought of as the modules of a more general virtue that are concerned with paradigmatically epistemic goods. The advantages of this view are that it does justice to the idea that there is some kind of separateness between moral and intellectual virtue and that it also indicates how the intellectual virtues can be used in the epistemology of character since it’s now clear in what sense the intellectual virtues are indeed related to epistemic concerns.
Chapter 2:
Accounts of the Intellectual Virtues

1. The Variety of Virtue Epistemologies

The ultimate goal of chapter 2 is to critically evaluate all the major contemporary accounts of intellectual virtue, paying special attention to how each explains the intrinsic value of intellectual virtue. I believe that the best way of going about this process involves grouping the various epistemologies together so that their common strengths and weaknesses may readily be seen. Of course, no two virtue epistemologies are exactly alike, so when there is an important difference I will evaluate proposals on their individual merits. Additionally, I have argued for the idea that the intellectual virtues are best thought of as character traits. Some contemporary virtue epistemologists don't think of the intellectual virtues primarily as character traits though. However, my intention is to evaluate all the upcoming theories on the supposition that the intellectual virtues are in fact character traits. If the accounts I intend to critique don't conceive of the intellectual virtues as character traits in the first place, one might rightly think that my criticisms are off the mark because they only work on the assumption that the intellectual virtues are in fact character traits. So a task that I give myself here is to explain why I am justified in evaluating these accounts of intellectual virtue in terms of character traits in the first place. Finally, in addition to aiding in the process of critical evaluation, virtue epistemology is in need of a new categorization scheme than the one it

42 Recall that I use *intrinsic* value to indicate that something has value in itself or final value, making a *relational* claim, specifically, one about *ultimacy*, not a metaphysical claim about the source of value. (See section 2 of the introduction.)
has traditionally employed in the previous decades because some of the old differences between opposing views have since collapsed. My new way of sorting out types of virtue epistemologies respects these developments.

The primary distinction made in virtue epistemology involves drawing a contrast between the virtue reliabilists and the virtue responsibilists (the names don't exactly roll off the tongue!). This naming system originated with the virtue epistemologist Lorraine Code, who initially invented the classification to distance her approach to epistemology from that of Sosa's. Virtue reliabilism draws its name from the central idea that an intellectual virtue reliably, or successfully, enables agents to generally form true beliefs and avoid false ones. The virtue reliabilists also have a history of using the term intellectual virtue in a broader sense than other virtue epistemologists who employ the term. To the virtue reliabilists, an intellectual virtue is any ability of an agent that is reliable in securing true beliefs and avoiding false ones. On this type of account, faculties such as eyesight and inferential reason would count as instances of virtue.

Opposed to the above group are the virtue responsibilists. Virtue responsibilism operates on the idea that a virtue ought to be understood as attributable to an agent's properly exercised ability to make good decisions. Virtue here is tied to the idea of an agent acting responsibly, usually for the sake of truth, hence the name responsibilism. And since responsibility is intimately connected to one's personal character, these virtue theorists take typical instances of intellectual virtue to be such things as intellectual

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44 Code, “Toward a ‘Responsibilist’ Epistemology.”
autonomy, inquisitiveness, and curiosity. These virtue epistemologists would reject an understanding of virtue as simply an automatic process, such as eyesight. Virtue involves volition, and a person who uses her volitional abilities well takes significant steps toward acquiring a virtue. Thus, the chief distinction between virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism involves a contrast between whether virtues can be had automatically, as in the case of eyesight, or through a series of informed choices, as in the case of perseverance.

These two camps within virtue epistemology have frequently criticized each other in the past. Linda Zagzebski, who is best classified as a virtue responsibilist on this binary naming scheme, takes issue with the virtue reliabilist definition of virtue, pointing out that virtues aren't simply equivalent to function; the virtues are what make those functions excellent. The function of the eye is to see, but the virtue of the eye is to see well. Her criticism essentially is that the virtue reliabilists have confused function with virtue and the conclusion that Zagzebski takes away is that virtue reliabilism, strictly speaking, isn't even a virtue theory at all.45 In reply to Zagzebski's criticism though, it can be pointed out that the virtue reliabilists are far closer to the most dominant historical understanding of intellectual virtue—Aristotle's, to be precise. Though we have already encountered reasons for rejecting Aristotle's account of intellectual virtue, arguably, the virtue reliabilists are closer to a more historically consistent definition. For example, Aristotle's intellectual virtue of intuitive reason roughly parallels an agent's ability to utilize inferential reasoning. So if the virtue reliabilists can't even be understood as giving a virtue theory at all, then by extension, Aristotle's own account

45 Zagzebski, Virtues of the Mind, 9, footnote 4.
doesn't count as a virtue theory to the extent that it resembles virtue reliabilism. But that
would be a rather extreme and uncalled for conclusion because obviously if anyone has
to count as a virtue theorist it has to be Aristotle, as he was the first philosopher to
articulate the major commitments of virtue theory. What Zagzebski doesn't seem to
realize is that the virtue responsibilists draw on Aristotle's moral conception of virtue
while the virtue reliabilists draw on the intellectual conception.

Despite these differences though, lately there has been a convergence of thought
on the matter and thus the virtue reliabilism-virtue responsibilism divide no longer
points to an intractable difference as it once perhaps did. There are chiefly three reasons
for this convergence. First, it has been argued (successfully, in my opinion) that there is
nothing about the formal definitions proffered by the virtue reliabilists that rule out the
intellectual virtues as excellent intellectual character traits. In other words, the
intellectual virtues as the responsibilists traditionally conceive of them, are formally
compatible with all the virtue reliabilist definitions. There is nothing in the idea of, say,
open-mindedness that conflicts with the idea that a virtue is conducive to having true
beliefs and avoiding false ones. And the reason this is so is that the virtue reliabilists
utilize a very general definition of virtue that is compatible with the more specific
conception employed by the virtue responsibilists. In the upcoming section, I look at the
exact definitions of intellectual virtue proposed by the virtue reliabilists so that the
reader can personally verify that the definition is in fact general enough to accommodate
a conception of intellectual virtue as a character trait. Second, it has also been noted that

46 See Jason Baehr, “Character, Reliability and Virtue Epistemology,” Philosophical Quarterly 56, no. 223
for a virtue to in fact be reliable, the agent himself must exercise responsibility. For example, inferential reasoning could only work if the agent were already committed in some way to being a reasonable and truth-seeking individual, even if only implicitly, otherwise such an ability could be employed for clearly unjustified or frivolous ends. Even simple perception, such as that involving eyesight and hearing, can be affected by how responsible an agent is. Third, the two main virtue reliabilists, Ernest Sosa and John Greco, have conceded an important point: their conceptions of the intellectual virtues, though wider than that of the virtue responsibilists, include that of the intellectual virtues conceived of as character traits as well. So while previously there was a creeping suspicion that these two camps were simply talking past one another, lately there has been a convergence of thought on the matter. We can conclude, then, that virtue responsibilism is compatible with virtue reliabilism since the former utilizes a more specific conception of virtue than the more general one of the latter.

From the fact that the virtue reliabilists accept an understanding of the intellectual virtues construed as character traits, and from the fact that it has successfully been argued that their definitions of virtue are compatible with the intellectual virtues construed as character traits, it follows that the criticisms I will direct at virtue reliabilist epistemologies will indeed be appropriate recipients of such critiques because I am

48 I argue for this conclusion in “Virtue Epistemology and the Pyrrhonian Problematic” (M.A. thesis, California State University, Los Angeles, 2009).
supposing that the notion of intellectual virtue under review is one of an excellent character trait. While it does remain the case that virtue responsibilism is compatible with virtue reliabilism, it must be noted that the former does not include the latter, as only the more general virtue epistemology can include the more specific. One notices here though that much of the deep-seated disagreements between these two camps have considerably softened and differences blurred; because of this development, I maintain that it doesn't make too much sense to continue to insist that this division in virtue epistemology is indicative of significant disagreement. In fact, I think that most forms of virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism are in fact closer than were previously thought. In what follows, I explain my rationale for dividing up accounts of intellectual virtue in a new way.

I propose that we organize theories of intellectual virtue on the basis of what epistemic good the intellectual virtues are aimed at acquiring. We may then further subdivide these accounts on the basis of how an intellectual virtue aims at that particular type of epistemic good. As it turns out, the vast majority of extant virtue epistemologies are committed to the idea that the intellectual virtues aim to acquire truth. Perhaps it will come as no surprise at this point, but in this regard virtue epistemologists have followed Aristotle, who stated that “the characteristic activity of each of the parts related to intellect, then, is truth; and so the virtues of each will be those states on the basis of which it will most of all arrive at the truth.” One philosopher summarizes Aristotle's

50 There is thus a possibility that in critiquing accounts of virtue from the reliabilist group that a more general definition of virtue may escape my criticisms. What the significance of such a possibility is I leave an open question. I do not believe that it necessitates further comment because my primary focus is on developing an epistemology of character, one that relies on explicating what sort of intellectual character traits a knower should optimally have.

51 Aristotle, NE, 1139b.
position on the matter: “an intellectual virtue is a disposition to experience true beliefs.”

The idea that the intellectual virtues are paradigmatically connected to truth has exerted a powerful influence on contemporary virtue epistemology, and on this basis there is no significant difference between virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism, as adherents on both sides have committed themselves to this idea (as will be seen shortly in the upcoming sections).

The first major division, then, in my new method of categorizing accounts of the intellectual virtues begins by distinguishing between truth-centered and non-truth-centered views of the intellectual virtues. So far, no one has divided up the various virtue epistemologies on this basis because for a long time it was not questioned whether or not intellectual virtue deals primarily with truth. The truth-centered accounts of intellectual virtue are, generally speaking, committed to the view that the intellectual virtues are character traits that enable an agent to acquire true beliefs. Sometimes it is also added that an intellectual virtue helps an agent avoid false beliefs as well; when this minor qualification is given, it will be more accurate to understand the truth-centered views as actually truth-ratio-centered views because an intellectual virtue is understood as enabling an agent to mostly have true beliefs and minimize false beliefs, or in other words an intellectual virtue enables an agent to have a high truth ratio. But because it would be rather cumbersome to utilize the long-winded term truth-ratio-centered when describing a

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52 Deborah Achtenberg, “The Role of the Ergon Argument in Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics,” *Ancient Philosophy* 9, no. 1 (1989): 42. It has been pointed out to me by Georgios Anagnostopoulos that though Aristotle’s conception of intellectual virtue is oriented toward acquiring the truth, the idea that intellectual virtue generates true beliefs is a reflection of recent epistemological analysis that understands knowledge as a kind of belief. Strictly speaking though, knowledge is not a kind of belief for Aristotle but is a different type of cognitive state. With that said, current virtue epistemological theories, even ones that purport to follow Aristotle, typically explain intellectual virtue in terms of beliefs. Later on in this chapter, I take issue with belief-oriented theories of intellectual virtue.
particular account, I will simply abbreviate the phrase to truth-centered. Because the truth-centered views are the dominant ones in virtue epistemology, there are a few prominent sub-groups united by various themes. Some versions rely upon the idea that the intellectual virtues must generally succeed in enabling an agent to have true beliefs and avoid false beliefs. One sub-group corresponds fairly well with the previously encountered virtue reliabilists, and so I will label the first of the truth-centered views as the reliable truth-centered ones; in order for a proposed account of intellectual virtue to fall under this view, it must take the position that an intellectual virtue reliably leads one to form true beliefs. A second sub-group that can be identified as part of the truth-centered crowd is what I will name the motivational truth-centered group. Virtue epistemologists of this type take issue with the idea that the intellectual virtues must generally enable an agent to acquire truth. They argue, instead, that what makes something in fact a virtue is the motivation an agent has to acquire the truth. Finally, there is a set of virtue epistemologists who think a virtue can't be adequately defined without both reliability and motivational components. They believe that not only must an agent be motivated to acquire the truth but must furthermore be generally successful in acquiring the truth. I will refer to these views as mixed conceptions of intellectual virtue because they combine features of the reliable and motivational truth-centered views.

53 Having true beliefs and avoiding false ones are not in fact the same goal; one could well achieve a large number of true beliefs while also believing a great many false ones if one happens to be “epistemically liberal,” being committed to believing many truths despite the risks of having many false beliefs, or one could be “epistemically conservative,” believing only what appears certain, ending up with a few number of true beliefs overall. However, despite the difference between the goal of having true beliefs and avoiding false ones, accounts of the intellectual virtues that make truth their primary objective with or without the additional stipulation of avoiding false beliefs nevertheless still revolve around one epistemic good: truth, or the lack of it. Categorizing accounts of the intellectual virtues on the basis of truth-centering respects this distinction. See Wayne Riggs for the differences between and consequences of having true beliefs versus avoiding false ones, “Balancing Our Epistemic Goals,” *Noûs* 37, no. 2 (2003): 342–352.
There are, of course, minor variations within these three groupings, and I will indicate what those are in the course of my critique.

Non-truth-centered views, on the other hand, don't primarily characterize the intellectual virtues as having to do with truth. Some versions still utilize truth as an important epistemic good that an intellectual virtue is concerned with, while others don't mention truth at all. Sometimes these views will center around some other type of epistemic good, whereas others will not center around any one epistemic good in particular. Non-truth-centered views are a minority within virtue epistemology, perhaps because many virtue epistemologists take it as obvious that the intellectual virtues should primarily revolve around truth. Since there are so few versions of non-truth centered views of the intellectual virtues in virtue epistemology, there are no sub-groups united by any common threads. Thus, I refrain from further dividing up the non-truth centered accounts.

The general division, then, in virtue epistemology is that between truth-centered and non-truth-centered views of the intellectual virtues. Within the former camp are the sub-categories of the reliable, motivational, and mixed truth-centered accounts. There is not as much similarity within the non-truth-centered views and so there is no further sub-division within that category. In what follows, I plan to critique the major accounts of the intellectual virtues and all fall into one of the four above-mentioned categories. However, there are some minor views that I will not examine due to considerations of importance and space. Many of these proposals don't rise above surface definitions to advance a substantive view of intellectual virtue (many never had this aim in the first place). Some of these views come from theorists working in virtue theory broadly
construed, while others don't classify themselves as virtue theorists at all. Among those working in virtue theory are those whose accounts can be thought of as truth-centered.\(^{54}\) Other virtue accounts are best understood as non-truth-centered.\(^{55}\) Finally, there are also works by philosophers who don't primarily see themselves as virtue theorists who nevertheless critique and interact with accounts of intellectual virtue, usually implying a definition or theory of intellectual virtue in doing so but stopping short of advancing beyond that; these views I leave uncategorized due to a lack of explicit statements that would suggest an appropriate category for these works to belong to.\(^{56}\) It's a difficult decision to omit these views from critique, but they are left out due to one or more of the following reasons: not attempting primarily to define or explain intellectual virtue, not being substantively developed, and/or not interacting in general with the virtue epistemology literature. Leaving these works aside, I will now proceed to critically evaluate the major understandings of intellectual virtue that have recently been proposed.

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2. Reliable Truth-Centered Accounts of Intellectual Virtue

The primary goal of section 2 is to understand why the reliable truth-centered accounts face some theoretical difficulties in explaining what makes the intellectual virtues intrinsically valuable. I plan to examine two virtue epistemologists in this regard: Ernest Sosa and John Greco. However, there are also two other goals of this section. One is to further explain an idea that I made near the beginning of the dissertation. In particular, I claimed that the intellectual virtues are intuitively thought to be intrinsically valuable. Most virtue theorists agree with this claim, but there are a few who do not. Those who dispute this idea do so on grounds that will be explored in this chapter. My intention for looking at this sort of view is to lend further support to the idea that the intellectual virtues are in fact intrinsically valuable by revealing why its main competitor view—that the intellectual virtues are only or merely instrumentally valuable—is seriously flawed. Examining an account provided by Julia Driver will be instructive in this regard, and the fact that she is best classified as a reliable truth-centered theorist gives us good reason to critique her account in this section.

Another goal of this section is to highlight some of the problems that stem from conceiving of the intellectual virtues in truth-centered terms, that is, as primarily revolving around acquiring truth and avoiding falsehood. Since several of these problems persist across various truth-centered views (not just the reliable truth-centered ones), I thought it best to indicate these issues as quickly as possible so that when they reappear in subsequent views there will be no need to re-explain these problems continuously in detail. In order to accomplish this task, I devote more attention to Sosa's
work compared to that of other virtue epistemologists. His work also makes for an optimal reference point since he is the epistemologist who introduced virtue into contemporary epistemology as a significant theoretical concept, and as such, one can see the point of departure that other virtue epistemologists had in mind when they began formulating their own theories. When all is said and done in this part of the chapter, one will also have an idea of what prompted alternate proposals, such as the motivational truth-centered views, to emerge.

Ernest Sosa is the philosopher who has done the most to characterize the reliable truth-centered view of the intellectual virtues. According to him, “X is an intellectual virtue only if X would produce a high ratio of true beliefs.” In another work, Sosa remarks that “Whatever exactly the end may be, the virtue of a virtue derives not simply from leading us to it, perhaps accidentally, but from leading us to it reliably: e.g., in a way bound to maximize one's surplus of truth over error.” Sosa's proposal is very straightforward and historically consistent with a definition of intellectual virtue that Aristotle himself offered. But does his definition of intellectual virtue correctly explain why an intellectual virtue is valuable? He thinks so, on the grounds that intellectual virtue is a kind of success from ability, and successfully achieving important goals through the use of ability, such as virtue, is intrinsically valuable. But as we are about to see, examining his proposal in more detail makes that idea implausible.

The first thing to note about Sosa's view is that his definition of intellectual virtue

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57 BonJour and Sosa, *Epistemic Justification*, 156. (The quote is from Sosa as BonJour functions as the former's antagonistic co-author in this work and is thus an opponent of Sosa's virtue epistemology.)
virtue is consistent with an individual memorizing a large stock of trivial truths. For example, imagine that an agent decided to embark upon a quest to become intellectually virtuous. In order to fulfill his task, he decides to memorize the temperatures recorded at 9 p.m. from ten randomly selected cities in Texas in the year 1964. As it so happens, this person is quite good at his selected task and over the course of several months has memorized thousands of accurate temperature readings. Sosa's proposed definition of intellectual virtue has been satisfied in this case; the temperature memorizer has successfully built himself a stock of true beliefs through his own dedication and perseverance, but it can't be correct that an intellectual virtue be thought of as intrinsically valuable if an agent commits himself to memorizing trivial truths. Instead, the agent is better thought of as foolish.

Now Sosa may retort that an intellectual virtue is still intrinsically valuable because an agent has acquired some truth, and some truth is better than no truth or worse yet, many falsehoods. But this type of reply would neglect to take into account that in memorizing a trivial set of truths, valuable time has been lost in committing oneself to actually believing important truths. Sosa's account has no way of accounting for a genuine *epistemic loss*, a loss of time and resources that could have been spent more usefully. Characterized in Sosa's manner, it's difficult to see what makes an intellectual virtue intrinsically valuable if it's compatible with an agent memorizing trivial truths. Even on the supposition that memorizing truth—any truth—is intrinsically valuable simply because it's truth (which is already a questionable assumption), one would have to explain the intrinsic disvalue in wasting epistemic resources that are better spent. At minimum, one would have to recognize that there is more intrinsically bad here (wasting
epistemic resources given a finite amount of time) than intrinsically good (memorizing trivial truths). If one were not to grant Sosa the idea that true beliefs are good simply because they are true, then Sosa's proposal fails to explain the intrinsic value of intellectual virtue well. Let us call this objection for the sake of convenience the *triviality* objection.

Sosa's account doesn't just run into problems considering triviality though; there is also an issue with *relevance*. For instance, suppose that an individual wanted to figure out how to play the violin. She makes this project the immediate goal of her life, but in doing so proceeds to diligently study a book about playing checkers. Through her course of study she learns much that she's never known about playing checkers and has made significant strides in becoming a checkers master. Since this individual gave herself the goal of playing the violin, but studied a topic that was completely irrelevant, she never achieved her goal. However, on Sosa's account, this individual is also intellectually virtuous; she, through her abilities, acquired a number of true beliefs in studying how to play checkers. Admittedly, she does possess a false belief, namely, that studying checkers exclusively will give her the ability to play the violin better, but that doesn't matter much on Sosa's account; what matters more is that an agent's truth ratio is high. In this case, the agent knows many truths about checkers and believes only one falsehood about mastering the violin. I contend that an intellectual virtue can't be thought of as intrinsically valuable if it leads to the conclusion that irrelevant epistemic practices (relative to a particular goal) are virtuous. The problem here is that Sosa's view designates agents as virtuous who pursue a goal through a means that is clearly unrelated. Let us label this result as the *irrelevance* objection.
The previous two objections were focused on the fact that characterizing intellectual virtue along the dimension of truth leads to some difficulties in thinking of an intellectual virtue as intrinsically valuable, but another thing to notice is belief. Should an intellectual virtue be thought of as intrinsically valuable if it leads to an agent believing more truths than falsehoods? Consider a case of an average undergraduate student in a math class who has just learned about Cantor's theorem, in particular, the rather intangible conclusion that given a set with infinite members, there will always exist a larger set with an even larger infinity and so on for that larger infinity. Despite the professor's very clear and thorough explanation, the student just doesn't fully grasp the concept—in his mind he thinks how can there be an infinity of infinities? However, the student trusts the professor, takes him at his word, and subsequently comes to believe Cantor's theorem along with all its mathematical implications. Once again, Sosa's definition is satisfied; the student now has increased his stockpile of truths. Yet, is an intellectual virtue made intrinsically valuable merely by the fact that a person happens to believe a set of truths? What is the value of belief without understanding? Additionally and ideally, an agent should also feel convinced (among other things) about a truth if he thinks it to be true. But in this situation the student felt uneasy the entire time, believing truly without understanding or conviction. There should be a non-accidental coincidence of some emotion even if very minimal, when it comes to an agent believing truths and rejecting falsehoods.\(^{60}\) In fact, one would hope that more psychological states than just belief are involved when it comes to accepting truths and avoiding falsehoods.

\(^{60}\) That is, there should be emotions that positively orient one toward epistemic goods, such as truth. I don't mean to suggest here that one should be emotional regarding the truth, in the sense of losing one's sense of objectivity or level-headedness.
Even if Sosa is right that an intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable at least partly because of securing true beliefs and avoiding false ones, he has missed a considerably important part of the picture. Let us name this the doxastic objection from the fact that belief is not sufficient to capture what is fully intrinsically valuable about intellectual virtue.\footnote{In the \textit{Posterior Analytics}, Aristotle makes a similar point in another context regarding the significance of possessing the truth along with understanding.}

What if Sosa's view implied that the intellectual virtues were not necessary to the epistemic enterprise? Suppose that a person studying chemistry were blessed to know an expert who was always correct about all the facts pertaining to chemistry. When doing chemical research, this individual always consults the expert to obtain more chemical knowledge. He becomes so dependent on the expert that, as a result, he neglects to critically think about and evaluate his own reasons for belief. But given that this individual always has a sure-fire route to access truths and avoid falsehoods via asking the expert, there is no need to cultivate intellectual virtue in the first place. That is, what does the value of intellectual virtue consist in if the end that virtue aims at (acquiring truth and avoiding falsehood) were guaranteed through some other route? Why should one struggle through a process of character building and refinement over several years when truth is available on the cheap? Let us call this the obsoletion objection, from the fact that if what virtue aims at is secured equally well or better through an alternate, non-virtuous route, the intellectual virtues can't be thought of as intrinsically valuable because they are obsolete for the sake of acquiring truth.

One older reply to Sosa's account of intellectual virtue stems from James Montmarquet, who argues that Sosa's position must be incorrect because it doesn't
adequately characterize virtue exemplars properly. I consider this argument here not for the purpose of reciting an already established objection, but because Sosa later clarified his position, and so another response is in order. Montmarquet's general position is that there are some epistemically outstanding individuals—intellectually virtuous exemplars—who possessed valuable character traits that nevertheless failed to obtain truth. He has in mind great intellectuals, such as Aristotle, Plato, Newton, Ptolemy, etc. On Sosa's understanding of intellectual virtue, these individuals fail to be virtuous since they believed a vast quantity of falsehoods, especially as their beliefs concerned the natural world. For example, Aristotle believed a large number of falsehoods about animal physiology, and all of Newton's laws of physics are incorrect (in the details). Recall that on Sosa's definition an agent must actually acquire a large number of true beliefs while avoiding false beliefs in order to be considered intellectually virtuous. However, Montmarquet maintains that these exemplars are in fact virtuous; they possess excellent character traits that are intrinsically valuable despite failing to believe a significant number of truths. And on this point Montmarquet is surely right—there is something valuable about having excellent character traits, even if agents fail to get the truth. The conclusion that he ultimately draws is that Sosa's account doesn't succeed because it deprives the virtue exemplars of being correctly labeled as intellectually virtuous when they clearly are. It was originally Montmarquet's argument that later led many epistemologists to think that Sosa's proposal leads to the conclusion that the intellectual virtues are only instrumentally valuable.


But I believe that Sosa's later critics have unfairly labeled his account as instrumentalist when he himself insists that his view accords the intellectual virtues intrinsic value. (I exclude Montmarquet from this charge because he critiqued Sosa before Sosa's later writings emerged that clarified the issue. But the newer critics have neglected to examine Sosa's complete opinion on the matter.) Given criticisms like Montmarquet's though, in what sense can Sosa claim that his definition implies an intrinsic valuation of the intellectual virtues? In other works of his, Sosa takes up the question of what we are to make of the case when an agent, perhaps through bad luck, ends up believing a host of falsehoods, despite having character traits that we would typically label as intellectually virtuous. He adds a qualification to his virtue epistemology: a virtue is to be understood in relative terms. That is, an excellent character trait counts only as a virtue given a particular set of background conditions. One of his favorite examples to illustrate this point is that of a car's engine. An engine only works, or is virtuous, relative to the background conditions of there being a road, permitting weather, gravity, etc. A car's engine is never virtuous tout court, but only when the background conditions have been specified. If a car were cast into the ocean and an attempt made to start the engine, it would be ridiculous, says Sosa, to blame the engine for malfunctioning as car engines were never made to be used underwater.

How does this consideration affect Montmarquet's criticism regarding the virtue exemplars though? Some might predict where Sosa could head with such a reply; they may think that he intends to define virtue in human beings relative to historical conditions and knowledge at the time. Virtue exemplars, such as Aristotle, Ptolemy,

Newton, etc. possessed intrinsically valuable virtues given what was known at the time, especially as it concerned empirical knowledge. Though such a response sounds initially plausible, such a maneuver isn't available to Sosa because he thinks that possessing an intellectual virtue entails having true beliefs and avoiding false ones. So what, then, is Sosa's response? He states that an intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable because there is some possible world in which, through exercising those virtues, that agent has a large preponderance of true beliefs to false beliefs. What this means is that the virtue exemplars, despite lacking true beliefs about much of what they thought in the actual world, possess true beliefs in some possible world. The conclusion Sosa draws is that on his conception, the intellectual virtues are indeed intrinsically valuable. Whether an individual's character traits are in fact virtuous depend upon which world that agent happens to inhabit.65

No virtue epistemologist has responded to Sosa's more nuanced view of the intrinsic value of intellectual virtue, but it's important to address his position now. What are we to make of this position? Despite preserving the idea that an intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable, there are some negative theoretical consequences that follow. The first thing I'd like to note is that Sosa's ideas imply that any character trait is intrinsically valuable in some possible world. Any character trait can systematically produce true beliefs and minimize false beliefs given the right set of background conditions. Consider

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65 What exactly is a possible world? The terminology was first introduced by Gottfried Leibniz who famously argued that the world we inhabit is the best of all possible worlds that God could have created in developing his theodicy. Intuitively speaking, the notion is meant to capture the idea that things may have turned out differently compared to what actually happened in the real world. For example, Abraham Lincoln may have had blond hair and the South could have won the Civil War. Later on, philosophers turned their attention toward the metaphysical status of possible worlds, exploring what sort of existence they had, if any. Epistemologists in general though don't provide an interpretation of what a possible world is in metaphysical terms, leaving the issue to be pursued in metaphysics.
what is typically regarded as an intellectual vice in the actual world—dogmatism. A
dogmatic individual stubbornly clings to a set of beliefs in spite of lacking evidence or
even possessing contrary evidence for his beliefs. But there is a possible world in which
a dogmatic individual always possesses a large ratio of true beliefs to false beliefs. There
are possible worlds in which character traits such as close-mindedness and utter lack of
curiosity generate a high number of true beliefs. Given Sosa's method of relativizing the
virtues to some possible world, it follows that any character trait is intrinsically valuable
in some possible world, which is obviously a regrettable theoretical implication. The
problem ultimately, then, is that Sosa has no principled way of demarcating intrinsically
valuable character traits from those that clearly aren't because all character traits are
intrinsically valuable in some world. We may call this outcome the possibility problem
from the fact that Sosa attempts to relativize the intrinsic value of intellectual virtue to
possible worlds.

Additionally, does Sosa's procedure really adequately respond to the heart of Montmarquet's objection? We think there is something intrinsically valuable about the
personality aspects of the virtue exemplars in this world, not in some possible world. It
is strongly intuitive to think that Aristotle, Newton, Ptolemy, etc. were intellectually
virtuous in this world because of their character traits, independently of whether their
beliefs were actually true or not. This raises a further problem that Sosa has no obvious
way of addressing—how are individuals supposed to know whether their character traits
are in fact virtuous or not? What if we are victims of Descartes' evil demon?66 In the

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66 Descartes' evil demon has been and continues to be a staple of epistemological thought experiments, deriving from Descartes' rightly famous meditations. (See René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Mike Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). In this scenario, an evil demon happens to control the world and interferes with the human perception of it, rendering
event that we have been deceived by this evil demon who feeds us false perceptions about the world, rendering our beliefs pervasively and systematically false, what are we to make of character traits that appear to be good? If the actual world is an evil demon world, and we have no way of telling whether or not we're in an evil demon world, what are we to make of character traits that we hold to be epistemically good for us, ones that we think bring us closer to truth? Whether the character traits we have are in fact virtuous and intrinsically valuable depend on us knowing the ultimate nature of reality, as well as our perceptual and rational capabilities. That's a tall order, and it's safe to say that no person has knowledge that thorough. We may conclude that Sosa's account faces a problem of identification, namely, that there is no way to tell whether the character traits we have are intrinsically valuable or not unless we have complete and thorough knowledge about reality.

So while Sosa's account began with the fairly straightforward idea that the intellectual virtues in fact enable an agent to secure true beliefs and avoid false ones, there are a number of objections that undermine any reasonable explication of the intrinsic value of the intellectual virtues. In evaluating Sosa's proposal, I labeled six criticisms as the triviality, irrelevance, doxastic, obsoletion, possibility, and identification objections. As it turns out, most other virtue epistemologies suffer at least one of these problems, and I will indicate which of these problems specifically in due course. Having a label for these issues will save some time as it would be redundant to develop the same objection

human beliefs pervasively and systematically false. The significance of the thought experiment is not that there actually is some great risk that our perception of the world is actually generated from some real evil demon. Rather, the thought experiment is meant to focus our attention on what a proposed epistemology implies if something about the world, independent of human control, happens to significantly obscure our ability to form true beliefs. Descartes' evil demon thought experiment, then, is a helpful way of revealing theoretical weaknesses about a proposed epistemology and not fanciful paranoia introduced without reason!
repeatedly against different accounts of the intellectual virtues. For ease of reference, I
concisely define what these objections are in the summary section of this chapter
(section 7).

Another major reliable truth-centered theory in virtue epistemology is advanced
by John Greco, who takes a position very similar to Sosa's: “A mechanism M for
generating and/or maintaining beliefs is a cognitive virtue if and only if M is an ability to
believe true propositions and avoid believing false propositions.”67 He further claims an
intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable because, echoing Sosa, intellectual virtue is a
type of success from ability.68 The key difference between the two though is that Greco
doesn't want to relativize virtue to possible worlds because he thinks that virtue should
be understood in terms of the actual world. He amends the definition above by adding
a justification condition: “S is epistemically justified in believing that p if and only if S's
believing that p is in conformance with the epistemic norms which S countenances, and
the history of S's belief has also been in conformance with those norms.”69 In order to
be virtuous, one must be justified in the sense above, in addition to believing truths and
avoiding falsehoods. What Greco means by an agent countenancing norms is that she
reasons according to correct rules of inference but that she need not actually have the
belief that she is in fact reasoning on the basis of such rules. For example, an individual
playing a game of chess may not have articulable beliefs about the formal rules of the
game (“I believe that a bishop can only move diagonally.”); however, in making moves
that are allowable, she countenances the rules of chess despite lacking belief about them.

68 Greco, Achieving Knowledge, 99.
Likewise, when an agent forms a belief, such as *snow is white* on the basis of perceiving white snow, she is justified in having that belief, and hence, there is something intrinsically valuable about her character traits even if she ultimately does form false beliefs (on the assumption that her history of belief formation also is consistent with epistemic norms). One advantage of Greco's view is that the *identification* problem is minimized (though not eradicated); we don't actually need to know the nature of the world and our capabilities as perceivers and reasoners to know whether there is something intrinsically valuable about our character traits. They are intrinsically valuable insofar as they accord with correct epistemic norms. Of course, one still does ultimately need to have true beliefs, so one only possesses an intellectual virtue to the extent that one does in fact form true beliefs. Another advantage of Greco's view is that the *irrelevance* objection is avoided; presumably what reasoning in accordance with epistemic norms entails is that one must see how the means utilized to some epistemic end actually pertain to that end.

Though Greco's account improves upon Sosa's, the improvements don't go far enough in that several of the serious objections that I offered against Sosa's account still apply to Greco's. There is, first, the problem of *triviality*—Greco's conception of intellectual virtue is still compatible with the idea that an agent can memorize a large set of trivial truths, enlarging his truth ratio. There is nothing *logically* wrong about memorizing trivial truths. That is, one does not break any rule of inference in doing so and can furthermore still countenance epistemic norms and obtain true beliefs. His account doesn't explain what would make an intellectual virtue intrinsically valuable if an agent is able to procure another, more sure-fire way of acquiring true beliefs and so the
obseletion objection still holds. Finally, though Greco is to be commended for integrating more than just beliefs in his account of intellectual virtue, surely there is more to virtue than just countenancing norms, believing truths, and avoiding falsehoods. So while the doxastic objection doesn't hold against Greco in the same way that it did against Sosa, Greco hasn't found any value in other psychological states that are positive aspects of excellent character traits, such as emotions relating to being convinced of true beliefs or understanding.

Aside from the objections common to both Sosa and Greco's account, there is also room to question just what epistemic norms an agent needs to countenance. It makes sense to insist that people should countenance basic logical principles, such as non-contradiction and modus ponens, even if those individuals have never heard of these principles and can't explain to someone else what they are. Should they also countenance rules of logic, say, from modal or deontic logic? What about axioms of Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory? Of course, they don't need to have explicit beliefs about these logical principles and axioms, and they certainly don't even need to know about the existence of these fields, but should they countenance norms that are consistent with them? Greco doesn't indicate which norms an agent should accept and, from his account, makes it sound as if an individual ought to countenance all epistemic norms. If that's true, then it's not clear whether any individuals have intrinsically valuable character traits because it's doubtful that someone countenances all epistemic norms. Even the best reasoners in history have committed the occasional fallacy. The end result is that there is some vagueness as to which epistemic norms an agent ought to countenance, and so it is also vague which individuals have intrinsically valuable character traits.
Furthermore, Greco’s account is too demanding in the sense that an agent’s *current* beliefs are only justified when her entire prior *history* of belief formation is consistent with correct epistemic norms. That’s an extreme requirement; is an agent’s belief that *snow is white* only justified if she has correctly countenanced epistemic norms for her entire epistemic history up until this particular belief? Would such a correct history have to begin from childhood onwards? Only perhaps a perfect agent would have such a pristine history of countenancing correct epistemic norms and so rare or non-existent is the individual who actually happens to have intrinsically valuable character traits via countenancing epistemic norms. Consequently, though Greco’s proposal solves some problems that affected Sosa’s account, he still hasn’t surmounted objections unique to his own view, as well as other objections that are common to both accounts. We may label the issue unique to his own view as the *countenancing* objection. So far, no reliable truth-centered view has fared well in explaining how the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable.

Julia Driver offers an interesting approach to thinking about the intellectual virtues. Though her general view falls under the reliable truth-centered model, she, unlike Sosa and Greco, takes the position that the intellectual virtues are *not* intrinsically valuable but are only instrumentally so.\(^70\) Though I have developed and labeled a number of objections against Sosa and Greco above and could level similar charges at Driver, those criticisms were meant to illustrate how their views fail to account well for the intrinsic value of the intellectual virtues. But since Driver disputes that idea from the beginning, it would beg the question against her to argue that her proposal is unable to

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account for the intrinsic value of intellectual virtue. So, instead, I proceed to show other implausible consequences of her view. In doing so, the case for thinking of the intellectual virtues as an intrinsic good is further bolstered because the main competitor view—that the intellectual virtues are only instrumentally valuable—will be shown to be logically problematic.

Driver states that “A character trait is an intellectual virtue iff [if and only if] it systematically (reliably) produces true belief.” Her view is fairly simple in that there is no further qualification to the above definition; there is no relativization to possible worlds or countenancing epistemic norms. A character trait may occasionally produce a small number of false beliefs, but as long as it yields a large preponderance of true beliefs in the long run, that character trait counts as an intellectual virtue. With that said, there are some major problems facing Driver’s view.

Imagine two brothers, A and B. A is overall a very wise individual who has cultivated and currently manifests virtually the entire set of typically recognized intellectual virtues. B, on the other hand, can’t be described as having any excellent character traits at all. A is enthusiastic for believing what is true, and via exemplification of the intellectual virtues, believes a great many truths. B is rather apathetic about the truth, but he does have one persistent character trait—he unflinchingly believes everything that A tells him. As a further stipulation on this case, let us also suppose that neither A nor B have any beliefs one way or another about the intellectual virtues themselves. That is, A, in his pursuit of truth, just happens to manifest the intellectual virtues, and the thought doesn’t even occur to him that there are entities like virtues and

likewise for B. Since B believes everything A does, both A and B possess the same overall stock of true beliefs. Driver's account labels A's character traits as intellectual virtues since through their use, A acquires true beliefs. Equivalently, B's character trait of unhesitatingly believing A is also an intellectual virtue because he simply copies A's beliefs, and all of them happen to be true. If this is already a strongly unintuitive result, consider further what happens when randomly, B loses contact with A. A still manages to believe a large amount of truths, but B ceases to believe anything new at all since A was his source of beliefs. Because B lacks any belief about the value of the intellectual virtues, he can't see or understand why he should cultivate them. From the fact that A is no longer part of the epistemic scene, it follows on Driver's account that B's character trait no longer counts as a virtue. Simply by removing A from the picture B's character trait now fails to be a virtue.

From these observations, we may conclude two things. First, when A and B are together, the value of their character traits as they relate to believing truths are epistemically equivalent. That is, Driver's account accords no further value to A's character traits than B's because the valuation of those traits derives from how instrumentally successful they are in procuring truths for the agent, and both are equally successful in acquiring the same stock of true beliefs. However, it is plainly obvious that A's intellectual character traits are superior to B's. Driver could easily have avoided this problem if she insisted that the intellectual virtues, as we typically conceive of them, are intrinsically valuable; that is, she could have argued instead that the value of A's character traits differ in kind when compared to B's. Though A and B's character traits are equally valuable instrumentally, A and B are not equivalent at all if we attach intrinsic value to
A's character traits while none to B's. We can call this outcome the *copying* problem.

Second, it can't be right to think that an agent's character trait changes its virtuous status simply and solely through the presence or absence of another individual: if A is present, B's character trait is a virtue, and if A is absent, B's character trait ceases to be a virtue. Why should B's character traits change from virtuous to non-virtuous if B's underlying psychology and personality, as they concern believing truths and avoiding falsehoods, are unchanged? Virtues are aspects of one's character, and being traits of character, don't come into or go out of existence because another person happens to enter or leave the room. This is to say that they *persist* on the assumption that an agent's underlying character is unchanged. Analogously, consider two vials, one containing water and another oil. Regardless of where one puts the vial of oil, either in the same room as the vial of water or in a different room, the vial of water would still retain its identity and persist as a vial of water. But by applying similar reasoning as in the case of A and B, Driver's account would imply that the vial of water can actually change its identity simply and solely through the vial of oil being put in or taken away from the same room as the vial of water. Since this obviously can't be correct, Driver's account implies an implausibility. We may designate this result as the *persistence* problem since it's appropriate to think that virtues, being entrenched states of character, retain their identity as virtues and persist as long as an agent's underlying character is unchanged.

Both of the above-mentioned issues are the result of thinking of an intellectual virtue in instrumentalist terms as Driver insists that we do. Notice here that Sosa and

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72 B's psychological states as they concern things such as perception of A undoubtedly change (in particular, they change insofar as A is present or absent). But as a truth-seeker, B's character traits and personality, with their associated psychological states, are unchanged.
Greco don't face this problem because they place intrinsic value on achieving epistemic success (believing truths and avoiding falsehoods) through one's own ability, that is, through one's own cultivation and exemplification of intellectual virtue. Though of course their accounts faced some other problems, they are very much on the right track by thinking that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable. However, if Driver were to amend her account and recognize that success from ability is in fact intrinsically valuable, she would no longer face the objections I described. A and B would only be equal on their ability to instrumentally acquire true beliefs but be far from equivalent when examining the intrinsic value of their intellectual character traits. Likewise, A leaving the room B inhabits no longer implies that B's virtuosity changes because B lacks an intrinsically valuable ability that A has and will continue to lack it regardless of whether A is with B or not. Thus, we are led to reject Driver's view that categorizes the intellectual virtues as only instrumentally valuable on the grounds that it leads to some rather vicious and unacceptable outcomes.

Subsequently, we have observed the failure of three different types of reliable truth-centered virtue epistemologies. Throughout this exposition, one may have noticed that these views are united by one common element of fallibility—they are committed to the idea that an intellectual virtue involves actually having true beliefs. But what if an apparently intellectually virtuous agent fails to acquire true beliefs through no fault of her own? The intuitive thought here is that one's intellectual virtues are still intrinsically valuable, but then the challenge becomes a matter of explaining how that is possible. Without the problematic added stipulations of possible worlds (Sosa) or countenancing epistemic norms (Greco), there is no room to think that an agent's excellent character
traits are intrinsically valuable because reliable truth-centered theories lead to the conclusion that these agents don't even have intellectual virtues to begin with since \textit{actually} having true beliefs is an absolute requirement of the reliable truth-centered views! One could obviously deny outright that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable (Driver), but as we have recently observed, that then opens up a whole new set of problems.

Additionally, one begins to notice a problem with the idea of truth-centering itself, as it is compatible with an agent memorizing a large stock of trivial or irrelevant beliefs. I'll have more to say on this matter later, as it is an issue that has infected virtually every truth-centered theory. It is from this point that we now move forward to the motivational truth-centered theories. They avoid some of the problems that the reliable truth-centered theories faced, but they also run into problems unique to themselves, as we will now see.

3. Motivational Truth-Centered Accounts of the Intellectual Virtues

The goal of section 3 is to critically examine the major motivational truth-centered views of the intellectual virtues. In opposition to the reliable truth-centered theorists, the motivational truth-centered epistemologists insist that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable because those who possess virtue are \textit{motivated} to acquire truth and avoid falsehood; it is an agent's epistemic motivation that provides an intellectual virtue with intrinsic value. The primary reason behind this insistence is that, as was briefly mentioned earlier in section 2, requiring an agent to actually acquire true
beliefs and avoid false beliefs leads to the unintuitive result that many intellectually virtuous exemplars would be denied the status of possessing intellectual virtue. For example, intellectually virtuous individuals, such as Aristotle and Newton, were widely off the mark in a great number of beliefs they had, especially empirical ones. But they couldn't have known any better at the time since they formed their beliefs in accordance with the best evidence available to them. Had they possessed the knowledge we have today, they obviously would have formed significantly different beliefs. But the fact that the intellectually virtuous exemplars of the past were motivated to acquire truth and avoid falsehood makes them intellectually virtuous and worthy of imitation. Ultimately, what matters to the motivational truth-centered theorist is not actually acquiring true belief, although hopefully that occurs; intellectual virtue does not involve actually being correct but in being motivated to be correct.

James Montmarquet and Wayne Riggs are two paradigmatic examples of the motivational truth-centered virtue epistemologists, though Montmarquet will receive the vast majority of the attention here as Riggs' overall theory is considerably less developed than Montmarquet's. Though Riggs has some unique ideas (which will be explored more in chapter 3), he appears to essentially adopt Montmarquet's view when it comes to the definition of intellectual virtue because he explicitly adopts Montmarquet's reasoning about the virtue exemplars and the intrinsic value of intellectual virtue. What, then, does Montmarquet think about intellectual virtue?

Montmarquet believes that all the virtue exemplars exemplified what he takes to be the primary intellectual virtue—epistemic conscientiousness, which he understands as
a motivation to believe truth and avoid error. However, epistemic conscientiousness in itself isn't a sufficient condition for being completely intellectually virtuous. Instead epistemic conscientiousness needs to be supplemented with other virtues, such as impartiality, sobriety, and love of knowledge. These supplemental intellectual virtues function as regulators of the main intellectual virtue of epistemic conscientiousness and their regulatory function manifests itself in the process of belief formation, albeit in an indirect way, as Montmarquet believes that we don't have direct control over our belief formation but instead have control over some of our character traits that aid in the process of belief formation. An overall intellectually virtuous agent would want to possess these supplemental virtues, such as impartiality, because if he only had epistemic conscientiousness he may be motivated to acquire true beliefs in an epistemically bad way. For example, an epistemically conscientious individual who lacks impartiality may turn out to be dogmatic; he may genuinely be motivated to believe truth and avoid falsehood, but he lacks the capacity to critically scrutinize himself and his sources of belief. Thus, a completely intellectually virtuous agent will possess the value of epistemic conscientiousness that is further regulated by other intellectual virtues. These virtues are united by the fact that they can all be instantiated and exemplified through simply being motivated to have the virtue. For example, one acquires the virtue of the love of knowledge simply through being motivated to love knowledge. Montmarquet is joined in this way of thinking by Riggs, who states that someone can “have a virtue so long as

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73 Montmarquet, “Epistemic Virtue.” Conscientiousness is not to be confused with the way the term is typically applied in ethics, that is, as a tendency or requirement to follow one's duty.

74 Montmarquet, Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility, 21–23, 47.

one has a stable disposition to be appropriately motivated to acquire true beliefs (and avoid false ones).”

Now that Montmarquet and Riggs' views have been adequately characterized, the time has come to review their proposals. The one important contribution that I acknowledge about the motivational truth-centered views is that they do in fact explain how the virtue exemplars have character traits that are thought to be intrinsically valuable. This leads to the larger point that virtue epistemologies ought to be faithful to real life examples of virtuous individuals as much as possible. We have pre-theoretical intuitions about the existence and value of virtue, and optimally, we would want our considered theory to align with those intuitions. We certainly wouldn't want to overturn our pre-theoretical ideas without justification for doing so. Montmarquet and Riggs' thus rightfully remind virtue epistemologists that they ought to calibrate their theory of intellectual virtue with real life individuals who function as data points of sorts that a theory must respect.

With that said, there are a couple of very serious drawbacks of the motivational truth-centered views, some of which are shared in common with their reliable truth-centered counterparts. To begin, let us first examine a problem unique to the former group. Given that the main virtue of epistemic conscientiousness and its associated regulatory virtues can be instantiated through simply wanting to have those virtues, it follows that these virtues can be had very easily. Because of this, I contend that there is nothing special about an individual being epistemically conscientious and thus reject it

being construed as an intellectual virtue in the first place, let alone one that is intrinsically valuable. This is because the overwhelming majority of individuals have as their default and baseline state a desire to acquire true beliefs and avoid false ones. Now, of course, they might not possess any belief about epistemic conscientiousness; they may not have any idea that they seek truth and avoid falsehood, but a typical individual's cognitive activity consists in seeking out truths, whether they are important or trivial. When it comes to false beliefs specifically, it's doubtful (though debatable) that agents through sheer mental power can motivate themselves to believe falsehoods.\textsuperscript{77} If agents have no choice but to avoid motivating themselves to have false beliefs, in what sense is it virtuous to avoid false beliefs? \textit{Individuals}, through simply being an average person, have a motivation to acquire true beliefs and avoid false ones because that is just a basic human tendency. Furthermore, this ease of possessing virtue is inconsistent with Montmarquet and Riggs' idea that accounts of virtue ought to be faithful to real life virtue exemplars and their exemplification of virtue because virtue is an excellent state of character that only exemplars actually possess to a significant degree. That is, it's not the case that the overwhelming majority of agents possess intellectual virtue because virtue is exceptional. As we have already seen, the list of the intellectually virtuous populating Montmarquet and Riggs' list is filled with intellectual all-stars, not average folk, so they clearly don't want that list occupied by anyone and everyone. Montmarquet and Riggs' problem is that their account fails to demarcate the virtuous from the non-

\textsuperscript{77} The debate about this matter has been termed \textit{the voluntariness of belief}. Though there are varying views, the general consensus (which I am inclined to) is that agents don't have freedom to flip their beliefs regarding the truth of a matter simply through willing it. There would have to be some intermediary, such as evidence, that enables agents to change beliefs about propositions from true to false or vice versa. See, for example, Robert Audi, "The Ethics of Belief: Doxastic Self-Control and Intellectual Virtue," \textit{Synthese} 161, no. 3 (2008): 403–418.
virtuous, as their view implies that virtually everyone is intellectually virtuous, and because of that, further implies that everyone has intrinsically valuable intellectual character traits when clearly they don't. We may label this problem the demarcation problem.

Both Montmarquet and Riggs may reply that the supplemental intellectual virtues, such as sobriety, love of knowledge, and impartiality are required for an individual to be completely intellectually virtuous, implying that an agent's intellectual virtues are only intrinsically valuable if an individual is overall intellectually virtuous. However, this response does not work as well. Recall that for Montmarquet and Riggs' one can have any of these supplemental virtues by simply desiring to have them. Once again, we notice that the path to virtue is very easy—too easy. Perhaps there are considerably fewer individuals who want to acquire these supplemental virtues (at least when compared to epistemic conscientiousness, which, I have argued, just is a default setting in most individuals), but many, if not most people have thought at some point that they should form their beliefs more carefully; should those individuals be thought to have acquired some intellectual virtue, such as sobriety, simply by the fact that they want to be more cautious when forming their beliefs? Were the task of acquiring virtue that easy!

There is a fundamental tension in Montmarquet and Riggs' ideas about intellectual virtue. On one hand, the people they think are intellectually virtuous are the intellectual all-stars, such as Aristotle and Plato. On the other hand, possessing intellectual virtue is extremely facile and can be had by virtually anyone and everyone. This leads to a dilemma: either the intellectual giants are intellectually virtuous and admirable because their character traits are significantly above and beyond the average
individual, or intellectual virtue is easy to acquire and the vast majority of humanity can be said to be intellectually virtuous, at least in regard to having epistemic conscientiousness. If the motivational truth-centered theorists choose to accept the first horn of the dilemma, then they can't define intellectual virtue in the terms that they did because virtue is too easy to possess. If they go with the second horn of the dilemma, there's no reason to highlight the virtue exemplars as such because virtually everyone would be a virtue exemplar. Ultimately, this challenge poses a problem from which there is no simple escape.\textsuperscript{78}

Not only do the motivational truth-centered views face the problem of demarcation, they also fall prey to similar objections that I leveled against the reliable truth-centered theories. On Montmarquet's view, epistemic conscientiousness is the primary virtue, but why think that a motivation to believe truths and avoid falsehoods is intrinsically valuable? What if an agent were committed to believing a large set of trivial truths? On the motivational view, so long as one is motivated, one has an intrinsically valuable character trait, even if it involves being motivated to count every single grain of sand on a beach. The problem of irrelevance also surfaces again—what if an agent wanted to learn how to scuba dive but instead had the motivation to learn about Mozart? Formally speaking, Montmarquet's definition of intellectual virtue gives no clue about

\textsuperscript{78} Perhaps the motivational truth-centered theorists could potentially respond by arguing that intellectual virtue occurs in degrees and is not an either-or phenomenon. To this I would very much agree that people can have virtue in degrees and, in fact, take up this issue in chapter 4. However, this move is not promising given the way motivational truth-centered theories are articulated because if all that separates the intellectual giants from the average person is a burning desire versus a weak flicker, respectively, to believe truth and avoid falsehood then virtuosity would be directly proportional to desire. This could lead motivational truth-centered theories to label certain individuals, such as perhaps an insane cult member who also happens to have a burning desire for truth, as intellectually virtuous. Clearly though, the motivational truth-centered theorists have no intention of admitting individuals like this to their list of virtue exemplars.
the relationship between being motivated to believe truths and one's epistemic goals, and so based on this objection it's doubtful that merely having a motivation to believe truths and avoid falsehoods is intrinsically valuable. Though he argues that epistemic conscientiousness ought to be regulated in order for an agent to be overall intellectually virtuous, ultimately this is just a regulation upon belief formation. Do the intellectual virtues that regulate epistemic conscientiousness also regulate emotion as well? Do they impact an agent's behavior? As we have witnessed with the reliable truth-centered theories, the motivational truth-centered theorists attempt to argue that what makes an intellectual virtue intrinsically valuable concerns belief, but surely there is much more that is intrinsically valuable in the manifestation of an excellent intellectual character trait, and so the doxastic objection still applies here.

On a positive note though for the motivational theories, they do manage to escape two issues that the reliable truth-centered views faced. Recall that the latter camp had difficulty with identifying whether a character trait was in fact a virtue because one would have to know whether or not an agent's beliefs conformed to how the world really is. The motivational views face no such issue because the intellectual virtues are directly tied to motivation, and as long as one can sense one's own motivation for believing truth and avoiding falsehood, one can know that she has an intellectual virtue. Finally, the motivational view surmounts the obsoletion objection; intellectual virtue retains its value even if a more efficient method at acquiring truths and avoiding falsehoods were discovered. That's because having these intellectual character traits are regarded by the theory as intrinsically valuable in themselves, regardless of whether a more efficient means to forming true beliefs are found.
Overall, the motivational truth-centered views recognize some of the central weaknesses contained in the reliable truth-centered accounts and improve upon them in those areas. However, their ultimate solution leads to other unique problems, as well as being saddled with some of the same problems that plagued the reliable views. Some virtue epistemologists have recognized the merits of both approaches and have tried to integrate the two camps together. But do they succeed in advocating a theory that is free from the issues facing these two prior groups? Let us now turn our attention toward the mixed views to find out.

4. Mixed Accounts of the Intellectual Virtues

My aim in section 4 of this chapter is to investigate what I have termed the *mixed* view of the intellectual virtues. Roughly speaking, the mixed accounts are committed to two basic ideas: that the intellectual virtues involve some success component, as in actually acquiring true beliefs and avoiding falsehoods, and that they have to do with a motivation to attain those beliefs. The main proponents of this type of theory include Linda Zagzebski and Abrol Fairweather. Zagzebski's influence on virtue epistemology has been enormous, so much so that after the publication of her book *Virtues of the Mind* it seems that every other virtue epistemologist is in some way responding to the claims she makes there. Fairweather has contributed significantly less to virtue epistemology, but he does slightly modify Zagzebski's account so as to escape a few objections that one could make against her original view. When one first understands Zagzebski, it is relatively easy to get a handle on Fairweather's account, and so it is with her that we begin.
Zagzebski attempts to draw on insights from both the reliable and the motivational truth-centered theorists, and though her synthesis might initially appear to be a simple merger between two theories, she adds several unique twists that give her theory its own unique flavor. She offers the following definition: “A **virtue**, then, can be defined as **a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end**.” She intends her definition to be general enough to include both the moral and intellectual virtues, though she doesn’t intend her definition to be exhaustive of all virtues as she thinks that her definition may or may not cover higher-order virtues, such as practical wisdom. (I examine how practical wisdom should be thought of in chapter 4.) Zagzebski further states that the “intellectual virtues ultimately aim at the truth,” and thus one sees here why she has been categorized as a truth-centered theorist. One can immediately recognize the insights of both the reliable and motivational truth-centered camps present in the definition; a virtue involves both being motivated to accomplish some goal and in actually fulfilling that goal. Zagzebski goes farther than Montmarquet though and tries to characterize motivation in more specific detail. She states that motivation is a “**persistent tendency to be moved by a motive of a certain kind**,” and additionally, a motive is an “**emotion or feeling that initiates and directs action towards an end**.” According to her, each virtue has its own particular associated motive and so each virtue begins with an action-directing emotion

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79 Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 138, bold emphasis in original. See also ibid., 135-137.
81 Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 132.
82 Ibid., 131.
that begins impelling an agent toward some goal. So for example, the virtue of honesty involves emotions that are characteristic of honesty and those emotions direct an agent toward manifesting honest behaviors. The intellectual virtues are special though when compared to the moral virtues, as the former are all united by the fact that they share one motivation in common: a general love or valuing of truth and a disvaluing of falsehood, while there is no common motivational unity to be found in the moral virtues.  

Zagzebski initially considered two broad ways of understanding the intrinsic value of the intellectual virtues, one involving linking the virtues to human flourishing and the other to motivations. However, in later works she came to embrace the latter view and suggested reasons why the former view faces difficulties. Recall that I eventually will be proposing an account of the intrinsic value of intellectual virtue via human flourishing, but I postpone discussion of why she considered and ultimately rejected that sort of approach until chapter 3, which deals with the idea of flourishing as it relates to virtue theory. Zagzebski is impressed with and develops a view of virtue and motivation that draws inspiration from the virtue ethicist Michael Slote, who articulates what he has termed an agent-based understanding of virtue, which is the idea that the good value of virtue can be explained through an agent's motivations. On Zagzebski's view, what makes the intellectual virtues intrinsically valuable is that all are partially composed of the underlying motivation of the love of truth and a disvaluing of

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84 Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 80, 202-211.
falsehood. Since this motivation is an emotion that impels an agent toward loving truth and hating falsehood, it is an emotion that makes an intellectual virtue intrinsically valuable. In contrast to theorists like Sosa and Greco, Zagzebski thinks that the success component of virtue (the fact that an intellectual virtue actually enables an agent to acquire true beliefs and avoid false ones) does not provide any sort of intrinsic value to intellectual virtue, as that component is only instrumentally valuable. It is solely the motivational component that provides intrinsic value to a person's entire intellectually excellent character trait. Another reason that Zagzebski wants the motivational aspect to provide intrinsic value to an entire intellectual virtue is that she is in agreement with Montmarquet's claim that a virtue epistemology should label the virtue exemplars as being in fact virtuous. The virtue exemplars all possessed a desire to have truth and avoid falsehood, and thus their character traits are intrinsically valuable because of that fact.

Despite Zagzebski's unique synthesis that moves past the comparatively simplistic reliable and motivational truth-centered theories, her account falls prey to some objections that don't apply to the previous theories. Consider a case of an agent who has two motivations, one a higher-order motivation that causally generates and sustains a second, lower-order motivation. Let us suppose that the higher order motivation involves an absolute commitment to acquire knowledge about all things through trusting only himself; he is an epistemic solipsist in this sense. From this motivation stems another: an action-generating emotion that impels him to love truth and hate falsehood. Additionally, let us stipulate that through many strokes of luck, this individual happened

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87 Zagzebski, “From Reliabilism to Virtue Epistemology,” 120.
to have all true beliefs. We have thus satisfied Zagzebski's definition of an intellectual virtue, both the motivation and success conditions. An agent who has these two motivations operating within himself though is best classified as a \textit{dogmatist} in that he arrogantly and foolishly trusts only himself. The primary problem with Zagzebski's theory though is that this individual's character trait would be regarded as intrinsically valuable because he is motivated to believe truths and avoid falsehoods. Furthermore, he actually does attain true beliefs, and so he would be labeled as intellectually virtuous on Zagzebski's theory. However, it can't be true that this dogmatic individual has an intrinsically valuable intellectual virtue; instead, he is better thought of as having an intellectual vice. We may label this issue that Zagzebski faces as the \textit{subsumption} problem from the fact that a more fundamental bad motivation may subsume a less fundamental good one, which leads to the conclusion that such a bad motivation can't confer intrinsic value to an intellectual virtue.\footnote{Additionally, a similar objection may hold against Zagzebski because she models her account on Slote's agent-based theory. It has been pointed out that Slote's theory implies that a character trait can be a virtue even if it stems from false beliefs that lead to good motivations. Likewise, it may be the case that the intellectual virtues, as Zagzebski conceives of them, can be had through some initial false beliefs. However, it's not clear whether the success component of a virtue requires that an agent's initial beliefs, prior to having a virtue, are required to be true or not. That is, Zagzebski tells us that having a virtue entails having true beliefs, but do those true beliefs include beliefs about the virtue itself, how it came to be generated, and finally exemplified? She does not answer this question. See Michael Brady, "The Value of the Virtues," \textit{Philosophical Studies} 125, no. 1 (2005): 85–113.}

Another unique problem present in Zagzebski's theory is that she thinks having an intellectual virtue \textit{guarantees} true beliefs to the agent who forms beliefs on the basis of that virtue. Compare the reliable truth-centered theorists here, as they argue that a virtue only \textit{generally} produce true beliefs. Having a false belief produced by virtue every now and then won't render a character trait non-virtuous. But on Zagzebski's view, if a belief is formed on the basis of virtue, it \textit{must} be true. There is every reason to question this, as
it’s completely unrealistic. Why think that intellectually excellent character traits, such as curiosity, perseverance, etc. lead necessarily to true beliefs? Having guaranteed true beliefs requires far more than just having excellent character traits; it requires, at minimum, that the world also cooperates with virtuous agents by not feeding them false perceptions or otherwise misleading them. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that Zagzebski, in agreement with Montmarquet, wants to validate the virtue exemplars as in fact virtuous.\textsuperscript{89}

But it would be a gigantic stretch to think that when forming belief through virtue they believed all and only true beliefs, never a single false one. Let us call this issue the guarantee objection on the grounds that it’s implausible to think that forming beliefs on the basis of intellectually virtuous character traits necessarily leads to truth.\textsuperscript{90}

Has Zagzebski surmounted issues common to previous accounts of intellectual virtue? Unfortunately, her account definitely succumbs to some and possibly to others. For example, consider again the problem of triviality—Zagzebski’s formulation of intellectual virtue is compatible with an agent being motivated to acquire trivially true beliefs.\textsuperscript{89}

\begin{itemize}
\item Zagzebski, \textit{Virtues of the Mind}, 191.
\item Ibid., 298. The reason Zagzebski holds onto this view stems from the fact that she is committed to avoiding “Gettier” problems (named after Edmund Gettier, see section 1, chapter 1), which is an issue concerning knowledge. A theory of knowledge often faces this problem when the theory implies that an agent can possess knowledge through accident or luck. That is, most epistemologists believe that knowledge should be acquired through the ability or skill of the agent, not through blind luck. However, because of the way many theories of knowledge have defined knowledge, they face Gettier problems because those theories are compatible with the idea that an agent can possess knowledge through luck. Zagzebski thinks that her virtue epistemology can sidestep this problem because she wants to define knowledge as virtuous true belief; whenever an agent believes something virtuously, he is guaranteed to have true beliefs. However, against Zagzebski, it has been pointed out that her definition is excessively artificial. After all, why think that a virtuous act, in this case belief, must necessarily accomplish its intended goal? It was never suggested in the history of virtue theory that a virtue guaranteed success, though of course, it has been argued that a virtuous person does generally achieve success in the real world. It appears that Zagzebski is guilty of an hoc definition of virtue in that she defined the term with the obvious goal of avoiding Gettier problems from the start, rather than starting with a typical definition of virtue. See Roberts and Wood, \textit{Intellectual Virtues}, 14 for more on this specific point, and also Julia Annas, “The Structure of Virtue,” in \textit{Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology}, ed. Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski (Malden, MA: Oxford University Press, 2007), 15–33 for a discussion of the relationship between virtue and guaranteed success in the history of virtue theory.
\end{itemize}
beliefs and actually succeeding in doing so. But as I’ve argued previously, it is doubtful that there is anything intrinsically valuable about an agent acquiring trivial truths. Now Zagzebski might be immune to this objection though, on the grounds that she thinks higher-order intellectual virtues exist, and those sorts of virtues are possibly not included in her formal proffered definition; she herself is noncommittal regarding whether these higher-order virtues are included in her definition, but she very well could build into her theory an account of higher-order intellectual virtues such that they enable an agent to decide what sorts of truths should be aimed for in the first place. But since she has never developed an account of higher-order intellectual virtue, at the very best, her account is incomplete. As it stands right now, she has no concrete, obvious way out of the triviality objection. Likewise, a similar problem holds for the irrelevance objection—perhaps an agent, with the goal of having true beliefs about a subject will be motivated to acquire and actually acquire truths about an unrelated topic. But a more informed individual would look for the relevance between one's epistemic means and ends. Zagzebski's way out of this problem depends too on whether she can propose an account of higher-order intellectual virtue. Perhaps an agent with practical wisdom may not aim to acquire irrelevant beliefs, but as I've just noted, Zagzebski doesn't explain how this would work.

Unlike the previous two objections that may apply to Zagzebski's account though, the following surely does. It has been a running theme in her works that a virtuous agent is one who actually succeeds in doing what she aims to do. But this

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91 She does paint in broad brush strokes what a higher-order intellectual virtue would be, namely, practical wisdom. But she doesn't indicate what the relationship precisely is between practical wisdom and lower-order intellectual virtues. If she indicated that an agent with practical wisdom would not seek out trivial truths then she could successfully escape the triviality objection.
commitment leads to a big problem for Zagzebski when it comes to surmounting the *identification* objection—the problem of identifying which individuals possess the virtues and which do not. Since Zagzebski states that it's an absolute requirement for one to actually possess true beliefs when it comes to having a virtue (in addition to being motivated to acquire true beliefs and avoid false ones), we would first need to know whether the beliefs that resulted from one's motivation for true beliefs were in fact true. But that would require a perspective on the world far in excess of what any person could manage. Zagzebski's problem here is even greater than the reliable truth-centered theorists because they only require that an intellectual virtue *generally* lead to true beliefs, whereas Zagzebski requires that intellectual virtue produce *all* true beliefs, so one would have to examine all of one's beliefs that purportedly were produced by virtue to know if in fact that individual had an intellectual virtue to begin with.

That's not to say that there aren't strengths to Zagzebski's account though. Her account does include more than just aiming for or succeeding in having true and false beliefs, albeit not much more, in the form of action-directing emotions that are intrinsically valuable and that provide intrinsic value to an individual's entire excellent character trait, and so she barely avoids the *doxastic* problem, that what is intrinsically valuable about intellectual virtues stems from beliefs and no other psychological states. Additionally, her account is able to surmount the problem of *obsoletion*. (Are the virtues obsolete if there is a more efficient means to truth?) In particular, Zagzebski says that a person merely having true beliefs might not have an intrinsically valuable state of character, but if that person possessed those beliefs as a result of having an emotion that drives one to have true beliefs and avoid false ones then that intellectual character trait
can be regarded as intrinsically valuable. So despite the significant problems I have pointed out with Zagzebski's account, she does manage to avoid a few crucial ones as well.

Moving on, Abrol Fairweather, another theorist who accepts the mixed view of intellectual virtue, apparently saw some of the shortcomings of Zagzebski's account and attempts to improve on it. On first glance, his definition of intellectual virtue looks exactly similar to hers:

A state of a person is a virtue if and only if it is (i) enduring, (ii) acquired, (iii) a power that allows its possessor to reliably succeed in bringing about a certain end, (iv) a motivation to bring about an end appropriate to the end in (iii). A virtue is a complex state that has a motivation and a disposition to reliably reach a certain end as components.\(^92\)

Notice here the commitments typical of a mixed virtue epistemologist: there must be both a motivation to acquire true beliefs and avoid false beliefs as well as actual success in forming those beliefs. Fairweather wants to move past Zagzebski's account though when it comes to motivations. On this matter he states: “A person has an epistemic motivation if and only if they have a desire (or kindred emotive state) for truth or for states whose value is derived from truth, and this desire effectively directs and controls the person's belief formation and revision.”\(^93\) The primary advantage of understanding a motivation in Fairweather's terms is that his account is immune to the problem of *subsumption* (a more fundamental bad motivation may generate a good motivation to acquire true beliefs and avoid false ones, but the fundamental motivation may have no intrinsic value at all) because he states that the motivation to believe the truth and avoid falsehood must be in *control* of a person's process of belief formation. That is, if a


\(^93\) Ibid., 72.
person had a more fundamental motivation to believe only himself, being a dogmatist, that generated a motivation to have true beliefs and avoid false beliefs, he would not be labeled as intellectually virtuous under Fairweather's proposal because his epistemically good motivation is not in control of his process of forming beliefs; rather, his bad motivation ultimately is.

However, this is the only improvement that Fairweather can make upon Zagzebski's account, as all the other previous objections to her mixed theory still stand. The problems of triviality, relevance, and identification apply to Fairweather's proposal since the only significant modification that he makes to Zagzebski's view is to tweak the notion of epistemic motivation in the manner specified above; the rest of his proposal is identical to Zagzebski's. His definition of intellectual virtue is still compatible with an agent memorizing a stock of trivial truths, using irrelevant epistemic means to an end, and not knowing whether one actually has a virtue or not, casting doubt on the idea that an intellectual virtue, as Fairweather understands it, is intrinsically valuable. Fairweather's theory is also most likely susceptible to the guarantee problem (the exercise of the intellectual virtues guarantees all true beliefs) because he, presumably, wants his proposal to validate the intellectual virtue exemplars as such. However, he is unable to do so because all the beliefs generated from intellectual virtue must be true ones. Ultimately, Fairweather's account enjoys the same advantages of Zagzebski's account, plus the additional advantage of avoiding the subsumption problem. Nevertheless, his proposal is unable to avoid the other problems that plagued Zagzebski's view. This brings us to the
end of the mixed accounts of intellectual virtue.

5. Transitioning from Truth-Centering to Non-Truth-Centering

I have now finished critically examining all the major truth-centered accounts of intellectual virtue in their reliable, motivational, and mixed variants. From what has been observed, there is a running pattern here; conceiving of the intellectual virtues primarily in terms of actually acquiring true beliefs and avoiding false ones, being motivated to have true beliefs and avoid false ones, or both, leads to serious theoretical difficulty in understanding the intrinsic value of the intellectual virtues. In many instances, this is due to the fact that having true beliefs in themselves is not necessarily intrinsically valuable. Of course the truth matters in epistemology (and with virtually everything else!), but fixating on truth at the cost of neglecting the other epistemic goods, such as importance, relevance, coherence, justified assumptions, explanatory power, etc. leads to epistemologically impoverished theories with their attendant implausible outcomes, as in the case of the truth-centered accounts of the intellectual virtues.

There are also problems stemming from the fact that these accounts are usually committed to understanding the goal of expressing intellectual virtue as only or primarily about belief formation, but as I have argued before, that does not come close to explaining most of what is intrinsically valuable about an intellectually virtuous person's character traits. That is, these views understand the intellectual virtues in terms of believing truths and not believing falsehoods, and the execution of an intellectually virtuous act results in a belief of some sort. This is a very restrictive view of virtue. Imagine if the moral virtues were understood in such a manner: is the individual who believes that
good ought to be done and bad avoided \textit{morally virtuous}? What about the person who is merely motivated to believe truths of ethics, or the one who actually succeeds in doing so—is either \textit{morally virtuous}? No account of virtue so thin has ever been advanced before in virtue ethics! As I mentioned in the introduction, the moral virtues at least involve components of emotion and understanding. Now some virtue epistemologists attempt to integrate some of this into their accounts (particularly the mixed theorists), but that integration has been rather thin. Zagzebski thinks that the intellectually virtuous person only feels \textit{one} epistemically relevant emotion—a desire to obtain truth and avoid falsehood. Other than the mixed theorists though, there is not even an attempt to explain how emotion relates to intellectual virtue. It's interesting to note that all the truth-centered accounts of intellectual virtue happen also to be belief-based. Why would these virtue epistemologists try to understand the intellectual virtues along such narrow terms—truth-centered and belief-based—when they could have conceived of the intellectual virtues using the richness and complexity of moral virtue?

I believe that the answer to this question traces back to some of the issues I mentioned in chapter 1, namely, that most contemporary virtue epistemologists have as their goal one that is shared with traditional analytic epistemology—analyzing the concept of knowledge. Ever since Edmund Gettier argued that knowledge can't be analyzed as justified true belief, an industry of looking for another necessary condition for the instantiation of knowledge became commonplace in contemporary analytic epistemology.\textsuperscript{95} The concept of justification has now fallen on some difficult times, but

\footnote{95 See section 1 of chapter 1 as well as footnote 90 for a review of Edmund Gettier and his impact on contemporary epistemology.}
that of truth and belief still are widely accepted as necessary components of knowledge.\textsuperscript{96} Virtue epistemologists have typically taken this as an opportunity to deploy the concept of virtue to successfully analyze knowledge. Knowledge, they argue (Sosa, Greco, Zagzebski, etc.), is virtuous true belief.\textsuperscript{97} But as I have argued in chapter 1, this is a dubious claim, as virtue is neither necessary nor sufficient to have knowledge. The reason that virtue epistemologists have proposed their truth-centered, belief-based accounts stems from their commitment to analyzing knowledge. As I have shown over the past few sections though, this leads to some theoretically serious problems, as the value of the intellectual virtues becomes completely obscured. In line with what I have said previously, the virtue epistemologist shouldn't use the virtues for the sake of solving traditional epistemological problems for two reasons: they don't work for that purpose, and there are more philosophically interesting uses for intellectual virtue in epistemology (see again chapter 1 for a review of my arguments for this conclusion).

The non-truth-centered virtue epistemologists are usually more aware of the truth-centered theorists devotion to solving traditional epistemological problems and so generally avoid falling into the same pitfalls that the latter group did. Some, as will be seen soon, are able to circumvent these issues more successfully than others. They are generally in agreement that virtue epistemology as a whole ought to forge a new path for itself, not confining itself to areas of epistemology where the intellectual virtues make for an awkward fit. There are three major accounts that I focus on in the upcoming

\textsuperscript{96} Justification has primarily been criticized by (epistemic) externalists in epistemology, who represent the majority view. An externalist believes that justification is not a necessary condition for having knowledge while an internalist believes it does. A paradigmatic externalist would be someone like Alvin Goldman, who had a large influence on both Ernest Sosa and John Greco.

\textsuperscript{97} Sosa, \textit{A Virtue Epistemology}; Greco, \textit{Achieving Knowledge}; Zagzebski, \textit{Virtues of the Mind}.
6. Non-Truth-Centered Accounts of Intellectual Virtue

The goal of this section is to critically examine the non-truth-centered accounts of intellectual virtue and I begin by taking a look at Jonathan Kvanvig's view. Kvanvig ultimately endorses a non-truth-centered virtue epistemology because he thinks that agents should be regarded as intellectually virtuous based on their personal character rather than on the nature of the world. As I commented earlier while critiquing the reliable truth-centered theories, these accounts are particularly vulnerable to the charge that being intellectually virtuous depends on the nature of the world, not on any personal characteristics of the agent himself. In particular, an individual may possess a whole suite of intellectual virtues, but because human perception of the world is dependent on the world “cooperating” with the agent, an individual may turn out to have many or even all false beliefs. Kvanvig thinks that the epistemic character traits of agents can be intrinsically valuable even if the nature of the world is such that it delivers false beliefs to agents. In simple terms, what Kvanvig thinks is intrinsically valuable about the intellectual virtues is that they generally incline an agent to have justified beliefs. That is, an intellectually virtuous individual forms justified beliefs because she utilizes the best evidence available to her. If it turns out that the world is an evil demon world, then she would still be regarded as intellectually virtuous because she forms her beliefs in accordance with the best information she has to work with. Unfortunately,

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99 A justified belief is one that an agent has some reason to believe. Justification, as typically understood in epistemology, is a property of belief which usually implies that an agent possesses some sort of evidence that suggests a belief is true or likely to be true.
Kvanvig doesn't word his own account as simply as I have put it. He tends to write in a technical style for the sake of precision, and he formulates multiple partial definitions of intellectual virtue before settling on a final one. I reproduce here his ultimate view with the promise that his definition will be clarified immediately:

\[ C \text{ is an intellectual virtue of } S \text{ of kind } K = \text{df. [definition]} \]

(i) \( C \) is a contributory member of a maximal and nonredundant set of nomologically possible and independent characteristics \( R \) that is necessarily such that were \( S \) to exemplify each member of \( R \), \( S \) would be disposed toward epistemically warranted belief, (ii) \( C \) is an epistemically significant characteristic of \( S \), and (iii) the strength of the disposition in question is notable for kind \( K \), of which \( S \) is a member.\textsuperscript{100}

Obviously, there is much to be explained! In understanding this definition, it will be helpful to remember that Kvanvig's ultimate goal is to develop a justification-based account of the intellectual virtues. His first condition initially appears to be very complicated, but ultimately turns out to be a few simple ideas packed together. Kvanvig states here that a character trait is an intellectual virtue insofar as it disposes an agent toward justified belief. But he is aware of a particular problem—does having and exemplifying just one intellectual virtue generally lead to a justified belief? Consider an individual who has only the virtue of open-mindedness; such an individual may be so open-minded that he believes something from everyone he meets, including liars and fools. Would it still make sense to insist that open-mindedness is an intellectual virtue if this agent had no other complementary character traits? Kvanvig thinks that the answer is clearly no; an individual must possess all the intellectual virtues in order to generally have justified beliefs. In making this claim, he is echoing a thought similar to many

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 140. Kvanvig thinks that his definition applies both to character traits and faculties, but I only critique him along the dimension of character traits. See section 1 of this chapter.
ancient virtue theorists who insisted on what has since been called the \textit{reciprocity of the virtues} thesis—that in order to truly and completely have one virtue, one must have all virtues. (I consider this topic in chapter 4.) Except in this case, Kvanvig argues that in order to form justified beliefs through intellectual virtue, one must have all the intellectual virtues, which is what he means when he says that a character trait must be a contributory member of a \textit{maximal} and \textit{nonredundant} set of independent characteristics that when exemplified, dispose an agent toward justified beliefs.\textsuperscript{101} He adds the further condition that these character traits must be \textit{nomologically possible}, meaning that these traits can exist given the nature of the world, including its logical, metaphysical, and physical laws. For example, it's an impossibility in our world for an individual to have a character trait that delivers all available streams of consciousness from individuals both living and dead directly to one's own consciousness, at least given our knowledge of the world.

The second and third conditions are considerably more manageable. All Kvanvig's second condition states is that an intellectual virtue must be epistemically significant, or in other words, must be related to epistemic goals and the epistemic enterprise in general. So a character trait that enabled one to write beautiful music is excluded on Kvanvig's account of intellectual virtue. Finally, the character trait must be significantly above what other individuals belonging to a kind are capable of. For example, as I have insisted previously, there's nothing special about a motivation to simply have true beliefs, but there is something admirable about an individual who is wise in all matters. Such an individual is very rare, and this is what Kvanvig means when he states that a character trait must be \textit{notable} for its kind; average or typical character

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 118–122.
traits are not virtuous ones.

Kvanvig's account of intellectual virtue is a model of technical precision. Due to the very careful wording of his view, his theory enjoys advantages that other views are unable to surmount. For example, his account does not appear susceptible to the triviality objection on the grounds that his definition of intellectual virtue excludes individuals who seek trivial truths. Specifically, since he argues that in order to have one intellectual virtue one must have them all, the completely intellectually virtuous individual will avoid wasting time trying to obtain trivial truths. By similar reasoning, Kvanvig is able to sidestep the irrelevance objection because an intellectually virtuous agent, possessing the totality of intellectual virtue, would be able to utilize the correct epistemic means to a particular epistemic end.

Kvanvig's commitment to the reciprocity of the virtues thesis clearly saves his view from running into problems that other accounts faced. However, as worded, his account implies that in order for an agent to form justified beliefs through intellectual virtue, the agent must possess all the intellectual virtues. Though Kvanvig doesn't comment on whether he wants his theory of intellectual virtue to validate the intellectual giants as such, his view may very well imply that no human being ever has had a justified belief through intellectual virtue. That is, while it may be the case that agents have formed justified beliefs through other means, to form a justified belief through intellectual virtue requires an individual to possess the totality of intellectual virtue. Since this is such a strong requirement, it's very likely the case that no human being ever has formed a justified belief through exercising intellectual virtue. Furthermore, it's also almost certainly the case that any actual person, living or dead, has never possessed intellectual
virtue, since to have one an agent must have them all. While it's a possibility that Kvanvig may intend his account to be an ideal theory, that is, one that real (flawed) individuals should aim for as an ideal, he argues that a robust virtue epistemology should assist individuals in cultivating virtue in their own lives. That is, it very much appears to be the case that he thinks virtue is within the reach of most individuals if they apply themselves to cultivating it.\textsuperscript{102} If this is true, then clearly Kvanvig's theory has the unintended negative consequences of denying both justified beliefs formed from intellectual virtue and intellectual virtue itself to probably every human being who has ever lived.

Furthermore, it's also questionable how Kvanvig understands the concept of justification. As it is used in an everyday sense, the conditions for having a justified belief are usually very weak. For example, if one sees a tree fall over, then one is justified in thinking that a tree has actually fallen over. Likewise, even if one thinks he has seen Elvis (due to hallucination or impersonation), he would still be justified in having that belief even if his belief turns out to be false. Now epistemologists obviously attempt to go beyond everyday understandings of concepts to shed light on them, but they aren't entitled to twist concepts around to fit their preferred theory (despite the fact that this happens anyway). Just as it was pointed out earlier that Zagzebski artificially defined intellectual virtue to guarantee true beliefs, so it seems the case here that Kvanvig has artificially defined intellectual virtue to deliver justified beliefs only when one possesses the totality of intellectual virtue. Why should it be the case that for something typically quite easy to achieve—justification—that the only way to form justified beliefs

\textsuperscript{102}Refer to chapter 1 of this work for Kvanvig's comments on how virtue epistemology should be utilizing the intellectual virtues.
through intellectual virtue is through possessing the totality of intellectual virtue? Ordinarily speaking, even epistemic character traits that fall significantly short of intellectual virtue but are nevertheless epistemically good in some way can enable one to form justified beliefs. Due to relating justification to intellectual virtue in a very implausible manner, Kvanvig's theory suffers an important weakness. Let us label this outcome as the *justification* problem.

Though Kvanvig is better able to explain the intrinsic value of the intellectual virtues when compared to some of the truth-centered views, he still falls short of others. For one thing, Kvanvig thinks that the result of exemplifying intellectual virtue is a justified *belief*; as we have previously seen though, thinking that the intrinsic value of intellectual virtue is primarily or completely explained if the only thing produced is belief can't be right. This is to indicate that Kvanvig's account does not avoid the *doxastic* objection. Also, and considerably more damning, what would he have to say against a problem similar to that of *obsoletion*—would the intellectual virtues still retain their intrinsic value if a more efficient means to justification were found? Suppose that in our world it's possible to hook one's brain up to a “justification machine” that maximally justified every single belief a person has or ever had previously. What would be the reason for cultivating intellectual virtue at that point? To continue to insist that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable while a more efficient path to justified beliefs is found would require an explanation of why one should pursue the less efficient option instead of the more efficient one. Kvanvig's theory may label the pursuit of intellectual virtue, rather counter-intuitively, as an intellectual vice if the primary purpose of intellectual virtue is to have justified beliefs and a more efficient means to have justified
In the end, Kvanvig's account runs into its own unique serious issue, as well as a few other significant ones that are shared in common with other theories of intellectual virtue. Many of these problems stem from the fact that Kvanvig centers the intellectual virtues around one epistemic good—justification. This brings up a pertinent issue in virtue epistemology—why think that the intellectual virtues revolve around just one epistemic good? Whether a theory is truth-centered or justification-centered, it runs into problems attempting to explain what makes an intellectually excellent character trait intrinsically valuable. The final two views appear to recognize this issue and they steer clear of connecting the intellectual virtues to just one epistemic good. They thus represent two of the more theoretically resilient definitions of intellectual virtue.

Let us now move onward to the second major non-truth-centered view, which is advanced by Robert Roberts and Jay Wood. Roberts and Wood's account is unique when compared to all the previous theories in that they make it explicitly clear from the beginning that they refrain from providing a necessary and sufficient conditions analysis of intellectual virtue because they think it's impossible. In support of this point, they remind their readers that in analytic epistemology's attempt to analyze knowledge, several necessary conditions were left out for actually having knowledge. For example, they humorously and insightfully point out that oxygen and protein are necessary to have knowledge because humans need these things to be alive in the first place, and one must be alive in order to have knowledge. However, trying to provide all the necessary conditions for the instantiation of a concept is unrealistic and unwieldy; instead, the

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philosopher must be judiciously selective in highlighting what he thinks is important and paradigmatic about a particular concept. Thus, in critiquing Roberts and Wood's proposal, one must keep in mind that they purposely avoid providing a necessary and sufficient conditions analysis of intellectual virtue, which is in large contrast to all the previously encountered theories of intellectual virtue.

What, then, do they believe a virtue is? “We propose that in general a human virtue is an acquired base of excellent functioning in some generically human sphere of activity that is challenging and important.” Initially, this sounds like a rather simple definition, but there is more than meets the eye here because they refine and clarify what they mean in their proposal. Notice initially that their account isn't worded specifically in terms of what an intellectual virtue is, but rather just simply as what a virtue is. That's because they don't think there is a difference between the moral and intellectual virtues, as there is just one set of virtues applied in different contexts, such as moral and epistemic ones (see section 2 of chapter 1 for my own suggestion of how to separate moral from intellectual virtue). When they say that a virtue is an acquired base of excellent functioning, they mean to convey the idea that virtue develops out of developing one's will excellently. They understand a will to include four elements: a motivational structure which impels people to action; volitional capacity, which enables one to make choices; willpower; which they describe as the ability to regulate one's emotions and impulses; and emotion itself, which functions as the source of attraction and repulsion. When Roberts and Wood state that the virtues contribute to excellent functioning in a generically human sphere of activity, they mean to indicate that a virtue is what makes a human qua (in

104 Ibid., 59.
105 Ibid., 61–64.
the capacity of) human being excellent, rather than qua baseball player or qua professor or qua artist because these are not \textit{generically human} activities or roles. People have different roles and jobs, but Roberts and Woods' are interested in discussing the virtues of the kind \textit{human being}.

While Roberts and Wood state that they don't believe it's possible to give a complete set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the instantiation of virtue, they do believe they can be selective in highlighting what they believe to be a central and significant necessary condition in having virtue. Since they think that virtue develops out of excellently forming, developing, and using one's will, and since the will contains the motivational structure necessary for an agent to be moved to action, one of the conditions for having virtue is that one have an excellent motivational structure. This excellent motivational structure they identify as the virtue of the love of knowledge.\textsuperscript{106} The love of knowledge \textit{is} an excellent motivational structure that underlies \textit{all} the virtues, moral, epistemic, and otherwise. Unlike a motivational truth-centered theory though, this is not just a simple desire to pursue truth and avoid falsehood. Instead, there is considerably more complexity here. In order to have the virtue of the love of knowledge, one must satisfy three criteria. First, one must have the ability to analyze one's beliefs and determine further which ones are \textit{load-bearing}, or rather which ones act as a foundation or core in a superstructure of beliefs. Second, one must recognize that in seeking a particular truth or piece of knowledge, \textit{human flourishing} is somehow achieved or promoted. This means either that an individual could flourish or that a group of people could flourish as the result of an agent's acquisition of knowledge. Third, and

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\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., chap. 6.
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finally, the knowledge that a person seeks must be *relevant* to the roles that she plays in life. So, say, a musician need not have any knowledge about a rocket but an astronaut ought to. When one satisfies these three conditions, one possesses the virtue of the love of knowledge.  

Ultimately, there is much richness and depth to Roberts and Wood’s account of intellectual virtue and I greatly admire their thoughts. Their account doesn't fall prey to many of the previous objections that I leveled at other virtue epistemologies. And I believe the chief reason for this stems from the fact that they offer a non-truth-centered account of intellectual virtue. For example, there is no issue of *triviality* or *irrelevance* here, as Roberts and Wood don't simplistically commit themselves to the idea that an intellectually virtuous person is merely one who aims for truth, any truth. It's also not a requirement on their account that an individual actually succeed in acquiring true beliefs. Furthermore, to them, a virtuous person is one who can recognize and act on important *load-bearing* beliefs that are *relevant* and contribute to *human flourishing*; in other words, a virtuous person isn't a frivolous seeker of unimportant epistemic goods.

There are two general comments that I'd like to make regarding Roberts and Woods' view. Recall that the main reason I am examining views of the intellectual virtues is to figure out how well they explain the intrinsic value of those virtues. In the previously examined accounts, it was relatively easy to determine why a virtue epistemologist thought that an intellectual virtue was intrinsically valuable. The reliable truth-centered theorists usually insist that intellectual virtue is a kind of success from ability and so that is what makes intellectual virtue intrinsically valuable. The

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107 Ibid., 156–158.
108 Ibid., 14.
motivational truth-centered epistemologists think it is motivation in itself that makes intellectual virtue intrinsically valuable. The mixed theorists argue that it's the motivational component of intellectual virtue that provides intrinsic value to the rest of an intellectual virtue. Among the non-truth-centered views, Kvanvig thinks that the intrinsic value of intellectual virtue is due to its ability to deliver justified beliefs.

But when it comes to Roberts and Wood's account, the answer is left somewhat mysterious. They do tend to drop hints from time to time, insisting that one's appraisal of the value of virtue depends on one's prior metaphysical worldview. They happen to think that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable because they believe their metaphysical worldview implies a certain way of life, and the virtues are the character traits that enable that sort of life to be had. There certainly is some truth to the idea that determining the value of one's virtues requires having certain metaphysical commitments. For example, at the very least, one would have to believe that there are such things as persons who exist over a period of time and who can develop character traits. However, there are philosophers who have denied the existence of persons, as well as some who deny the existence of character traits. Perhaps these individuals won't recognize the intellectual virtues as being intrinsically valuable because their metaphysics blocks such a conclusion.

But on the supposition that there can be some sort of minimalist metaphysics, supposing that there are such things as persons, character traits, goals, a real world, etc., what would Roberts and Wood have to say then? Though they thoughtfully explain why

109 Ibid., 67.
they choose not to offer a necessary and sufficient conditions analysis of virtue, the drawback of their approach is that they don't offer the sort of clarity and insight that a more precise definition would bring out. All the truth-centered theorists take a stab at trying to explain what makes the intellectual virtues intrinsically valuable, and Roberts and Wood are well-aware of these prior virtue theories. What could have been a great opportunity to offer their own unique take on what makes the intellectual virtues intrinsically valuable instead appears like either avoidance or a failure to recognize an important debate within virtue epistemology. So a challenge that I would offer these theorists would be to put their cards on the table and explicitly explain what makes an intellectual virtue intrinsically valuable instead of simply saying that it depends on one's prior metaphysical views. After all, what in philosophy doesn't depend on one's metaphysical views?

Though I can't say for certain what Roberts and Wood believe about the intrinsic value of the intellectual virtues, I will attempt to evaluate what their view implies. It seems to me that an intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable on their account because it makes the human will excellent, and willing well is what makes a human being an excellent member of his kind. And recall that excellent willing presupposes that one has the virtue of the love of knowledge. So to have an intrinsically valuable intellectual character trait, one must possess the virtue of the love of knowledge. In thinking about this argument though, there appears to be something incorrect in how Roberts and Wood approach the motivational structure of virtue, especially as it concerns the love of knowledge. Specifically, is it really the case that one must have a love of knowledge to have an intrinsically valuable character trait?
The primary issue that Roberts and Wood's account faces is that love of
knowledge isn't a necessary condition in order to possess another virtue. Recall that in
order to have this virtue, an agent must be able to critically scrutinize and aim for load-
bearing and relevant beliefs that in some way contribute to human flourishing. But it's
possible to think of an example of virtue that doesn't satisfy all three conditions. Since
this is possible, it's not a necessary condition that one possess a love of knowledge to be
virtuous. Let us focus specifically on the condition that an agent must be able to analyze
the load-bearing capacity of her beliefs. Consider a case of an individual who would be
described by all as generous. She contributes a large percentage of her resources to an
orphanage because she wants those children to grow up as happily as possible, delights in
giving, and experiences mental anguish from the thought of not helping those in need.
If asked why she is generous, this agent would respond that she does what she does
because it's good to help those in need. Let us suppose though that she is unaware of
where her beliefs about generosity fall in her superstructure of beliefs. That is, she
believes generosity to be a valuable and good trait, but she doesn't know where those
beliefs fit in relation to other beliefs. In order words, she has no idea whether her beliefs
regarding generosity are load-bearing or not. Here we have a case of a virtue (generosity)
being exemplified without love of knowledge since having a love of knowledge requires
that one possess load-bearing beliefs.

Roberts and Wood could respond by stating that an agent need not be aware of
having a load-bearing belief, but rather just acts on beliefs that are in fact load-bearing.
In response though, we can question just what it takes for a belief to count as load-
bearing. In the above scenario, the generous woman acts in the way she does because she believes it's a good way to behave. But how much is she required to know about the source of this belief? Does that mean she should possess knowledge about ethical theory? Perhaps she should also know about epistemology and how goodness relates to truth. But it doesn't have to stop there—perhaps the woman should also have an ultimate metaphysical explanation for human beings and their place and purpose in the universe. But all this is too much. The point I am trying to make is that one's beliefs don't need to be load-bearing as Roberts and Wood's account implies. One can have an intrinsically valuable character trait—a virtue—without possessing a love of knowledge in the sense that Roberts and Wood have articulated. I will label this result the *presupposition* problem because they wrongly think that love of knowledge is a necessary condition for having any other virtue.

We have now seen some of the weaknesses of Roberts and Wood's account of intellectual virtue. In addition to these theoretical problems though there is also much untapped potential. They mention that the intellectual virtues ought to connect in some way to human flourishing, and in that belief they are surely correct. Additionally, they are on the right track in thinking of virtue as what makes a human being good qua human. Their downfall in this area though is that aside from a few brief remarks made in passing, they don't explain what flourishing is and how it can be achieved through virtue. Instead, they rely on the thought that one's prior metaphysical worldview will inform an individual as to how the virtues benefit an individual. This is another significant missed opportunity because Roberts and Wood had the chance to fully utilize the theoretical power of virtue theory by investigating the connection between virtue and
flourishing but instead elected not to do so. In chapters 3 and 4, I explore this relationship and explain why it's critical for virtue epistemology to proceed in this direction. With that said though, I believe that Roberts and Wood are generally moving virtue epistemology along the right path, and the problems their account faces are nowhere near as severe as the previously encountered theories.

This now brings us to the final account of intellectual virtue, one advanced by the virtue epistemologist Jason Baehr. Baehr's account, just like Roberts and Wood's, is more sophisticated than the truth-centered views. One of his primary goals is to explain what makes the intellectual virtues intrinsically valuable since he doesn't think that the intellectual virtues must necessarily enable an agent to secure truths or any other epistemic good. In order to accomplish this task though, Baehr first develops an idea of personal worth which serves as a springboard to explaining what makes the intellectual virtues intrinsically valuable. Ultimately, Baehr reaches the conclusion that an intellectual virtue is a character trait that enhances an agent's worth as a person.

Regarding personal worth, he initially states that “A subject S is good or better qua person to the extent that S is positively oriented toward or 'loves' what is good and is negatively oriented toward or 'hates' what is bad.”

On Baehr's view, to be positively oriented toward what's good and negatively oriented toward what's bad includes having psychological desires toward good things and away from bad things. Additionally, one must be positively oriented toward the good for the sake of what's good. For example, one is not positively oriented toward the good of generosity if one's ultimate goal is to

111 Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 97.
112 Baehr acknowledges that this idea comes from Thomas Hurka. See especially Hurka, *Vice, Virtue, and Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
become famous as a philanthropist—this isn't an example of being positively oriented toward the good for its own sake, but rather for the sake of something else. After developing an idea of personal worth, Baehr then proposes an idea about personal intellectual worth: “A subject S is intellectually good or better qua person to the extent that S is positively oriented toward or 'loves' what is intellectually good and is negatively oriented toward or 'hates' what is intellectually bad.”113 Finally, once he has developed an idea of what personal intellectual worth is, he comments on intellectual virtue: “an intellectual virtue is a character trait that contributes to its possessor's personal intellectual worth on account of its involving a positive psychological orientation toward epistemic goods.”114 An important thing to keep in mind is that Baehr's definition is not a necessary and sufficient conditions analysis of intellectual virtue. In this regard he has been influenced by Roberts and Wood and thinks that the virtue epistemologist must be selective in what a definition must focus on. What Baehr, then, has chosen to highlight is the fact that intellectual virtue relies on a conception of personal worth. Furthermore, the value of one's character trait stems from one's orientation toward an epistemic good. An agent may be motivated to seek truth but fail in the process. Nevertheless, it's still a possibility on Baehr's view that this individual possesses an intrinsically valuable character trait because this person had a positive psychological orientation toward truth.

Baehr's account of intellectual virtue is a step forward in the right direction because he generalizes his account beyond just one epistemic good. No longer do the intellectual virtues revolve around just truth or justification, which is a much needed change in virtue epistemology. Additionally, his account is able to surmount the doxastic

113 Baehr, The Inquiring Mind, 111.
114 Ibid., 102, italicized emphasis in original.
objection because Baehr doesn't specifically call for intellectual virtue to be primarily understood in terms of beliefs. Despite this improvement though, it doesn't lead to as many theoretical benefits as might be expected since his account is vulnerable to many of the same objections that afflicted previous theories. The problem of _triviality_ resurfaces in a slightly different form. Imagine that an agent loves all epistemic goods pertaining to grains of sand on the beach, committing himself to love epistemic goods of truth, motivations for truth, coherence, etc. However, such a pursuit is overall _trivial_. All it takes on Baehr's account to possess an intrinsically valuable intellectual character trait is to have positive psychological states toward epistemic goods. Now Baehr might reply that this agent lacks such a state toward the epistemic good of importance in that he only values trivial beliefs. But the fact still remains that he has a good psychological state toward other epistemic goods. There is nothing in Baehr's theory that informs us about _which_ epistemic goods to aim for or love; all we are told is that there should be _some_ positive psychological state aimed at _some_ epistemic good. Likewise, the same point holds for the epistemic good of _relevance_. An agent can value all sorts of epistemic goods that don't pertain to his epistemic goal, valuing all sorts of irrelevant things. Because it's not plausible to think that an intellectual virtue is made intrinsically valuable by loving trivial or irrelevant truths, Baehr's account comes up short in this regard.

In addition, his account faces a few issues that pertain to previously encountered virtue epistemologies. Consider what I label the issue of _emotion_, which resembles Driver's problem of _copying_.\(^{115}\) Suppose that there are two individuals, X and Y. X

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\(^{115}\) Despite the similarity of these two objections, I give them different labels to call attention to the fact that Driver's _copying_ problem exists to illustrate a problem with valuing the intellectual virtues in only an instrumental manner, whereas Baehr's _emotion_ problem does not face any issue regarding the instrumental valuation of virtue. Baehr thinks that intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable whereas
happens to be completely intellectually virtuous, whereas Y lacks all excellent character traits. X can be described as being intellectually virtuous because he has a positive psychological orientation to all epistemic goods and a negative orientation toward what is epistemically bad. Y happens to be a very easily influenced fellow though, and since X is the person closest to him, he copies all the beliefs that X has regarding the epistemic goods. Y then has a positive psychological orientation toward all the epistemic goods and a negative orientation toward what is epistemically bad. In fact, he is absolutely in love with all that is epistemically good. However, what Y lacks that X does not is an understanding of what makes those epistemic goods in fact good. X, if queried, could provide an account of why he believes in the way he does, but if Y were questioned, would not be able to explain his beliefs. However, Y will insist (and truly believe) that he does indeed love the epistemic goods. Here we have a case in which Baehr's criteria for intellectual virtue are satisfied, but the result is obvious; Y doesn't have a character trait that is intrinsically valuable since he is simply copying X. This problem stems from the fact that simply loving the epistemic goods is not enough to consider a character trait as intrinsically valuable.

Baehr may respond to this objection by pointing out that since Y lacks understanding, he does not in fact have a positive psychological orientation toward an epistemic good, namely, understanding. In response though, it can be pointed out that Y does have the same love of epistemic goods that X does—he loves understanding too, and all it takes on Baehr's account to have a positive psychological orientation toward an epistemic good is a positive emotion toward that particular good. If Baehr were to

Driver does not.
respond to my objection in this manner, it would involve a conflation between loving something and understanding it. One can love all sorts of things without understanding them—people, ideas, God, etc. And unfortunately for Baehr, (as the Beatles once famously declared), *all you need is love!* That is, all it takes to have intellectual virtue on Baehr's account is simply love of epistemic goods, not understanding of them. So, granting for the sake of argument that one actually has intellectual virtue insofar as one loves what is epistemically good, it doesn't follow that intellectual virtue, as Baehr understands it, is intrinsically valuable.

A related objection that stems from the above discussion concerns having an intellectual virtue through simply having an occurrent emotion, such as love or appreciation; it's pretty easy to have virtue if all it takes is a good emotion toward an epistemic good. If this sounds like a familiar problem, it is; recall that one issue facing the motivational truth-centered theories is that they make possessing an intellectual virtue too easy because all it takes to have a virtue is a motivation to believe truths and avoid falsehoods. But that's a default setting in most individuals, and so those accounts face a problem of *demarcation* in that they can't easily separate the virtuous from the non-virtuous. Baehr's account is just a more generalized version of this basic idea; all it takes to have an intellectual virtue is just a positive emotion of some sort toward an epistemic good. But that too is a default setting in most agents because how many people out there don't appreciate truth, or justification, or *some* epistemic good? Baehr's view labels as intrinsically valuable a default, typical setting in most individuals; such an outcome means that Baehr hasn't successfully demarcated the virtuous from the non-virtuous and so also faces the *demarcation* problem. Though Baehr's theory of intellectual virtue is
relatively the newest of all the examined virtue epistemologies, he ultimately can't quite
get around some significant issues.

This brings us to the end of the discussion of the non-truth-centered views of
intellectual virtue. One thing initially to note is that this family of views tends to run
into problems that are less severe than their truth-centered counterparts. I believe that is
due to their less narrowly developed conception of intellectual virtue. Baehr is right to
think that the intellectual virtues have to do with epistemic goods (plural) rather than just
one epistemic good, such as truth. Roberts and Wood are on the right track in
mentioning human flourishing in connection with intellectual virtue. These are
important insights that a stronger virtue epistemology ought to integrate and expand on
in some form, and that is what I intend to do in formulating my own proposal. With
that said though, all of the surveyed proposals have difficulties in explaining what makes
an intellectual virtue intrinsically valuable. In articulating my own point of view, I make
it my primary goal to explain the intrinsic value of the intellectual virtues in a plausible
and robust manner. In order to do that though, I examine an oft-neglected companion
concept to virtue in contemporary virtue epistemology—flourishing.

7. Summary and Conclusion of Chapter 2

There was a significant amount of epistemological territory covered in this
chapter as it was a survey of the best accounts of intellectual virtue in virtue
epistemology. Recall that one primary goal of my dissertation is to explain why the
intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable. However, there would be no need for this if
virtue epistemology already had an account of intellectual virtue that explained the
intrinsic value of virtue without running into significant problems. Hopefully by now though, one recognizes the shortcomings of virtue epistemology in this regard and sees a need for a better explanation of the intrinsic value of intellectual virtue.

In this process, I proposed a new way of categorizing families of intellectual virtue because it revealed common thematic weaknesses in a way that is not initially obvious. The largest dividing line in virtue epistemology is that between the truth-centered and non-truth-centered views of intellectual virtue. Within the former group are three sub-groups. There are the **reliable truth-centered** views, which revolve around the idea that an intellectual virtue is a character trait that enables an agent to reliably form true beliefs and avoid false ones. Then there are the **motivational truth-centered** accounts, which state that an intellectual virtue is a motivation to have true beliefs and avoid false ones. The last member of this group is the **mixed** view, which holds that an intellectual virtue not only involves a motivation to have true beliefs and avoid false ones, but also involves actual success in forming true beliefs and not false ones. There was no subdivision of the non-truth-centered views as there isn't as much thematic unity. Their only uniting point is that they all reject classifying the intellectual virtues solely along the dimension of truth.

Virtually all the theories of intellectual virtue examined insist that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable. Since the reliable truth-centered theorists insist that possessing an intellectual virtue successfully leads one to obtain true beliefs, they argue that intellectual virtue is a kind of success from ability and that is what is intrinsically valuable about virtue. The exception among the reliable theorists is Julia Driver, who departs from the consensus view and instead argues that the intellectual virtues are only
I took her account as an opportunity to show some of the negative theoretical implications of thinking about the intellectual virtues along instrumental terms. The motivational epistemologists think that what makes an intellectual virtue intrinsically valuable is a motivation to believe truth, which in itself is intrinsically valuable. The mixed theorists adopt and modify the insights of the motivational ones and argue that it is the motivational component of an intellectual virtue that makes it intrinsically valuable. The non-truth-centered epistemologists have significantly differing opinions. Kvanvig thinks that what makes the intellectual virtues intrinsically valuable is that they generally lead to justified beliefs. Roberts and Wood's account is less clear on this matter, but they seem to be arguing that what makes the intellectual virtues intrinsically valuable is the motivational structure of the love of knowledge. Lastly, Baehr believes that the intrinsic value of intellectual virtue can be explained by appealing to the notion of personal worth; an intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable insofar as it contributes to an agent's intellectual personal worth.

During the course of evaluation, we encountered some significant problems with the various theories and how they understand the intellectual virtues as intrinsically valuable. Remember, as I indicated in chapter 1, to argue that something has intrinsic value is to claim that it has value as a final end or end in itself. When a virtue epistemologist claims that an intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable, he is saying that an intellectual virtue is worth cultivating as an end in itself or as a goal in itself. The problems that I have highlighted over the course of this chapter fall, for the most part, into two broad categories. Either a theorist claims that an intellectual virtue, as defined, is intrinsically valuable, but as it ultimately turns out this claim is implausible; or, an
intellectual virtue, as characterized, isn't plausibly a candidate to be thought of as an excellent character trait in the first place. In what follows, I collect together all the major problems and indicate which accounts of intellectual virtue are susceptible to a particular problem (in chronological order of presentation).

**Triviality** (problematic for Sosa, Greco, Montmarquet, Riggs, Baehr, potentially Zagzebski and Fairweather): having an intellectual virtue should not be compatible with memorizing trivial truths, having a motivation to memorize trivial truths, or loving trivial epistemic goods. There isn't intrinsic value in pursuing or having trivial epistemic goods.

**Irrelevance** (problematic for Sosa, Greco, Montmarquet, Riggs, Baehr, potentially Zagzebski and Fairweather): having an intellectual virtue should not be compatible with having one epistemic goal, X, and pursuing epistemic means, Y, when X and Y are clearly unrelated. For example, if one wants to learn how to play chess, one should not embark on a quest to study orchestral composition.

**Doxastic** (problematic for Sosa, Greco, Montmarquet, Riggs, Kvanvig): there is much more that is intrinsically valuable about an intellectual virtue than simply belief formation. For example, there are emotions stemming from conviction as well as understanding, which doesn't necessarily reduce to belief.

**Obsoletion** (problematic for Sosa, Greco, Kvanvig): what makes the intellectual virtues intrinsically valuable if there is another, more efficient means to truth or justification? If there is a more efficient route to these epistemic goods, then the intellectual virtues are obsolete.

**Identification** (problematic for Sosa, Greco, Zagzebski, Fairweather): others or an agent herself should be able to reasonably tell if her character trait is in fact an
intellectual virtue or not on the basis of facts about her own character and personality. There is no need to know whether, for example, there is an evil demon that exists who feeds agents false perceptions.

*Countenancing* (problematic for Greco): it shouldn't be a requirement for one to have a pristine history of completely countenancing epistemic norms in order to be regarded as intellectually virtuous.

*Copying* (problematic for Driver): on the assumption that the intellectual virtues are *not* intrinsically valuable, but rather instrumentally valuable, it follows if one agent, A, believed truths through ability, whereas a second agent, B, believed those exact same truths through copying A, it follows that both A and B are equally intellectually virtuous. This is erroneous because A clearly has something of value which B does not. The problem can be avoided by arguing that A and B are not equivalent in terms of having intrinsically valuable character traits but are only equivalent along instrumental epistemic dimensions.

*Persistence* (problematic for Driver): on the assumption that the intellectual virtues are *not* intrinsically valuable, but rather instrumentally valuable, it should not follow that one agent, A, has or lacks intellectual virtue simply and solely on the basis of a second agent, B, being physically present, as A's intellectual virtue involves personality traits that exist independently of B's presence.

*Demarcation* (problematic for Montmarquet, Riggs, Baehr): there should be some clear distinction between the virtuous and the non-virtuous. Why should a default setting, such as a motivation to believe truth, be regarded as intellectually virtuous? Virtue, by literal definition, is an excellence, not an average commodity.
Subsumption (problematic for Zagzebski, potentially Montmarquet, Riggs): if a theory does include a motivational component for intellectual virtue, it shouldn’t allow for an intellectual virtue to be considered intrinsically valuable if an intrinsically good motivation were ultimately produced by an intrinsically bad one.

Guarantee (problematic for Zagzebski, Fairweather): excellent intellectual character traits in themselves can’t guarantee truths to an agent. Having truth is only partially a function of one’s personal character, as having guaranteed true beliefs requires other things outside the control of the agent, such as a cooperative and non-deceptive world.

Justification (problematic for Kvanvig): it can’t be true that the only way to possess justified beliefs through intellectual virtue is via having and exemplifying all the intellectual virtues. Even having just one intellectual virtue in itself almost always leads to justification.

Presupposition (problematic for Roberts and Wood): on the assumption that love of knowledge is a virtue, it’s not necessary that one first love knowledge in order to possess any of the other virtues.

Emotion (problematic for Baehr): simply loving epistemic goods does not render an intellectual virtue intrinsically valuable. One could love all epistemic goods but not understand why one loves them; love should not be conflated with understanding.

Now that the major problems with previous virtue epistemologies have been explained, it’s obvious that a better virtue epistemology ought to avoid these same problems. I take it upon myself to avoid these issues, and I believe that the theoretically significant concept of flourishing can significantly aid in this process. In chapter 4, I
revisit this list of issues and show how my account avoids all the mentioned problems.
Chapter 3: Flourishing

1. The Theoretical Power of Flourishing

What is flourishing and why should it matter to virtue epistemology? To answer this question, I first describe in detail what flourishing is and after that explain its importance to virtue epistemology. Just as there are different understandings of virtue, there are also different accounts of the relationship between virtue and flourishing that have been developed throughout the years. In discussing what flourishing is and its importance to virtue epistemology, the virtue theorist must use discretion in choosing what source to review. In my considered judgment, as well as that of probably most virtue theorists’ of the past and present, the most important figure in this regard is Aristotle. One reason for thinking this is that he is seen by many as giving virtue theory its distinct form. Another is that his arguments are still thought to be philosophically fruitful, and one unmistakably detects his influence within contemporary virtue ethics and virtue epistemology. Though I initially criticized Aristotle for inadequately distinguishing between moral and intellectual virtue (section 2, chapter 1), his original argument that established a substantial link between virtue and flourishing is one to be reckoned with by all virtue theorists, even all philosophers in general. In fact, I think Aristotle is broadly correct about the relationship between virtue and flourishing (though incorrect in some key details), and his argument establishing that relationship can be developed into a powerful virtue epistemology. There is, though, quite a conceptual chasm between our ideas and Aristotle’s own, so it is first necessary to explore his thought, describing it in adequate detail so that it can ultimately be cast into a stronger,
updated form. The virtue epistemology that I finally advocate can be considered Neo-Aristotelian in the sense that its broad structure parallels that of Aristotle’s. However, I do part ways with him in many respects, so if the reader does not ultimately consider my account Neo-Aristotelian then at the very least one can recognize that it is inspired by Aristotle. I first begin with a general introduction to some key terms.

The term flourishing that I have been using up to this point is actually a translation of the Greek word *eudaimonia*, which is a technical term when discussed in the context of virtue theory. Unfortunately, sometimes virtue theorists don’t go out of their way to alert their readers that flourishing is a translation of a very loaded concept; in fact, just about the only thing not lost in the translation of *eudaimonia* is the fact that it denotes a well-lived or successful life. One important fact initially to note is that *eudaimonia* is a teleological concept, that is, one that invokes some reference to a final end or goal; the *eudaimonia* of human beings involves them performing their final end or goal well.¹¹⁶ According to Aristotle, the way one determines what the final end of a human being is involves taking account of what humans are and what they do, that is, by determining their defining, unique, and goal-directed activity—their characteristic activity as Aristotle says (from the Greek *ergon*, sometimes translated as function). Aristotle believes that the characteristic activity of a human being is to reason; he believes that rationality is what separates human beings from other living organisms (as they have their own characteristic activities) and that a human achieves a state of *eudaimonia* when he

¹¹⁶ Strictly speaking, Aristotle didn’t think that all human beings could flourish. For example, slaves are excluded. For the sake of developing my own account of virtue and flourishing though, I ignore these historical details and rely on the idea that all human beings can flourish. Additionally, the gods can also be in a state of *eudaimonia*; this I also consider an historical footnote that doesn’t figure into my final proposed theory. See Aristotle, *NE*, 1100a and *Politics*, 1328a.
manifests his characteristic activity—reasoning—well.

Non-coincidentally, there is a term for whatever it is that enables an agent to accomplish his characteristic activity well—*virtue*! One may remember from the introduction that virtue just means an excellence (from the Greek *arete*). Since virtue enables a person to perform her characteristic activity well, a virtue *benefits* the one who possesses it; in particular, since the characteristic activity of humans is to reason, the virtues benefit agents by enabling them to reason *well*. To achieve a state of *eudaimonia*, agents must, at minimum, cultivate all their virtues, which are intrinsically good constituents of it. *Eudaimonia* refers to a state that lacks nothing and is complete; it is the highest intrinsically valuable state of a human being. This is what Aristotle means when he says that “Flourishing [*eudaimonia*] is the activity of a complete life in accordance with complete excellence [*arete* or virtue].” It is important to keep in mind that *eudaimonia* referring to the highest intrinsically valuable state of an agent is laid down by Aristotle as a definition, but the claim that virtue is necessary to flourish is a conclusion that he argues for (via the concept of human characteristic activity as reasoning).

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118 Aristotle, *EE*, 1219a. Aristotle’s statement here should be read as saying that *eudaimonia* be in agreement with a virtuously lived life, though there may be other goods that an agent needs to fully flourish. There has been considerable debate as to whether virtue alone constitutes the completely flourishing life in Aristotle’s thought. He sometimes makes it appear as though complete virtue is sufficient for complete flourishing, but in other places says that virtue plus a number of external goods is also required, such as health. See, for example, Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, chap. 18 for an examination of this textual ambiguity.

119 Some may be wondering at this point what exactly a life of *eudaimonia* would look like, as the idea that it is the highest intrinsic good may appear vague. Aristotle does indeed move past his general
Though we have not encountered any contemporary virtue epistemologists who have defined virtue in terms of performing one’s characteristic activity well (indeed, there are none), it would be keeping historically in line with Aristotelian virtue theory if such a definition were offered. I take this as my task, though I ultimately modify Aristotle’s conception of characteristic activity so that it can withstand some pertinent criticisms.

There is also one last comment that I’d like to make about eudaimonia and it concerns how objective a state it is. There has been a considerable change in how eudaimonia has been translated, with the emerging term being that of flourishing; previously, the term had frequently been translated as happiness. Why the shift? Essentially, translators want to distance eudaimonia from a typical conception of happiness. The former is considerably more of an objective state in that one at least partially achieves such a state through performing one’s characteristic activity well, and an entity’s characteristic activity is largely determined by what type of organism that an entity is, by how it is constituted. Of course, a human being who performs her characteristic activity well, that is, virtuously, also has some rational opinion about why she acts the way she does, so in that sense there is some subjective point of view involved in human eudaimonia. But there is virtually nothing like these thoughts involved in our typical notion of happiness, which is thought of as a subjective state produced through a large variety of means and that varies considerably from person to person. For example, one person may gamble over the course of a lifetime and win a

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fortune, feeling extraordinarily good at the end of the day, whereas another may like to lead a simple life filled with nothing but reading books, also feeling pretty swell. Even though these individuals engage in significantly different activities, most would still call both of them happy. Of course, one notices immediately here that our concept of happiness is extremely subjective and variable in a way that *eudaimonia* is not, and this is the primary reason why translators refrain from translating *eudaimonia* as happiness, instead preferring flourishing or other related terms. It must be said though that flourishing is also meant to indicate a life that is pleasant and desirable. Aristotle, as well as other virtue theorists, thought that a life of *eudaimonia* is pleasant, that it doesn’t involve feeling awful or drained when such a state is achieved. But nevertheless, it’s important to keep in mind the manner in which *eudaimonia* is considerably more of an objective state than is happiness because there has been frequent confusion on the matter in the past.

Now that I have adequately described what *eudaimonia* is—an intrinsically valuable and complete state realized at least partially through performing one’s characteristic activity well, that is, virtuously—I will simply employ the concept of flourishing as its equivalent in English. That is, when I utilize the term *flourishing*, one should understand that I mean *eudaimonia* and do not intend to merely suggest an everyday understanding of the word (though I will still utilize the term *eudaimonistic* since no corresponding adjective exists for flourishing).

And now to the more important question: why should virtue epistemology be concerned with flourishing? The rough and unrefined answer to that question is that

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121 Aristotle, NE, 1153b.
flourishing allows for a robust and theoretically powerful explanation of why intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable, in addition to some other advantages I will highlight. Of course, one might also be wondering if virtue and flourishing pair so well together, why haven't other virtue epistemologists taken the opportunity to develop a eudaimonistic virtue epistemology—one that explicitly relies on a connection between intellectual virtue, flourishing, and related concepts? There are several reasons for that, but much of their hesitance stems from the fact that important and influential criticisms of virtue theory have been developed, attacking the plausibility of many fundamental notions that ancient virtue theory relied upon, such as characteristic activity and teleology, as well as simply misunderstanding what flourishing is. I examine these reasons and update key virtue terminology such that they are no longer problematic in section 2 of this chapter. My final statement about why intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable only becomes fully developed in chapter 4 though, and what I immediately provide below functions as an initial justification to even consider linking the concepts of virtue and flourishing together.

The first advantage of having a eudaimonistic virtue epistemology is that it connects virtue to something that is understood to be intrinsically valuable, namely, flourishing. Flourishing, by definition, is a complete or self-sufficient state that refers to an agent having all intrinsic goods. And recall that virtue, as it was classically understood, is a constituent of a flourishing life. Remember that Aristotle had to argue for this conclusion, as it's not initially apparent why virtue is necessary for a human being to flourish. The way that Aristotle connects virtue to flourishing is via the idea of characteristic activity, namely, that a virtue is what enables an agent to perform her
characteristic activity of reasoning well. By similar arguments, if a eudaimonistic virtue epistemology can connect intellectual virtue to flourishing via characteristic activity while surmounting relevant objections, it will succeed in establishing why the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable. Of course, it must go beyond the formal relationships stated here and explain, substantively, how all this is possible and plausible. But it’s important to recognize that there is now a way of advancing beyond mere intuitions that the virtues are valuable in that one can explain the value of virtue in terms of its relationship to a flourishing life. So one of the main advantages of flourishing is that of explanatory power in explaining what makes the virtues intrinsically valuable.

Another advantage of thinking of the virtues as constituents of a flourishing life is that it eliminates problems that repeatedly appear in the virtue epistemologies examined in chapter 2. It is my contention that some of these problems stem from thinking of the intellectual virtues in causal terms, that is, as character traits that cause one to acquire epistemic goods, particularly truth. Recall one form of the obsoletion objection—that if intellectual virtue is a character trait that enables one to form true beliefs and avoid false ones, and if there were a more efficient and reliable means to truth found, what value would the intellectual virtues have? For example, if it were the case that simply pushing a button delivered one a stock of 1000 true beliefs every time it’s pressed, why bother cultivating (over potentially a very long time) the intellectual virtues—they are obsolete because what is (supposedly) valuable about an intellectual virtue is its ability

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122 Thomas Hurka discusses how most virtue theories fail to advance beyond a formal connection between virtue and flourishing, as what is really theoretically important and interesting is a substantive one. See “The Three Faces of Flourishing,” in Human Flourishing, ed. Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred Dycus Miller, and Jeffrey Paul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 44–71. See also Nicholas Everitt, “Some Problems with Virtue Theory,” Philosophy 82, no. 2 (2007): 275–299.
to deliver truth and something else delivers it better. This problem only gets off the
ground though if one thinks of intellectual virtue in causal terms, conceiving of them
merely as causal deliverers of goods. But if the intellectual virtues partially constitute a
state of flourishing, if they enable individuals to perform their characteristic activity well,
then the virtues don’t merely cause some good to occur, but actually constitute it in some
way. If the intellectual virtues constitute some good, such as the good of flourishing,
then their value is not solely a function of how well they causally produce some good,
and thus the obsoletion objection doesn’t have force.

Similarly, thinking of the intellectual virtues as partial constituents of a
flourishing life gives the virtue epistemologist a more principled way of responding to
philosophers such as Driver, instead of pitting one set of intuitions against another. I
argued against Driver that her view (the intellectual virtues are only instrumentally
valuable) leads to some theoretically problematic results (specifically, the copying and
persistence problems). However, my argument against Driver’s view was purely negative,
appealing to the intuition that the intellectual virtues are best thought of as intrinsically
valuable. But now it is possible to go farther and not simply appeal to one’s intuitions;
one can make a positive case for thinking of the intellectual virtues as part of a
flourishing life, and indicate where virtue fits in a constellation of other concepts, such
as characteristic activity. So no longer is the debate between these two camps to be
decided purely on grounds of intuition; instead, virtue epistemologists can develop a
robust, positive case for thinking that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable, and
they can do this by appealing to the connection between virtue and flourishing. Thus,
the problems of copying and persistence can be defeated with more than just negative
arguments as the virtue theorist has a considerable positive case to make as well.

Not only does connecting intellectual virtue to flourishing explain in a deeper way why the former is intrinsically valuable, it also yields a reason to become intellectually virtuous in the first place. On the ancient virtue-theoretical way of looking at things, virtue is what enables an organism to perform its characteristic activity well; in doing so, a virtue benefits its possessor. If it can be shown that agents have a characteristic activity, and that agents perform this characteristic activity qua human beings, then it follows that a virtue benefits individuals by enabling them to perform their characteristic activity well. Likewise, if one can explain how intellectual virtue enables an agent to perform her characteristic activity well, one will also have shown how intellectual virtue benefits the one who has it. (This idea will be argued in the next section.) From what we have seen in chapter 2, virtue epistemologists are usually content to simply defend the intuition that intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable and leave it at that. They don't usually exhibit a particularly pressing need to explain why one should want to possess intellectual virtue in the first place. Some may argue that the reason this is so is that virtue epistemologists are having a professional level discourse about theory and that their concern is not with epistemic practice. That, of course, would be true to some extent. But my contention is that virtue epistemologists, for the most part, have been complacent here, as they simply assume that their definition of intellectual virtue carries with it an implication of why one would want to possess intellectual virtue. Now perhaps this is a forgivable offense because it appears obvious that if, for example, the intellectual virtues enable agents to

123 Roberts and Wood would be the exceptions to this claim, as they take their work to be one of, in their terms, regulative epistemology, or a branch of epistemology that is concerned with practically assisting real world individuals improve their epistemic lives through philosophical reflection.
form true beliefs and avoid false ones, one would want to possess that sort of character trait. Of course, when I examined what a proposal such as this led to (problems of triviality, irrelevance, etc.), it became apparent that one wouldn't necessarily want to have that sort of character trait. For the most part, virtue epistemologists already have a conclusion in mind—that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable and that we ought to cultivate them, but they seem to hold this view on the grounds that this is obviously correct from their definitions.

From these considerations, a larger issue can be seen in virtue epistemology— from the fact that intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable it doesn't follow that one should cultivate it. This might be difficult to see after one has been immersed in virtue-talk for some time, but other examples clearly demonstrate this. On the supposition that art is intrinsically valuable, it doesn't follow that we should paint. On the supposition that good tasting food is intrinsically valuable it doesn't follow that we should eat it. One would have to give an argument explaining why a thing’s intrinsic value implies some type of human action in regard to it. But articulating a framework for virtue epistemology around the idea that intellectual virtue is a component of a flourishing life gives one a principled strategy for explaining why one should cultivate intellectual virtue in the first place; one should strive to develop the intellectual virtues because they benefit the one who possesses them. So not only can a eudaimonistic virtue epistemology explain why the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable, it can also yield a reason as to why agents should attempt to develop virtue in their own lives.

This isn't to say that actual individuals, perhaps average, everyday folk, would be convinced by this line of reasoning. I would assume that if a virtue epistemologist were
to enter the streets and preach about the value of the intellectual virtues his words would largely fall on deaf ears! All that I am attempting to express here is that *theoretically speaking*, a eudaimonistic virtue epistemology can connect the idea that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable to an explanation of why agents should attempt to develop those same virtues in themselves. This doesn't mean that a non-eudaimonistic virtue epistemology would fail in this regard; perhaps there are other ways of making this connection. But for the most part, virtue epistemologists have simply assumed that one would want to possess an intellectual virtue because it's intrinsically valuable, and the justification for that idea simply follows from a particular definition of intellectual virtue. Though more remains to be said about how intellectual virtue benefits an individual, pending my explanation in chapter 4, my proposal of connecting intellectual virtue to flourishing avoids this issue because it yields the conclusion that agents should cultivate intellectual virtue because it *benefits* the agents who do so. That is, on the assumption that humans have a characteristic activity, and on the assumption that humans perform that characteristic activity, it follows that virtue, specifically intellectual virtue, enables agents to perform that characteristic activity well.

A fourth reason why the virtue epistemologist should adopt a eudaimonistic virtue epistemology is that it provides a way of *unifying* the intellectual virtues. Perhaps at some point the reader was bewildered by the variety and plurality of the intellectual virtues I used as examples. Here is a sample of what I have claimed are intellectual virtues: attentiveness, open-mindedness, intellectual courage, inquisitiveness, intellectual integrity, intellectual humility, curiosity, thoroughness, and self-awareness. There are even more intellectual virtues beyond these. But I highly doubt that my list of intellectual
virtues is exactly the same as anyone else's. From the review of virtue epistemologies in chapter 2, one may have noticed that the recognized intellectual virtues vary slightly from account to account. This suggests an important question that every virtue epistemologist should strive to answer: on what basis is an intellectual virtue admitted to a list of intellectual virtues in the first place?

James Montmarquet's technique is to look at the virtue exemplars and extract from them character traits that he believes are excellent regarding the epistemic enterprise. That is how he justifies the existence of what he takes to be the primary intellectual virtue, epistemic conscientiousness, which is a motivation to believe truth and avoid falsehood. But what if virtue epistemologists disagree about who the virtue exemplars are? Or what if they agreed on who they are, but disagreed on what traits of theirs counted as virtuous? How could this debate be adjudicated? As it turned out, I myself rejected epistemic conscientiousness as an intellectual virtue on the grounds that it's just a default, typical setting in virtually every human being, and so there is nothing special about epistemic conscientiousness; it doesn't appear on my list of the intellectual virtues. My reasoning here is negative in that I advance a reason for why a particular character trait is not in fact an intellectual virtue, but in my criticism, I never advanced a positive reason for admitting intellectual virtues to a list of virtue. In fact, providing lists of virtue is relatively common practice in virtue epistemology, as the virtue epistemologist frequently just mentions a list of virtues that he finds intuitively correct without explaining any further why the list of virtue is as he says it is. The problem here is that lists of intellectual virtue look like an arbitrary hodgepodge of character traits without any underlying unity.
But thinking of the intellectual virtues as constituents of a flourishing life suggests a way out of this problem. In particular, it can be said that for a character trait to count as an intellectual virtue it must somehow partially constitute a flourishing life. This gives us a criterion for admitting character traits into a list of intellectual virtue and prevents it from appearing arbitrary. Not only does thinking of the intellectual virtues as constituents of a flourishing life help minimize the problem of arbitrariness, it also assists the virtue epistemologist in what to do about some character traits that straddle the border between virtue and something else. For example, creativity could be thought of being a virtue, if it somehow contributes to human flourishing. Then again, sometimes the goal of creativity is to produce something different purely for the sake of difference; in this case, there is a reason against admitting creativity, construed in this manner, to a list of the virtues.

My suggestion is not meant to imply that virtue epistemologists will now magically come together and completely agree on what elements belong to a true list of intellectual virtue; there will still be debate and potentially there always will be one. But at the very least there is now some principled manner of admitting a character trait to a list of intellectual virtues: if an intellectual character trait does not somehow partially constitute a flourishing life, it's not an intellectual virtue. If it does partially constitute a flourishing life, then it's an intellectual virtue. I will take this basic thought a significant step further though in the next chapter when I explain how the intellectual virtues that have appeared on my list are components of a flourishing life. Initially though, I draw the conclusion that connecting intellectual virtue to flourishing at least in theory gives
one a way of *unifying* the intellectual virtues and gives us a principled way of admitting character traits to a list of the intellectual virtues.\textsuperscript{124}

The fifth and final advantage of having a eudaimonistic virtue epistemology is that it allows virtue theory to maintain its integrity qua virtue theory. There has been a tendency lately for other theories to incorporate the virtues in ways that subsume the virtues without the traditional virtue-theoretical framework. This has occurred in epistemology, but one can see more clearly how this has happened by first examining ethical theories that epistemological theories are modeled on. In particular, there are currently three major ethical theories—consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. In consequentialist ethics (and in very simple and unsophisticated terms), the morally right action is that which maximizes the best consequences. It's up to the particularly consequentialist to determine what counts as the *best consequences*—in many theories, the best consequences occur when happiness is globally maximized, a variant of consequentialism known as utilitarianism. One might think that since virtue ethics was mentioned as a competitor to the other two aforementioned theories that consequentialism can't incorporate virtue, but in fact, this has been done many times. For example, the consequentialist Thomas Hurka has argued that virtue is an attitude toward good things that contributes to maximizing the goodness in the world.\textsuperscript{125} There have also been deontological appropriations of virtue. Very roughly speaking, in deontological or rule-based ethics, an action is right just in case it conforms to a correct

\textsuperscript{124} Linda Zagzebski agrees that the concept of flourishing can unify the intellectual virtues, even though she ultimately shies away from proposing a eudaimonistic virtue epistemology. See *Virtues of the Mind*, 210.

\textsuperscript{125} Hurka, *Vice, Virtue, and Value*. Historically speaking, David Hume, Jeremy Bentham, and John Stuart Mill also all understood the virtues in a consequentialist manner.
rule. John Rawls is a good representative of this approach to ethics. Regarding the virtues, he states that they are “strong and normally effective desires to act on the basic principles of right.”

Notice immediately that when appropriated by rival theories, the virtues turn into something completely different than what they were under classical virtue theory. Under consequentialism, the virtues are (one of the) maximizers of the world's goodness. But this commitment to maximizing something is absent from ancient virtue theory. Consider Julia Annas, who states that:

> It is also not surprising that ancient ethics, with one marginal exception, never develops anything like the related consequentialist idea of a maximizing model of rationality. If my ethical aim is to produce a good, or the best, state of affairs, then it is only rational to produce as much as possible of it. Rather, what I aim at is my living in a certain way, my making the best use of goods, and acting in some ways rather than others.

That is, in classical virtue theory, the virtues are not thought of as something that help maximize a good state of affairs. And part of the reason for this is that ancient virtue theory relies on the idea that virtue is part of a flourishing life, and a flourishing life is one that involves an agent performing his characteristic activity well; there's no thought of maximization operating here. Likewise, there is nothing in ancient virtue theory which connects the virtues to rule-following; in fact, ancient virtue theorists, such as Aristotle, tend to suggest at times that virtue is more a matter of holistic perception and that morality is uncodifiable. In classical virtue theory, a virtue is not just a strong tendency to do something, such as maximizing the goodness of the world or acting on

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right principles; a virtue is what enables an organism to flourish by making it excel at its characteristic activity.

Just like in ethics, in epistemology there are also three major approaches to the field. What is perhaps less recognized is that these epistemic theories, for the most part, structurally parallel their ethical counterparts. The counterpart of consequentialism is reliabilism, as the latter is an epistemic theory committed to the idea that the epistemic good ought to be maximized. The reliabilist usually takes the position that agents should aim for epistemically good states of affairs, and a good state of affairs is one in which truth ratios are maximized. An epistemic deontologist is committed to the idea than an epistemic action, such as belief formation, is right just in case it conforms to correct epistemic rules. But strangely, there is no extant version of virtue epistemology that parallels ancient and some modern accounts of virtue ethics! There is no version of virtue epistemology that understands virtue as a performance of human characteristic activity, as part of a flourishing life.

So what theories do virtue epistemologists model their accounts of intellectual virtue on? In some cases the answer is consequentialism; recall that some of the reliable truth-centered virtue epistemologies revolve around some idea of maximization, usually that of truth ratios. For example, Sosa's own epistemology has been labeled as virtue consequentialism by another virtue epistemologist. Given that Sosa says things like

129 Zagzebski was the first virtue epistemologist to call attention to this parallelism, Virtues of the Mind, 3–29. See also Zagzebski, “Précis of Virtues of the Mind,” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 60, no. 1 (2000): 169–177.
131 Probably the best example of this is found in Roderick Chisholm, Theory of Knowledge.
132 Christopher Hookway, “Cognitive Virtues and Epistemic Evaluations,” International Journal of
“Whatever exactly the end may be, the virtue of a virtue derives not simply from leading us to it [truth], perhaps accidentally, but from leading us to it reliably: e.g., in a way bound to maximize one's surplus of truth over error,” it's not difficult to see why he would be considered a virtue consequentialist. Even the motivational truth-centered theorists think that an epistemically significant motivation involves that of aiming for as many true beliefs as possible while minimizing false beliefs. Though the non-truth-centered views tend to move away from reliabilist ideas in epistemology, even they too sometimes incorporate the idea of maximization. For example, Kvanvig states in proposing his virtue epistemology that: “What we want is an account of the cognitive life of the mind that helps us understand how to maximize truth and avoid error.” Baehr's virtue epistemology, though chronologically last in the development of all the critiqued views, is modeled on Hurka's virtue consequentialism; so the trend in virtue epistemology currently appears to be a further embrace of consequentialist concepts and methodology. Though epistemic deontology is comparably less popular when compared to reliabilism, it also makes an appearance in virtue epistemology. Recall that Greco sought to amend Sosa's basic virtue epistemology by appealing to the idea that an agent ought to countenance epistemic norms in order to have completely virtuous beliefs.

It is my contention that virtue epistemology is better able to preserve its integrity qua virtue theory by appealing to concepts native to ancient virtue theory. This doesn’t
mean that a virtue epistemology modeled on its ancient predecessors is more likely to be right by that fact alone of course. But a virtue epistemologist ought to be cognizant of what makes virtue theory unique when compared to its rivals. Aristotle’s strategy for understanding the value of the virtues, that of thinking of them as elements that enable agents to perform their characteristic activity well, is one of the distinctive aspects of virtue theory. Though there may be other ways of preserving the integrity of virtue epistemology qua virtue theory, the idea of characteristic activity greatly distances virtue theory from that of consequentialism and deontology, reliabilism and epistemic deontology. Talk of maximization is endemic to consequentialism and reliabilism, and that of rules to ethical and epistemic deontology; how virtue theory connects virtue to flourishing via characteristic activity is what gives virtue theory its chief defining feature. Yet, at the moment, there is no movement underway that attempts to understand the value of intellectual virtue via flourishing despite there being contemporary virtue ethics that have been modeled on Aristotle’s thought. Given the previous advantages that I have highlighted and the fact that virtue theory’s idea of flourishing is what makes it unique, there are many reasons to take virtue epistemology in this direction, and that precisely is the direction I intend to take it.

2. Resistance, Reactions, and Revisions to Flourishing

Though I have enthusiastically advanced the claim that there is much theoretical power in utilizing the concept of flourishing in virtue epistemology, there are many who would not share that same sentiment. Part of the reason for this is that philosophers in general have found various and supposedly damning faults with Aristotle’s reasoning,
most of which stem from problematic assertions about the idea of characteristic activity. These criticisms include allegedly problematic metaphysical assumptions, incompatibility with the theory of evolution, unnecessary theological assumptions, and arbitrary assignment of what makes humans in fact human. Due to these issues, tying the virtues to flourishing is potentially to invite philosophical chaos. Virtue epistemologists have been influenced by these criticisms, and in many cases have attempted to articulate a virtue epistemology without an attendant idea of flourishing because they seek to avoid these purported problems. However, it's my position that they have too hastily adopted these conclusions instead of mounting a defense against them; as I have argued in the preceding section, there are many advantages to utilizing the concept of flourishing with that of virtue.

In this section, I take as my task an examination of some of the strongest criticisms against the idea of flourishing, especially as they relate to the idea of characteristic activity, and then following that, articulate my own modified understanding of characteristic activity that escapes these objections. There are seven total objections that will be encountered in this section (all are eventually listed); the first two will receive responses immediately after they are presented while I will only respond to the latter five after they have all been explained. The reason I present the material in this manner is that the first two objections can be answered immediately without changing Aristotle's virtue theory at all but the last five require a good deal of modification of some of his key virtue-theoretic ideas before their corresponding criticisms can be surmounted.

Why defend the idea of characteristic activity? The short answer is that it is a crucial link between virtue and flourishing; without it, my ultimate argument for
explaining why the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable will not work. In making use of this idea, I utilize Aristotle’s general argumentative structure involving virtue and flourishing, but modify some concepts in a way that don’t fall prey to some serious problems. To quickly review, Aristotle’s argument (usually referred to as the function or *ergon* argument) essentially comes down to this: once we have established the characteristic activity of a human being, we can then claim that performing that characteristic activity well at least partially constitutes a flourishing life. Flourishing is the highest intrinsically valuable state a human being can achieve, and reaching that state involves performing one’s characteristic activity well. And virtue, recall, is what enables agents to perform their characteristic activity well and is something that at least partially constitutes a flourishing life. Virtue is intrinsically valuable because it is a constituent of a life of flourishing, and the reason it partially constitutes that sort of life is that it enables agents to perform their characteristic activity well. My argument ultimately depends on the idea that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable because they enable agents to perform a particular characteristic activity of human beings well. Though I part ways with Aristotle in thinking that the characteristic of human beings is to reason, nevertheless, advance a related view.

As stated earlier, the idea of characteristic activity is a teleological notion in that it supposes that organisms are goal-directed in their activities. Furthermore, Aristotle partly arrives at this conclusion because he thinks that nature as a whole is teleological. Therein lies a chief problem that philosophers have with his virtue theory, as they are suspicious of his teleological commitments. Aristotle’s ideas about teleology stem from his metaphysics, especially the doctrine of final causality, which is the idea that there is a
goal which things act for the sake of or for the purpose of. For example, to say that the heart pumps blood for the sake of or for the purpose of keeping the body oxygenated would be to offer a teleological explanation of the heart. According to Aristotle's idea of final causality, one has only truly and completely explained something when she has explained what goal an object is directed toward. For instance, the final cause or ultimate goal of an acorn is directed toward becoming an oak tree. As one notices, this goal does not require an object to be consciously aware of its goal or possess any mental states at all. Furthermore, this teleology—the for the sake of—is built into the fabric of nature itself; it's not simply a linguistic thesis about how humans happen to word explanations in terms of purpose.

Now whether or not nature as a whole operates on metaphysical teleological principles is an interesting question, but it need not be an impediment to a virtue theorist because teleological principles do not necessarily have to operate on a cosmic level for them to operate at some lower level. Thus, the virtue theorist need not presuppose Aristotle’s metaphysics in order to defend virtue theory. But it is important for the virtue theorist to consider Aristotle’s claim that human beings have some built-in or immanent teleological feature about them. Of course, this point is of particular controversy because it seems to the critic that humans don’t exist for the sake of or for the purpose of anything. Individuals may give themselves a purpose or goal, but it’s not an objective feature about human beings in the same way that their hands and feet are. This criticism is usually motivated by many philosophers’ commitment to naturalism, the metaphysical idea that only natural (or material or physical) things exist. Thinking of purposes as being objective features of the world is difficult and perhaps impossible to
square with a naturalist picture of reality because they seem to raise problems for naturalism.\textsuperscript{136}

Fortunately for the virtue theorist, I believe that this criticism traces back mostly to translational issues. Characteristic activity is a translation from the Greek \textit{ergon}, which was previously typically translated as \textit{function}. However, thinking of \textit{ergon} in terms of function has in large part prompted this criticism because we tend to think of items with a function as having some purpose. For example, to say that the function of a knife is to cut is to say something similar to the effect, if not exactly the same as, that the purpose of the knife is to cut. But this isn’t precisely what Aristotle means in talking about humans. The concept of characteristic activity is meant to pick out what is highest and most unique about humans—their \textit{defining activity}, not their purpose or function. This activity is goal-oriented, and in that sense teleological, but it doesn’t presuppose that humans have a \textit{purpose}, as if imbued by the gods with some mysterious metaphysical property. Aristotle thinks that the characteristic activity of humans is reasoning, and it is goal-directed in the sense that humans always employ reason for the sake of some goal; “goal-directedness” is a feature of human reason, and in that sense is teleological.\textsuperscript{137}

Though Aristotle made sweeping teleological claims about the cosmos based on his metaphysics which have come to be seen as indefensible, his understanding of the teleology of human beings is not particularly controversial if understood properly. The virtue theorist need not endorse Aristotle’s metaphysical claims about all reality; all that is

\textsuperscript{136} Of course, one could make the argument that because naturalism can’t accommodate teleology well or at all then so much the worse for naturalism as a metaphysical thesis. This very well could have been how Aristotle would have reacted, as well as philosophers who reject naturalism. However, my purpose here is neither to argue for nor against naturalism, but only to show how virtue theory can be compatible with it, as I view it as a net positive for a theory, generally speaking, to be compatible with other theories.

\textsuperscript{137} John Cooper explains Aristotle’s teleology particularly well in \textit{Reason and Human Good}. 
necessary is thinking of human characteristic activity as goal-directed in the sense stated above.

Hopefully that puts to rest one type of prominent objection against the metaphysics of teleology. But there is another metaphysical issue that critics of Aristotle have repeatedly pointed out. Though there is some controversy in how to best interpret Aristotle, the majority view understands Aristotle as insisting that there is a metaphysical essence that human beings exemplify in order to be human.\textsuperscript{138} This is not to be confused with a Platonic essence that exists separately in some abstract realm, as Aristotle thinks that the essence of a human being, its form, is part of a person himself. That is, if there were no humans, there would also be no human essence, which is in contrast to a generally Platonic strategy for understanding essence, as there need not be any existing human beings for a human essence to exist. However, talk of metaphysical essences is deeply disturbing to many philosophers primarily because it violates their acceptance of materialism about human beings, that humans are only constituted by material entities (as opposed to immaterial or supernatural ones). And of course, if materialism is true, then it seems to most that there is no room for something like a species essence to exist as it is not a material entity. This is an important objection to keep in mind, one that I will address later in this section.\textsuperscript{139}


\textsuperscript{139} See Tim Lewens for a recent example of this type of criticism against Aristotelian virtue theory, “Human Nature: The Very Idea,” \textit{Philosophy and Technology} 25, no. 4 (2012): 459–74. Just like my comment regarding naturalism though, I don’t argue for or against materialism; I merely try to maintain compatibility with it.
Aside from purely metaphysical concerns, some critics also take issue with the idea that the human characteristic activity is to reason. Aristotle arrives at this conclusion by comparing human capacities to animal and plant ones, finding that what is unique and highest about humans is that they utilize reason to achieve their ends. This is surely intuitive to a large extent, as one of the hallmark characteristics of human beings is their ability to reason. But, as the critic argues, Aristotle is simply wrong about supposing that the human characteristic activity is to reason, as there are countless cases of individuals who we clearly regard as human who can’t reason. On this objection, simple observation immediately falsifies Aristotle’s proposal that we think of human characteristic activity as that of reason. In fact, this criticism still persists against modern Aristotelian virtue theorists.\(^{140}\) However, there is a reply that Aristotle and other virtue theorists would probably have made: humans who don’t reason are defective humans. Just like an oak tree would be defective if it had weak, thin roots, or as a wolf would be defective if it were not able to hunt, a human being who lacked reason falls short of the species norm. This, perhaps, is just an invitation for further questioning—how would one be able to assign a species norm? Where do these standards of normativity come from? If an organism is defective, is it still an actual member of its (apparent) kind? Let us consider how Aristotle would probably respond to these questions before modifying his ideas for our present purpose.

Aristotle may initially point out that the highest capacity of human beings is determined by comparison with other lifeforms. On his view, all life exists in a static

hierarchy, with lifeforms possessing lower abilities near the bottom (plants) and those with higher abilities near the top (the gods). Higher organisms possess the abilities of those lower than themselves but have a unique capability that lifeforms of the lower levels lack. To determine what the human characteristic activity is, one begins from the bottom of this hierarchy, such as with plants, and observes what their highest characteristic activity is (nourishment and growth), then proceed upward from there to more complex organisms, such as lower mammals, noting what they possess above and beyond plant life (avoidance of pain, perhaps seeking of pleasure), and so on. What Aristotle ultimately finds is that humans possess reason, which is their highest capacity compared to lower lifeforms. Reason, furthermore, is the divine element in us, though humans are lower than the gods because they lack their characteristic activity of immortality. According to Aristotle, to begin deriving a species norm, one must necessarily investigate what rung a species occupies in the hierarchy of life.

Needless to say, Aristotle’s strategy for understanding human characteristic activity doesn’t exactly inspire confidence. One significant issue with Aristotle’s reasoning is that it seems wildly incompatible with the theory of evolution, which supposes that the diversity of life is anything but organized in a stable hierarchy.141 Instead, organisms evolved in many varying and divergent directions, with more complex animals in many cases lacking basic abilities that simpler animals possessed. For example, humans lack the ability to use sonar pinging, an ability that bats possess; even certain jellyfish are capable of some kind of immortality, an ability that all more complex

organisms lack. (And I might add too that the immortality of the jellyfish would make them more godlike and fit for the pantheon than humans on Aristotle’s reasoning!) Furthermore, the theory of evolution is predicated on the idea that all life evolved from a primordial genetic ancestor, which is quite different than thinking that the species existed in a static, rigid fashion. A second significant issue with Aristotle’s account of humanity is that he supposes that reason is a divine element within us. However, one would have to defend the reality of the divine in the first place, and then further explain how reason is a divine ability within human beings. Aristotle, in fact, does have arguments to establish the existence of God, but the fact is that he relies on many controversial presuppositions in order to establish the truth of his conclusions. From incompatibility with the theory of evolution to invoking the divine, critics allege that Aristotle faces a monumental theoretical uphill climb.

Even on the (enormously generous) supposition that there is no issue with articulating a species norm, there is still the vexing question of what the virtue theorist is to do with organisms that deviate from the species norm. Is a healthy and unconstrained wolf that never hunts still a wolf? Maybe it’s an altogether different creature entirely, or maybe it’s inaugurating a speciation event. This in particular might not sound like much of a problem to the virtue theorist, but the issue becomes even worse when it concerns human beings. On Aristotle’s way of looking at things, human characteristic activity is to

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142 Specifically, the species *Turritopsis dohrnii*, also known as the “immortal jellyfish,” can reverse its aging process by repeatedly returning to an earlier polyp stage of development, a process with no known observed limit, rendering it theoretically immortal. One can only wonder what Aristotle would have had to say about this!

143 And on the further supposition that a divine element within human beings is not physical or material, Aristotle could then face an interaction problem between the divine element of reason and the rest of the material body, all of which comes close to resembling Descartes’ ghost in the machine (mind-body dualism) problem. However, Aristotle may possess a way out that was unavailable to Descartes as the former’s conception of mind and matter were fundamentally different than the latter’s.
reason. But how would he label a human who could not reason, perhaps as a result of birth defect or tragic accident? It’s one thing to say that that individual is defective; perhaps most would agree with that claim. But it’s considerably more difficult to insist that the person is not human. If we take reason to be the highest capacity and defining feature of humans, and if reason is altogether absent, then it follows that the individual in question is not human. This entire process of reasoning appears to have gone off course though in supposing that what makes humans in fact human is their ability to reason. But clearly there are humans who don’t reason who are rightly regarded as human because they still possess other defining features of humanhood. So another problem for Aristotelian virtue theory is that it’s not able to correctly categorize individuals who are actually instances of human beings because it wrongly supposes that reason is what makes humans in fact human.

The previous thought is related to another objection that one hears from time to time repeated in philosophy, which is that philosophers tend to overestimate the value of reason in what makes humans unique. Aristotle (among many others), is obviously impressed with the human capacity to reason, to make arguments, and to draw conclusions from them. But why privilege reason over other capacities that may make us unique or special? One may just as well make arguments to the effect that it is our capacity to love deeply, or to have religious beliefs, or to appreciate beauty, or to build a culture, or to have a sense of personal identity, or to use written language, or any number of characteristics that make humans unique when compared to the rest of life. Why suppose that reason is the human characteristic activity at the expense of all these other plausible candidates? Though Aristotle would have appealed to the hierarchy of life and
his supposition that reason is divine, we have already noted issues with those ideas so
that avenue of response won’t work. Virtue theory, then, faces an additional hurdle in
that there seems to be no strong contemporary reason for accepting the idea that we
should privilege reason as the human characteristic activity over others. This objection,
coupled with the previous ones, make it appear as though the idea of characteristic
activity is completely doomed to failure.

Unfortunately for virtue theory in general, Aristotle’s modern defenders have also
not been able to surmount the previous two objections, so there is no readily adoptable
modification of Aristotle’s view at hand. Contemporary Aristotelian virtue ethicists,
such as Philippa Foot and Rosalind Hursthouse, who rely on the idea that the
characteristic activity of humans is to reason, neither indicate how we are to regard cases
of humans who don’t reason nor do they explain why reason has a privileged status over
other potential candidates for characteristic activity. Foot and Hursthouse don’t rely on
Aristotle’s hierarchical conception of life or his metaphysics, so they don’t
straightforwardly run into issues pertaining to the theory of evolution or divine elements
in humans, but there are still important theoretical gaps to be filled if the idea of
characteristic activity is not to generate serious issues.144

The ultimate goal of the virtue theorist interested in utilizing the concept of
characteristic activity must, at minimum, be that of avoiding all the previously mentioned
objections (seven of them), that of: presupposing a cosmic metaphysical teleology,

144 For these objections and others against Foot and Hursthouse, see David Copp and David Sobel,
“Morality and Virtue: An Assessment of Some Recent Work in Virtue Ethics,” Ethics 114, no. 3
43–62; Prior, “Eudaimonism and Virtue.”
thinking that humans have an objective purpose as a species, relying on the idea of a species essence, violating compatibility with the theory of evolution, thinking of humans as infused with the divine element of reason, implying that humans are not in fact humans if they can't reason, and privileging reason over other plausible candidates for characteristic activity. I have already argued for a way to avoid the first two issues and they need not further vex the virtue theorist (see the first few pages of this section). Of the remaining issues, some are more difficult to circumnavigate than others, but all of these problems should be avoided by the virtue theorist. Also, it must be kept in mind that my ultimate reason for wanting to accomplish this task is to establish some link between virtue and flourishing via the idea of characteristic activity.

Interestingly though, I believe that there is a broadly Aristotelian way out of these issues. This is not to say that Aristotle would necessarily agree with my observation here, but nevertheless one can detect an affinity with some of his other ideas. To begin, it's important to recognize that virtue and characteristic activity are relative to the kind of lifeform an organism is. Trees don't have the same virtues as animals or humans because they have fundamentally different characteristic activities; their virtues are different because they are constituted differently. What's clear from this is that what it means for an organism to have virtue and to have a characteristic activity depends on the constitution of the organism in the first place. For example, it would obviously be wrong to say that a starfish's characteristic activity is to reason and its virtue is whatever makes it reason well because that completely ignores the capacities and powers of a starfish—it can't reason at all in the first place so to assign it human virtue and characteristic activity to it would be a category mistake.
Keeping these considerations in mind, I propose that we change the order of reasoning that Aristotle employed. I maintain that, in contrast to Aristotle, who derives the characteristic activity of individual lifeforms from first considering the species as a whole, we invert that order and derive the characteristic activity of the species from particular organisms. Alternatively phrased, Aristotle began with a general premise about the species and reaches specific conclusions about how individuals belong to the species; I, on the other hand, think we should begin with specific instances and then formulate a generalization from those instances. This doesn't mean that individual organisms have characteristic activities. Rather, what I am calling for is for the characteristic activity of organisms to be understood as a generalization from observed individuals. My reason for this insistence is that it’s the particular organism that is ultimately real, whereas species have no physical or metaphysical existence in their own right. At the end of the day, the characteristic activity of a kind must respect how individuals actually are constituted. For example, if it were the case that the vast majority of humans did not reason but rather engaged in some heretofore unknown mental process, the incorrect conclusion to draw is to regard these individuals as defective cases of humans or not even humans at all because the characteristic activity of a human being is to reason. Instead, if the vast majority of humans did not reason then the better conclusion to draw is that their characteristic activity must be something other than reason. If the virtue theorist wants to insist that the characteristic activity of human beings is to reason, then he should insist on that because it’s a unique activity that the overwhelming majority of humans actually engage in.
Notice immediately that one consequence of my approach is that there is no commitment to the problematic idea of a species essence. My proposal still takes seriously what humans are though, as my idea of characteristic activity depends on how humans are constituted, which is to say that whatever human characteristic activity turns out to be, it must ultimately respect what humans are composed of, their total abilities, powers, capacities, instincts, and any other feature that composes them. In this explanation, I took care to avoid using words that could cause needless controversy, such as *essence* or *nature*. Though these concepts don’t necessarily involve a commitment to a metaphysical species essence, the fact is that they are usually employed in that manner. However, words such as *constitution* or *composition* are considerably more neutral, and I will continue to employ them in expressing the connection between characteristic activity and what humans are. I also wish to clarify that when I employ a term such as *constitution*, I don’t mean to preclude the idea that humans interact in social ways. The human constitution includes powers to act on and potentialities to be acted on socially by other humans as well, both individually and in groups.

A second modification that I would like to make to Aristotle’s thought is to open up the possibility of there being multiple characteristic activities of organisms, not just one. This means that there could be multiple generalizations based on common abilities observed from particular individuals. There are three reasons for this modification. First, there are a plethora of things that humans do that make them uniquely human, so there is no need to privilege reason over other abilities. When one formulates a generalization about what human characteristic activity is, one observes patterns across multiple individuals in several dimensions. This accords with our intuitions about who
we count as human in the first place. Just because an individual doesn’t reason doesn’t mean that we cease to classify him as a human. Rather, there are a multitude of criteria that we use to determine what counts as human and what does not. Human beings, of course, are very unique when compared to other organisms. But to think that their uniqueness consists in just one characteristic over and above other lifeforms is clearly false, as what makes human beings, indeed potentially all species, unique compared to another might involve many distinct powers and capacities, that is, many characteristic activities.

My second reason for wanting to think that there are potentially many characteristic activities for a species stems from wanting to appropriately classify humans who can’t reason as in fact genuine examples of human beings. Recall that on Aristotle’s way of looking at things, the human characteristic activity is to reason; whoever can’t reason would be counted as defective. However, the logic of this line of reasoning goes even farther than that, as what makes human beings in fact human is their rational capacity since the concept of characteristic activity is one that defines what a lifeform is. Because being human necessarily requires rational capability on Aristotle’s way of looking at things, it follows that humans who can’t engage in reasoning aren’t in fact human. But thinking that there could be many characteristic activities avoids this problem as there are now multiple unique abilities that humans possess that make them part of the human species. So while it remains true that, generally speaking, human beings reason, it nevertheless doesn’t follow that humans who can’t reason aren’t human. On the assumption that everything else about their constitution is relatively the same as typical human beings, they can still be regarded as human because they presumably have
Third, thinking that there could be multiple characteristic activities of humans helps preserve compatibility with the theory of evolution. That is, evolution is a chaotic and wild process, and newer organisms don't simply add on to or build on top of currently existing valuable features of previous organisms to evolve toward higher complexity without qualification. Instead, sometimes features are lost and in other cases new traits emerge that are not present in previous related species. Perhaps Aristotle had good reasons for thinking that the human characteristic activity was just one capacity—reasoning—that existed over and above the lower animals because he conceives of life as existing in a static and orderly hierarchy. However, we now view the diversity of life as a dynamic bricolage. One way to respect this idea is to think that there could in fact be multiple characteristic activities of humans since we don't occupy a strict hierarchical rung in Aristotle's sense.

At this point, it's important to pause and reflect on what the ultimate purpose of my previous remarks are. Of course, rethinking the idea of characteristic activity enables the virtue theorist to surmount objections that were previously difficult to handle. However, my main goal was never simply to answer objections; it is to press toward a positive project, which is to explain how the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable as constituents of a flourishing life. If we know what the characteristic activity of human beings is, and if we know what it takes to perform their characteristic activity well

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145 The abilities I have in mind are those that are unique to human beings and that can't be reduced to reasoning. Though it is debatable as to what can be subsumed under the ability to reason, there are many unique and defining features of human beings that can't be. For example, the ability to appreciate beauty through perception is one process that can in some cases be instantly experienced without the need to reason about the experience in any way. Only an unusually wide and potentially implausibly encompassing understanding of reasoning would be able to include most of human beings' unique and defining activities.
(what their virtues are), then we can state what it would take at least to partially flourish. In order to have some guidance in explaining the nature of the virtues, one first needs to have some idea about human characteristic activity. Once some plausible characteristic activity is established, one can explain how that activity is best performed, that is, one can explain what the human virtues are. Since I am interested in matters pertaining to the intellectual virtues, some connection needs to be made between a characteristic activity of humans and the intellectual virtues. That is, virtues in general are things that enable human beings to perform their characteristic activities well; intellectual virtues, then, are things that enable a person to perform at least one of those characteristic activities well—but what sort of characteristic activity would the intellectual virtues make excellent, if any?

In thinking about a potential connection between a human characteristic activity and the intellectual virtues, it’s important to keep some constraints in mind. First, since I have understood characteristic activity as a generalization that is true about the vast majority of humans, it wouldn’t be correct to propose something that only applies to a minority of them. To insist that the characteristic activity of humans is, for instance, chess playing, would be to identify an activity in which only a small fraction of individuals participate. As much as possible, the virtue theorist ought to look for human abilities that are generically human. Potential characteristic activities involving reason, emotion, concept of self, etc. are at least initially plausible because they are capacities that the vast majority of humans have. Second, human characteristic activity should also represent a unique capacity that only humans participate in. To say that a characteristic activity of humans is, say, breathing, doesn’t pick out a unique capacity that humans have
as other animals breathe too. Finally, to keep consistency with the ancient concept, a proposed characteristic activity ought to be somehow goal-directed; in other words, there needs to be something teleological about a plausible characteristic activity. Accidentally slipping and falling, aside from the fact that this happens to other animals as well, is not goal-oriented, as it is something that happens due to carelessness or misperception, among other things. Articulating a characteristic activity using these guidelines will ensure that it is a plausible one.

Fortunately for the virtue epistemologist, there is in fact a plausible human characteristic activity that the intellectual virtues make excellent. I advance the claim that one human characteristic activity is that of utilizing and seeking epistemic goods. This shouldn’t be a controversial claim in the slightest. For one thing, this is just a generalization from particular instances. Because of the way humans are constituted, because of all our powers, abilities, instincts, and anything else that composes us, we find that as a matter of living a human life, we utilize and seek the epistemic goods, such as knowledge, justification, evidence, etc. This doesn’t mean that we necessarily use and aim for these goods consciously (such as mentally saying I will seek out the good of knowledge.) Of course, I readily admit that there are a few individuals who do not utilize and seek the epistemic goods, but that’s not a problem on my account because I have understood characteristic activity as a generalization that may have exceptions. Saying that a human characteristic activity is using and seeking epistemic goods doesn’t mean that the humans who don’t participate in this activity are not human; they can still be regarded as human so long as they perform other characteristic activities that are uniquely human, perhaps their ability to communicate using written language or
participate in social roles (or whatever else that’s plausible). Finally, I would like to point out the teleological feature of this characteristic activity—those who use and seek the epistemic goods do it with goals in mind. Sometimes the goals are the epistemic goods themselves; in other cases, the epistemic goods are means to some other ends. Nevertheless, the epistemic goods are integral to the very act of goal-seeking itself, and as such, are integral to living a human life. Thus, I have articulated a modified understanding of characteristic activity that is consistent with Aristotle’s own in that it is a defining, unique, and teleological activity of human beings.

Though I will have more to say in the upcoming chapter about the intellectual virtues, for now we can say that they are character traits that enable human beings to utilize and seek the epistemic goods well. The intellectual virtues partially constitute a state of flourishing because they enable humans to perform that generically human activity well. When one performs his characteristic activity well through virtue, one at least partially realizes an intrinsically valuable state of being. As virtue is a constituent of that state, it too is intrinsically valuable; the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable because they partially constitute a state of flourishing.

At this point, there is an important and necessary qualification to make to the above argument. In fact, the need to make this qualification stems from a common objection made against virtue theory, which is this: why think that performing a characteristic activity well is intrinsically good? That is, I have proposed an understanding of characteristic activity and have mentioned other plausible candidates alongside it. But there are other potential options that I did not initially mention. For example, humans are the only species that appear to participate in the act of cruelty, in the
sense of inflicting pain for the sake of pain. The critic may ask: are there virtues for performing the characteristic activity of cruelty well? Does one flourish, at least partially, if one performs his characteristic activity of cruelty well? This is an important and challenging objection, one that Aristotle and contemporary virtue theorists have been criticized about. What are we to make of this objection?

The important qualification that the virtue theorist must make is that it is only in performing one’s *good* characteristic activities that one at least partially achieves a state of flourishing. There are no virtues for performing bad characteristic activities well because the virtues are good excellences. At this point, the skeptic might object further—the idea of characteristic activity is supposed to be a descriptive, objective statement about what humans are. The problem, it is alleged, is that the virtue theorist is at pains to explain what makes the virtues good, and the proffered explanation is that it enables agents to perform their characteristic activity well. But if we first need to figure out what characteristic activities are good, then there is no independent way of establishing what makes the virtues good, as they are good because the characteristic activities they make excellent are already understood to be good.146

But I contend that there is nothing problematic in supposing that the virtue theorist works with an idea of a good characteristic activity. In fact, the idea of characteristic activity *must* have some normative dimension to it. For if it were purely a descriptive statement, no human behaviors should be implied from it. In particular, if the generalization that human beings use and seek the epistemic goods is purely just a description with no normative dimension whatsoever, no human action ought to take

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146 Hurka makes this objection against virtue theorists. See “The Three Faces of Flourishing,” footnote 12.
place in light of it. What we ultimately need is some type of characteristic activity that has normative content in it. And the way one supplies that type of content is to choose characteristic activities that are worth performing. That is why an activity such as cruelty, which appears to be uniquely human when compared to the diversity of life, is ultimately rejected as a characteristic activity that ought to be improved and that is why there are no virtues for it. From what can best be determined about Aristotle, he too thought of characteristic activity as a normative one.\footnote{Jennifer Whiting, “Aristotle’s Function Argument: A Defense,” \textit{Ancient Philosophy} 8, no. 1 (1988): 33–48.} To borrow a phrase from some other virtue theorists, the idea of characteristic activity is not merely a description but is “normative all the way down.”\footnote{Both Hursthouse and Whiting use this phrase when commenting on the idea of characteristic activity.}

There are also ways of assuaging worries that the only way to explain the goodness of virtue is through good characteristic activities. The intellectual virtues are in one sense thought to be pretheoretical data to be respected. That is, we think of these character traits as already good for many reasons. Sometimes we prize knowledge for its own sake, and cultivating the intellectual virtues may help us acquire more knowledge. Sometimes the epistemic goods are instrumentally good for achieving other goals we may have, and in that case as well, the intellectual virtues are thought to be good. Finally, we tend to admire individuals who have cultivated the intellectual virtues as character traits, which suggests that there is something good about them. Thus, we don’t have to exclusively depend on the idea of characteristic activity to tell us what the virtues in fact are. Of course, they do give us a principled way of delineating and adding to or removing from a list of the virtues, but aside from that, there are multiple other reasons.
for thinking that the intellectual virtues are good, and those reasons don’t derive solely from the idea of characteristic activity.

There is also already considerable intuitive weight behind the idea that one ought to cultivate one’s characteristic activity of using and seeking the epistemic goods, that this activity is worth performing. Education and learning in general presuppose cultivating this characteristic activity well, and if one values education and learning, it would be difficult to say how those can be pursued well if one ignores one's characteristic activity of using and seeking the epistemic goods. Whatever one’s ultimate goals are, the fact is that this characteristic activity underlies it. From ivory tower pursuits to mundane tasks, using and seeking the epistemic goods are a part of human life. When one considers how fundamental my proposed characteristic activity is to any sort of human achievement, any sort of human goal, one sees that there is considerable support in thinking of this characteristic activity as one worth cultivating.

This may still not satisfy the critic. I imagine someone may protest that one could perform this characteristic activity for bad ends. For example, a morally bankrupt scientist may want to use and seek the epistemic goods for the sake of annihilating the human race. Why think that it would be good for him to cultivate my formulated characteristic activity? Perhaps this critic may be content if I toned down my basic assertion, to say instead that some humans should perform their characteristic activity of using and seeking the epistemic goods well. Other questionable individuals, perhaps those who are particularly evil, or uneducated, or both, should not attempt to perform this activity well.

However, the way I tend to think of this type of situation is that the evil scientist
is still moving closer to an ideal state of being in that he is beginning to possess virtues that are good to have qua human being. I'd also like to think (though it would require a lengthy defense that I do not provide) that the more overall epistemic goods one actually possesses, the more moral one will tend to become. That is, I think of moral truths as a subset of truth in general, and truth is an epistemic good. So on the reasonable assumption that there are in fact moral truths, performing one's characteristic activity well would lead one also to attain a great deal of moral truths in the long run. Of course, in the interim, the evil scientist may wreak havoc; he may not learn enough moral truths in time to tame his potential destructiveness, but ultimately, given enough time and of actually succeeding in performing his characteristic activity well, he may tend toward being a moral person as well.\footnote{Of course, this doesn't mean that if an evil scientist were in the middle of some rampage while also (slowly) becoming a good person it doesn't follow that others should sit idly by and do nothing while this individual improves his character. One would have to weigh all the pros and cons of a specific scenario to see what action would in fact be advisable. All my example is meant to show here is that though other evils may unleashed if a bad person were to perform the characteristic activity of utilizing and seeking the epistemic goods well, there is still good to be found in the fact that he performs a good characteristic activity well.}

Another issue that some may have concerns the objectivity of the state of flourishing. In section 1 of this chapter, I stated that flourishing is supposed to be considerably more of an objective state than happiness. But if the notion of characteristic activity is a normative one that is selected in light of it being worthy to perform, then in what sense can it be objective, if there is a value judgment inserted into it? In answering this question, it is important to keep in mind that flourishing is more of an objective state than happiness is, not one that is completely objective in the sense of being totally independent of human judgment or opinion. It is objectively true that for all human beings who engage in using and seeking the epistemic goods that there are
virtues that can improve this characteristic activity. Those who have these virtues realize a flourishing state better than those who lack these virtues, which is an objective fact. However, this doesn't preclude agents from having some normative opinion about their activities. That is, if an intellectually virtuous agent were queried about why she utilizes and seeks the epistemic goods, she would be able to explain that she does so because it is a good activity for humans to participate in and that it is also good to do this activity well. Thus, just like the concept of flourishing, which has both objective and subjective aspects, so too does the idea of characteristic activity. There is an objective feature about characteristic activity (in the manner described above) that still retains its objectiveness even when agents have a normative opinion about that characteristic activity.\(^{150}\)

One last issue that I wish to attend to is that of exceptional cases. It might be asked: what are we to make of those humans who can't perform the characteristic activity of using and seeking the epistemic goods well? Can they flourish? No, in one sense, and yes, in another. Those minority of humans who, for whatever reason, can't perform this particular characteristic activity well are unfortunately precluded from flourishing in the same manner as those who can. The idea of characteristic activity that I have developed is ultimately tied to actual human beings; if there are no humans capable of utilizing and seeking the epistemic goods because of the way they are constituted, then this characteristic activity simply doesn't exist. Likewise, if an individual lacks this

\(^{150}\)Furthermore, someone who makes this sort of criticism probably is presupposing a hard distinction between facts and values. That is, this person may think that normative value judgments are subjective (opinions) whereas facts (truths) are objective. Though I don't have the space here to explain why this fact-value dichotomy is false, I believe that many philosophers, and in some cases virtue theorists, have successfully argued against the fact-value dichotomy. Thus, there is legitimate talk of objective facts and truths that are also normative ones. See Philippa Foot for a good linguistic analysis of the fact-value dichotomy as it relates to the virtues, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
characteristic activity, he can’t cultivate it well and he can’t flourish in accordance with its virtues. However, I would like to add that it still may be possible for an agent to flourish in other manners, as there are other potential characteristic activities that may be worth developing. What those exactly are I leave open for discussion, but there is more to a human life than just the epistemic goods. There is always the possibility that one can flourish along more dimensions than just an epistemic one.

Formulating an epistemic characteristic activity is important, but it’s not the whole story. My ultimate goal is to explain how the intellectual virtues relate to a flourishing life, to explain how the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable because of how they constitute a flourishing life. So far, my whole case has not been made. But it was necessary to stop here to explain what role the idea of characteristic activity plays because it’s a crucial and necessary link between intellectual virtue and flourishing. While the next section examines some virtue epistemological reactions to the idea of flourishing (and related concepts), the most important part of the dissertation is chapter 4, as that is where I substantively characterize what an intellectual virtue is and how it enables a human being to perform her characteristic activity well, enabling her at least to flourish partially. It is only at that point that I will consider my main thesis as completely defended. But for now, I would like to briefly touch on the few virtue epistemologists who have mentioned anything significant about the relationship between intellectual virtue and flourishing.

3. Virtue Epistemology and Flourishing

In virtue epistemology, one can discern and divide two different groups from
each other on the basis of their view about the relationship between virtue and flourishing. The first group is generally averse to linking virtue to flourishing via characteristic activity because they (I suspect) are cognizant of some or all of the common objections originally directed toward Aristotle. A second group accepts the idea that the virtues constitute a flourishing life. However, their support of this idea is extremely thin; there has never been a substantial elaboration of the link between virtue and flourishing in contemporary virtue epistemology via characteristic activity or any other means. They essentially tend to understand the relationship between virtue and flourishing on an intuitive level. I devote the majority of my attention in this section to the first group because there is simply more to critique, whereas, aside from one view, I simply and briefly report on what the second group of virtue epistemologists says.

Among the first group, Linda Zagzebski is a good virtue epistemologist to start with as she was the first to consider any sort of conceptual relationship between intellectual virtue and flourishing in contemporary virtue epistemology. Recall that Zagzebski's view of intellectual virtue is a mixed one in that she thinks that there are two components of virtue, both motivational and success aspects. She believes that it is the motivational component of virtue that imbues the entire character trait with intrinsic value, and the reason she thinks this is that the motivation to have true beliefs and avoid false beliefs is good in itself. I argued against this idea (section 4, chapter 2) on the grounds that this motivation in itself can't plausibly be thought of as always, and without further qualification, intrinsically good. One of the reasons that Zagzebski is attracted to a motivational view though was that she finds the idea of flourishing suspect:

Two forms of pure virtue theory can be distinguished according to the
different ways they relate the concept of a virtue and the concept of the good. If the concept of a good life (eudaimonia) or of good in the impersonal sense is the bottom-level moral concept, and the concept of a virtue is defined in terms of the concept of the good, the theory is . . . what I will called good based. Aristotle's ethics is most naturally interpreted as a theory of this kind. An interesting alternative is a new form of virtue ethics . . . This type of theory makes the virtue, motivation, or other internal states of the agent ethically fundamental. A trait or motivation is good or bad in itself, not because its goodness or badness is derived from some prior concept of the good. 151

I could have quoted Zagzebski in chapter 2 to explain why she chooses to understand the value of virtue via motivational means, but I believe that a discussion of her remark is significantly more meaningful now that the concept of flourishing has been sufficiently characterized. What Zagzebski is attempting to distinguish is two different strategies for explaining the value of the virtues. The first option explains the value of virtue by relating it to flourishing (eudaimonia)—the virtues are good because they contribute to a good life; the second option is the one she ultimately ends up endorsing, which is the idea that the virtues are good because of some feature about virtue itself; they are good independently of their contribution (or lack of) to a good life.

Initially, one should notice Zagzebski's conception of flourishing, which she calls “good in the impersonal sense,” and attributes to Aristotle. This is clearly mistaken. From what was said earlier, flourishing is the highest personal good; the flourishing person is the one who has his own set of virtues, which are his excellent personality traits. It is supposed to be a complete and final state such that the agent who flourishes personally desires nothing else. So for Zagzebski to call flourishing an impersonal good is just an odd and incorrect understanding of Aristotle. I suspect though that the reason she

151 Zagzebski, Virtues of the Mind, 80. The “new form of virtue ethics” that Zagzebski refers to is Michael Slote’s “agent-based” conception of virtue ethics (see section 4, chapter 2), which makes motivations the fundamental units of goodness in agents.
considers flourishing an impersonal good stems from the fact that she thinks of flourishing as a completely objective state of an agent; however, as I have indicated, there are both objective and subjective aspects of flourishing. There would be something terribly self-contradictory about Aristotle's account of flourishing, meant to explain the highest intrinsic good for humans, if he thought that the human good were completely independent of human opinion on the matter. Thus, one potential reason that Zagzebski hesitates to connect intellectual virtue to flourishing is that the latter is an impersonal good that doesn't necessarily lend itself well to someone's personal good in the form of cultivating intellectual virtue. But as I have shown above, flourishing is the highest personal good, and since the intellectual virtues are character traits that partially constitute that good, they are part of the personal good; they are good elements of our character, which is anything but impersonal.

Another idea that Zagzebski thinks is implied by the concept of flourishing is that it is only a self-regarding good. In saying this, she is echoing concerns of ethicists who have accused virtue ethics of being committed to the view that being a moral person ultimately means being concerned about oneself. There is some truth to this. According to the ancient view, one reason for acquiring the virtues is that they benefit their possessor. Even the moral virtues, such as justice, generosity, etc. were thought of as virtuous because they benefit the agent herself. However, according to a contemporary ethical objection, this isn't moral at all. Rather, this is just ethical egoism, or the idea that agents ought to be concerned only about themselves. On this objection, what plausibly counts as a moral theory is one that is committed to the idea of

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152 Ibid., 200.
altruistically taking care of others or valuing others for their own sakes or at least being concerned with the good of others. It goes strongly against the intuition of these critics that a virtuous life is one that is ultimately justified on the grounds that it is good for the agent herself, not others. Zagzebski thinks that since intellectual virtue is more concerned with one's own good, such as obtaining knowledge for oneself, it could make sense to link intellectual virtue with flourishing. However, she hesitates to make this connection because she doesn't want the intellectual virtues construed as devices to selfishly advance one's own knowledge. Thus, a second concern that Zagzebski has with the concept of flourishing in virtue epistemology has to do with the fact that possessing the intellectual virtues would ultimately be justified in an egoistic manner, which is not a view of virtue that she is particularly interested in advancing.

Zagzebski's conception of flourishing in an egoistic manner has influenced other virtue epistemologists. For example, Jason Baehr, who otherwise heavily criticizes many of Zagzebski's fundamental commitments in virtue epistemology, adopts the idea that the goodness of intellectual virtue should not be understood in terms of flourishing. What makes intellectual virtue good to him is the fact that it involves loving epistemic goods for themselves, not for the sake of benefiting oneself. This is especially evident when he compares his theory to Robert Adams, whose ideas inspired him greatly to develop his own virtue epistemology. Adams' own virtue theory is explicitly non-eudaimonistic; though he thinks that the virtues usually do benefit their possessor, he doesn't think this is necessarily true, and he also argues that even if it were so, this wouldn't explain the goodness of virtue. Rather, Adams believes that the goodness of

virtue follows from an agent loving (or having similar psychological states) what is good and hating (or having similar psychological states) what is bad. So, riding on recent trends in virtue ethics and virtue epistemology, specifically the works of Adams and Zagzebski, Baehr too avoids linking the intellectual virtues to flourishing because he doesn't want the intellectual virtues to be valued on egoistic grounds. Though many virtue theorists seem to take it for granted now, there is clearly room to ask a critical question: does flourishing in fact entail ethical egoism?

This question is best answered by first thinking of the relationship between the moral virtues and flourishing. The moral virtues, as classically conceived, do involve taking others into account when required. For example, the moral virtue of generosity depends on the fact that an agent genuinely cares about the good of others for their own sakes. That is to say, the person who wants to develop generosity doesn't think to herself: how can I better advantage myself? Rather, the individual who has the virtue of generosity first shows true and genuine concern for others, and as a result of that, thereby benefits from having that virtue. If one's sole concern were only ultimately with oneself, and not others, then one can't possess the virtue of generosity, as well as other typical moral virtues, like justice and honesty. Another way of looking at this is to recognize that the good of others is also a part of one's own good; that is, it's good for oneself that one truly cares about the good of others. Although Zagzebski is repeating the

155 If this sounds familiar, it is; both Adams and Baehr are influenced by Hurka's virtue consequentialism.
156 How this can be true is a topic best explored in explicit detail elsewhere. At the very least though, it is possible to think about this claim in the following (simplified) manner. It benefits oneself to recognize what is true. It is true that other human beings have intrinsic personal worth. Thus, it benefits oneself to recognize that other human beings have intrinsic personal worth. (And then to go on further to act on that recognition by helping others, protecting them, etc.) Too often in the criticism of virtue theory it is assumed that self-benefit is equivalent to self-preservation. Obviously if this is true then ethical egoism could easily be implied. But to my knowledge this claim has never
concerns of ethicists in her remarks here, there is no need for her to suppose that flourishing entails egoism. Thus, there is no need to be worried that possessing intellectual virtue will ultimately be justified on egoistic grounds. Though I have stated above that flourishing does provide a reason for acquiring intellectual virtue in that it does genuinely benefit an agent, it doesn't follow that this reason is necessarily egoistic. It may be the case that what is epistemically good for others is also good for oneself. If this is true then it doesn't necessarily follow that flourishing automatically entails egoism.

Some virtue epistemologists also take issue with the notion of characteristic activity, such as Baehr. He distinguishes his virtue epistemology from contemporary Aristotelian-inspired accounts of the virtues, such as Rosalind Hursthouse’s. His objection to her account and those similar to it (such as Foot’s, and potentially Aristotle’s) is that they face a dilemma that seemingly can’t be surmounted. As he sees it, one goal of the Aristotelian virtue theorist is to explain the nature of virtue by appealing to how humans characteristically act; that is, the virtue theorist aims to produce an objective account of virtue by deriving it from human nature. However, as I have pointed out in the previous section, no virtue theorist thinks that this is a purely descriptive process, as the virtue theorist selectively chooses which characteristic activities are worth performing, which is to say that she already has some normative notion in mind in thinking of the relationship between characteristic activity and virtue. The problem though is that once normative standards have been introduced, once the thought of purely describing characteristic activity is abandoned, the virtue theorist has surrendered the hope of objectively characterizing the virtues. What Baehr has a

been advanced by any virtue theorist. Sometimes what virtue demands is sacrificing one’s life for the sake of the good, which is hardly thought of as beneficial to oneself.
problem with is an issue that is virtually the same as the one mentioned in the previous section: what the virtue theorist is supposed to give is an explanation of virtue that follows from an objective and neutral description of human characteristic activity, but she can’t provide that since she is already presupposing some normative standards that prevent her from providing an objective and neutral description of characteristic activity.\textsuperscript{157}

But as I have argued previously, the virtue theorist should not strive for a purely descriptive account of characteristic activity because he ultimately wants to advocate some normative position. Virtue theorists in some form or another want to recommend that people cultivate the virtues, but the only way this is possible is if they rely on normative judgments and standards from the very beginning in the articulation of their virtue theory, which is to say that the foundations of their virtue theory are “normative all the way down.” Additionally, I have also shown (section 2) that there are independent ways of figuring out what characteristic activities and virtues are good without presupposing some connection between the two. Baehr’s apparent dilemma for virtue theorists adamant on linking the idea of virtue to flourishing via characteristic activity is thus not a problem to be reckoned with.

Wayne Riggs is the last contemporary virtue epistemologist to offer substantive comments about the relationship between virtue and flourishing. Riggs, recall, is a virtue epistemologist who agrees with the idea that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable because they are motivations to acquire true beliefs and avoid false ones. Additionally, Riggs is interested in potentially explaining what makes the intellectual...

\textsuperscript{157} Baehr, \textit{The Inquiring Mind}, chap. 7.
virtues valuable in a deeper way than most other virtue epistemologists. He finds insight in Aristotle's conception of flourishing and the relationship of the moral virtues to it. From this relationship, he proposes a similar model for intellectual virtue. Consider first his understanding of moral virtue and flourishing:

1. *Endeaimonia* is the highest good for humans.

2. Whatever contributes to a life of *endeaimonia* is good by virtue of [because of] that fact.

3. The members of the standard list of virtues (courage, justice, benevolence, etc.) contribute to a life of *endeaimonia*.

4. So, the virtues are good because they contribute to a life of *endeaimonia*.158

This is a fairly standard reading of Aristotle. From this model, he develops a parallel one for virtue epistemology and intellectual virtue:

1. *Wisdom* is the highest epistemic good for humans.

2. Whatever contributes to a life of *wisdom* is good by virtue of [because of] that fact.

3. The members of the standard list of intellectual virtues (intellectual integrity, intellectual creativity, epistemic responsibility, open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, self-reflection, intellectual honesty, etc.) contribute to the achievement of wisdom.

4. So, the intellectual virtues are good because they contribute to a life of *wisdom*.159

Riggs believes that the advantage of this model is that it explains what makes the intellectual virtues good, namely, that they contribute to a life of wisdom. Though I

158 Wayne Riggs, “Understanding ‘Virtue’ and the Virtue of Understanding,” in *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, ed. Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski (Malden, MA: Oxford University Press, 2007), 205, 214. The phrase *in virtue of* as it occurs in premise 2 of this quotation and the following should be read as *because of* (so as not to potentially confuse virtue, understood as a character trait, with an idiomatic expression).

159 Ibid., 215.
argued against Riggs' view that the intellectual virtues, understood as motivations to have true beliefs and avoid false ones, are intrinsically valuable, Riggs potentially has an avenue of response available to no other virtue epistemologist—he can use (and thinks he is using) Aristotle's general strategy of explaining the value of the virtues. Unfortunately for Riggs, the devil is in the details and he misses an opportunity to explain the value of the intellectual virtues using an Aristotelian strategy.

The first problem Riggs faces is that his explanation of what wisdom is is extremely thin. In the argument above, wisdom functions as a placeholder for the highest epistemic good, whatever that may be. At minimum, he thinks that wisdom involves having a high ratio of true beliefs to false beliefs and an understanding of those beliefs, with understanding being akin to coherence. If wisdom is supposed to make the intellectual virtues good by the fact that they belong to wisdom, then Riggs needs to explain how the intellectual virtues partially contribute to such a state. From all appearances, it appears that since he thinks of the intellectual virtues as motivations to have true beliefs and avoid false beliefs, the contribution of the intellectual virtues to wisdom is that they causally produce true beliefs and avoid false ones. However, as I argued previously (section 1 of this chapter), thinking of the intellectual virtues in causal terms is what leads to many of the previously encountered problems that I listed at the end of chapter 2. (Such as the obsoletion objection: why bother cultivating the intellectual virtues if a more efficient means to truth were discovered?) Perhaps Riggs doesn't think of the intellectual virtues in causal terms since he doesn't fully characterize wisdom and the relationship between it and the intellectual virtues—but, in addition to my argument

160 Ibid., 215–216.
above, his choice of words is telling; he states that the intellectual virtues “contribute” to a state of wisdom, not that they contribute it. Despite Riggs' insistence that he wants to offer an argument in parallel with Aristotle's own regarding flourishing and the moral virtues, he fails to accomplish this task because on an Aristotelian virtue theory, the virtues constitute, at least partially, the highest human good of flourishing. Thus, in addition to the problems that I highlighted about Riggs' theory in chapter 2, his view here does not succeed in explaining the intrinsic value of intellectual virtue.

Riggs also faces a second problem in wanting to parallel Aristotle's virtue theory. Recall that flourishing (eudaimonia) for Aristotle is the highest intrinsic good; someone who flourishes lacks nothing. One of Aristotle's reasons for wanting to conceive of flourishing in this way is that he seeks to explain human behavior. According to him, all human behavior is directed toward just one ultimate end. If it weren't, then we couldn't make sense of human behavior. This is an intuitive thought; if an individual were to have two or more different ultimate goals (not just any goals), he would have a practical paralysis of sorts because he would always be torn between them. Although Riggs wants his view to parallel Aristotle's, he is unable to make it so because he thinks of the ends of flourishing and wisdom as two separate ends. Aristotle would not have agreed with this idea because he thinks that ultimately there is only one end for which a person acts. Flourishing is supposed to be the ultimate goal for which all agents act; they don't act for the sake of wisdom and flourishing as though they are two different goals. Moral and intellectual virtue are both for the sake of one ultimate end. Riggs' proposal would lead

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161 It could be the case that Riggs considers constituting to be synonymous with contributing. However, piecing together his overall argument as I have done suggests otherwise. At the very least, clarification is in order for Riggs' argument.
to what Aristotle wanted to avoid—a sort of practical schizophrenia based on the fact that individuals would always be torn in two separate directions.\textsuperscript{162} So though Riggs is on the right track in explaining the value of the intellectual virtues, he needs to make some significant revisions to his view.

That brings us to the end of the review of the virtue epistemologists who have offered in-depth comments about the relationship between virtue and flourishing. The following brief characterization of the following virtue epistemologists—those who are generally in support of the idea that virtue constitutes some sort of flourishing life, but only really scratch the surface of the idea—are presented for the sake of reviewing all the proposed accounts in contemporary virtue epistemology. Ernest Sosa thinks that an agent acquiring true beliefs as a result of her ability experiences something like flourishing.\textsuperscript{163} John Greco, influenced by Sosa, claims that virtue, which he understands generally as success from ability, is constitutive of human flourishing.\textsuperscript{164} This is almost tautologous though as another alternate translation of \textit{eudaimonia} is success, and the only thing that Greco adds is that flourishing is a success from ability. Though Jonathan Kvanvig doesn't comment explicitly on flourishing, he thinks that the intellectual virtues are important for the sake of agents participating in community efforts to acquire knowledge, which could plausibly be understood as part of a flourishing life.\textsuperscript{165}

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\textsuperscript{162} Perhaps individuals \textit{do} have internally conflicted psychologies regarding their ultimate aim. For example, maybe they actually have multiple ultimate aims, and humans can do nothing but experience frustration as they attempt to fulfill the unfulfillable. Bernard Williams suggests this possibility in Williams, “Replies.” If this is true, then Aristotle is wrong because he mistakenly thinks that humans have one ultimate goal. However, what I am merely attempting to show here is that Riggs’ account does \textit{not} parallel Aristotle’s in the way he supposes because Aristotle wouldn’t have been on board with the idea that there are two or more ultimate ends that individuals have.
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\textsuperscript{163} Sosa, “The Place of Truth.”
\textsuperscript{164} Greco, \textit{Achieving Knowledge}, 99.
\textsuperscript{165} Kvanvig, \textit{Intellectual Virtues}, chap. 7.
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Roberts and Jay Wood state that *eudaimonia* is the broadest and deepest human well-being, but don't go beyond that to indicate what that state specifically is.\(^{166}\)

When one examines the broad range of opinions regarding flourishing in virtue epistemology, one generally finds that some philosophers are hostile to the idea whereas others are in mild support of it. The concept of flourishing is very important for all the reasons I have provided earlier, and understanding it and its relation to intellectual virtue will enormously benefit virtue epistemology. But it's clear that if one thinks there is some relationship between virtue and flourishing, one needs to substantively characterize that relationship. I have already made significant progress toward that by articulating an idea of characteristic activity that links virtue to flourishing, but the final task that awaits is a more detailed characterization of virtue itself.

4. Summary and Conclusion of Chapter 3

Chapter 3 was the beginning of my argument that aims to explain what makes the intellectual virtues intrinsically valuable. I initially stated that I sought to adopt Aristotle’s basic argument that understands the virtues as that which enable humans to perform their characteristic activity well. If Aristotle’s general argument is correct, a way opens for explaining the value of the virtues by appealing to the idea that they enable agents to perform their characteristic activity well, allowing them to flourish, at least partially. Though I see my project as a Neo-Aristotelian one, I ultimately did modify some key concepts to make my project more defensible.

In section 1 of this chapter, I presented five reasons why the virtue

epistemologist should explain the value of virtue by reference to flourishing, that is, by proposing a eudaimonistic virtue epistemology. First, since flourishing is an intrinsically valuable state that lacks nothing, and if virtue is considered a constituent of that state, then virtue too is intrinsically valuable. Thus, there is explanatory power in thinking of the virtues as related to flourishing since one is able to explain the value of the former on the basis of the latter. Second, there were various problems that prior virtue epistemologies ran into, especially to the extent they conceived of the intellectual virtues as mere causes of some epistemic good. But I showed how these problems can be avoided by thinking of virtue as a constituent of, not merely a cause of, some good. Third, a eudaimonistic virtue epistemology yields a reason for agents to acquire virtue in that those who possess virtue are benefited by it. Fourth, the intellectual virtues can all be unified on the grounds that they contribute to a life of flourishing. Fifth and finally, a virtue epistemology is better able to preserve its integrity qua virtue theory if it integrates a concept of flourishing within it. Given all these reasons, there is a solid case for wanting to pursue a eudaimonistic virtue epistemology.

Of course, not all philosophers would be excited by such a prospect. In section 2, I explained why there has been so much resistance to the idea of flourishing, with much of it revolving around the idea of characteristic activity. Most philosophical hostility to Aristotle revolve around the following issues: an implausible metaphysics of teleology, the idea of humans having a purpose, a species essence, a view of humans that saw them having a divine element, an implication that humans who could not reason were not in fact human, and overprivileging reason as that which makes humans members of the human species.
Keeping these criticisms in mind, I modified Aristotle’s understanding of characteristic activity. Instead of deriving a notion of human characteristic activity by determining where humans fell on a static hierarchy of life, I argued that we should formulate an idea of characteristic activity as a generalization from particular instances. After that, I maintained that we shouldn’t think of characteristic activity as just referring to a single unique trait that humans have over other lifeforms, and so I opened the door to thinking that humans could have many characteristic activities. These changes enabled my own proposed characteristic activity—that of utilizing and seeking the epistemic goods—to surmount the objections that afflicted Aristotle’s theory. A key idea that I brought out at this point involved stating that humans flourish when they perform their good characteristic activities, as there are no virtues involved in performing bad characteristic activities well. I then defended my view from a number of objections, including that of it: relying on normative judgments when the concept of flourishing was supposedly thought to be purely objective, being guilty of presupposing a characteristic activity to be good, and implying that evil individuals could flourish if they perform their characteristic activity well. I ultimately found that my proposal withstood all these objections and constituted a significant step toward understanding the value of the intellectual virtues.

Finally, I examined the few virtue epistemologists who significantly commented on the relationship between virtue and flourishing. In particular, I responded to the idea that flourishing is an impersonal good by pointing out that this is clearly an erroneous idea (Zagzebski). I then argued against the idea that flourishing implies egoism
(Zagzebski, Baehr). After that, I turned my attention to the idea that a virtue theorist faces an unsolvable dilemma if he wants to use the idea of characteristic activity with integrated normative judgments (Baehr), appealing considerably to my responses given in section 2. I then maintained that a proper understanding of Aristotle necessarily involves seeing him as arguing that flourishing is an ultimate goal that integrates all other goals, including that of cultivating wisdom and the rest of the intellectual virtues (Riggs). Finally, I offered a brief review of the virtue epistemologists who make minor comments on flourishing as it pertains to intellectual virtue or whose previously encountered views perhaps implied what they may have said about flourishing. With common objections regarding flourishing cleared and major worries about my own proposal out of the way, I now turn my attention toward culminating my project by explaining what the nature of intellectual virtue is.
Chapter 4:
A Eudaimonistic Virtue Epistemology

1. The Nature of Intellectual Virtue

There are essentially two more central questions that await a complete answer: what is an intellectual virtue? How is it intrinsically valuable? From what I have said previously, the veil of mystery has already been partially lifted. Since I have advanced the position that a good human characteristic activity is utilizing and seeking the epistemic goods, the intellectual virtues would be things that enable one to perform one’s good characteristic activity well. And since performing one’s good characteristic activity well partially constitutes a life of flourishing, which is an intrinsically valuable state, it follows that intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable since it is a constituent of flourishing. Broadly speaking, this is an Aristotelian strategy for understanding the value of the virtues, as the idea of linking virtue to flourishing via characteristic activity was originally Aristotle’s idea. Though I severely critiqued his division between the moral and intellectual virtues as untenable, there is actually still much insight to be found in how Aristotle thinks of moral virtue, which, ironically, lends itself very well as inspiration for how to conceive of the intellectual virtues! Along this dimension as well, I incorporate Aristotelian insights into my ideas about virtue and flourishing. My ultimate goal for this chapter is to substantively characterize the nature and value of the intellectual virtues. Let us begin this task by reflecting on Aristotle’s insightful comments about moral virtue:

A good man is a man for whom natural goods are good. Let me explain. The things for which men compete and which are regarded as the greatest
goods—honor and wealth, health and strength, and good fortune and power—are indeed naturally good, but they can be harmful to some people because of their characters. Neither a fool nor an unjust or intemperate person would get any benefit from them, any more than a sick person would benefit from a healthy person's diet or a deformed weakling from the equipment of someone in robust health. A person is a noble person because of possessing those goods that are noble for their own sake, and because of doing noble deeds for their own sake. What things, then, are noble? The virtues and the works of virtue.  

Aristotle's comments here are particularly illuminating about the nature of some typical goods. Things such as honor, wealth, health, strength, fortune, and power are usually regarded as good, but if the person who achieves or happens upon them lacks a good character, these items can harm him. This should largely be an intuitive thought. It is quite easy to imagine someone who prizes wealth to the point of losing perspective on other important values in life, or someone who loves honor at the expense of other goods. For many goods that are believed to be valuable and important to human beings, one can imagine a way in which their value is diminished or corrupted. Aristotle is aware of this fact, and he thus seeks to find something that always retains its good value regardless of changing circumstances. And his answer here is very clear—virtue is a good that is always good. He thinks this because virtue is a state of character that improves the performance of the human characteristic activity of reason. Though Aristotle wouldn't have phrased the point in such terms, I propose that we interpret him as distinguishing between two types of goods—first-order and second-order ones. A first-order good is a good that does not always retain its value as a good for any number of reasons, whereas a second-order good always retains its value as good because it enables one to correctly pursue and choose among first-order goods. Second-order

167 Aristotle, EE, 1248b.
goods are always intrinsically valuable whereas first-order ones are not necessarily so.

Though Aristotle's remarks concern moral virtue, his basic idea is readily adaptable into epistemology. When one considers the epistemic goods, things such as truth, evidence, coherence, motivations for truth, importance, relevance, justification, explanatory power, robust paradigms, etc. one recognizes that though these items are typically regarded as goods, there are instances when their value can be diminished or even become negative. A madman might spin a particularly coherent tale completely devoid of truth; a counter of grains of sand might come to know how many grains there are on a few number of beaches while neglecting to discover important truths; a lucky fellow may hit his head on a door and come to know most truths of the universe but fail to have any evidence whatsoever for his beliefs. In all these instances, one sees that typical epistemic goods aren't always good. What is the value of coherence if it is not accompanied by a connection to reality? It could very well insulate one from attempting to acquire true beliefs because one might think that she already has truth because her beliefs are consistent. What is the value of truth if the truths are unimportant? While it could be countered that all truth has some value, it's important to recognize that a human life is limited and that one must set important priorities in deciding which truths to pursue. No matter which of these epistemic goods is examined, one finds that its goodness can become corrupted in some way if that good is not pursued with discretion. But what if intellectual virtue could be thought of as a good that always remains good? What if the agent who cultivates and expresses intellectual virtue is able to pursue and obtain the epistemic goods in a manner that is always good? At the very least, it would become clearly evident why intellectual virtue is of utmost value and ought to be
inculcated in human beings. If this is indeed true of intellectual virtue, it would also help explain what makes it intrinsically valuable and essential to a human life well-lived.

Surprisingly, there is nothing like this idea found in all the proposed accounts of intellectual virtue in contemporary virtue epistemology. Instead, what we have usually encountered is that intellectual virtue revolves around just one epistemic good—truth. But as I have argued in chapter 2, intellectual virtue is not necessarily intrinsically valuable if it merely involves acquiring truths because that ignores which truths one ought to acquire and how those truths are to be acquired in the first place. Among the small minority of virtue epistemologists who don’t propose a truth-centered view of the intellectual virtues, one still doesn’t find much akin to the idea mentioned above. The ancient virtue theorists frequently viewed virtue as the foremost among all human goods. Contemporary virtue epistemologists, on the other hand, don’t think of intellectual virtue as the highest among epistemic goods since they usually conceive of intellectual virtue in very narrow terms, which effectively renders it just one good among other goods; they don’t explore the possibility that intellectual virtue can be a good that is higher than all other epistemic goods, and how it can render typical goods into ones that are always good. This is rather unfortunate, as the virtue epistemologist thinks of virtue epistemology as an important discipline, with intellectual virtue being the heart of it. But with such a weak heart, why think that intellectual virtue could be the central theoretical force of virtue epistemology?

In light of this, what I wish to do, then, is to develop an account of intellectual virtue that renders it an epistemic good above and beyond other epistemic goods, strengthening it significantly to make it the powerful, central feature of virtue
epistemology that it ought to be. In articulating and defending such a proposal, I draw upon Aristotle’s important insight that virtue is a good that is quite different than other goods, that there is something about it that renders it always good. Explaining why this would be the case with intellectual virtue is a more complex matter, but initially we can begin with a simple yet intuitive characterization of intellectual virtue that will be further clarified through the proceeding exposition. Here is the essential idea: *an intellectual virtue is a coordinator of epistemic goods.*

I chose the term *coordination* with an eye toward utilizing its straightforward, dictionary definition, which is that of imposing order and organization on something, in this case the epistemic goods. While I will ultimately insist that *coordination* is a technical term because I seek to go significantly beyond common usage, it should be remembered that the term was chosen with the above denotation in mind. In saying that an intellectual virtue is a coordinator of epistemic goods, what I mean to convey is that it is a character trait that enables an agent to pursue and select among epistemic goods in such a manner that the epistemic goods retain their status as good, preventing their value from being corrupted. This means that it enables an agent, for example, to prioritize certain truths above others, to pause in the process of gathering truths to reflect on internal consistency and coherence, to make assumptions necessary for a proper investigation, to modify a paradigm, and so on. Given particular situations and contexts, an intellectual virtue enables an agent to make correct epistemic decisions such that one ultimately moves closer to a complete and comprehensive understanding of reality.

The intellectual virtues enable an agent to coordinate the epistemic goods in such a way that she is able to determine whether the epistemic goods she seeks should be
accorded intrinsic or instrumental value. An individual with complete possession of intellectual virtue does not blindly commit herself to pursuing only truth, only justification, only one epistemic good, only some limited set of epistemic goods; instead, the intellectually virtuous agent considers the entire context and situation, including herself, so that she is able to determine why it is that a particular epistemic good has intrinsic value and why she should pursue it now, later, or never, and the same goes for those epistemic goods with instrumental value as well. The intellectually virtuous agent arranges and prioritizes the pursuit of the epistemic goods in a logical manner that is appropriate to the particularity of a situation and acts accordingly on that organization.

A useful way of distinguishing intellectual virtue from the other epistemic goods is to conceive of the former as a second-order good and the latter as first-order ones in a manner similar to the way that Aristotle thought of the relationship between moral virtue and other typical goods. On this way of thinking about things, a first-order epistemic good, which include goods such as truth, evidence, reasonable assumptions, etc. is one that does not always retain its positive value. These items belong to a list of first-order epistemic goods primarily because varying situations and contexts sometimes alter and potentially negate their value. These are opposed to second-order goods—the intellectual virtues—which always retain their good value on account of the fact that they enable agents to pursue and select first-order epistemic goods in correct and appropriate ways. This is to say that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically good whereas first-order epistemic goods are not necessarily so. It is the intellectual virtues’ status as a second-order epistemic good that chiefly explains why they are so important to virtue epistemology and epistemology in general; without a discriminatory capacity to judge
which epistemic goods to value, pursue, and obtain, individuals are blind in their participation in the epistemic enterprise.

The process of coordination is one that involves an agent's *psychological state*. This state *persists*, in that it doesn’t spontaneously form or decay within a short time. Instead, it slowly develops and remains steady in the one who possesses it. This state is complex, and comprises a panoply of simpler psychological states, including (but not limited to) beliefs, desires, intentions, perceptions, memories, emotions, attitudes, viewpoints, motivations, imaginings, etc. And it can hardly be emphasized more that an intellectual virtue is not *just* a belief state, as there is more to being virtuous than merely *believing* something about an epistemic good. In contrast to previous virtue epistemologies, my conception of intellectual virtue involves potentially many psychological states and is not belief-based. Even though an intellectually virtuous state is composed of simpler psychological states, it is not a haphazard, random mix of psychological elements thrown together. Rather, the many psychological states that constitute intellectual virtue are unified in such a way as to enable agents to effectively pursue and obtain the epistemic goods in an optimal manner. Accordingly, the intellectual virtues enhance an agent’s rational and cognitive abilities in terms of an agent appropriately pursuing and relating to the epistemic goods. However, the effects of an intellectual virtue are not merely confined to an agent’s rational psychology. The intellectually virtuous individual feels emotions that are pertinent to the pursuit of epistemic goods, and these emotions are often particular to specific intellectual virtues themselves, such as those characterizing inquisitiveness or courage.

The psychological states underlying an intellectual virtue ultimately produce
behaviors in agents that are manifestations of the agents' commitments to realizing their epistemic goals, whatever they happen to be. This could mean a general commitment to pursuing epistemic goods broadly and appropriately, or it could mean a specific commitment in the form of working in a particular field of endeavor, reading a specific book, or interviewing a unique individual, among other things. The process of coordination is far from automatic, though it may be unconscious in some respects. That is to say that agents make conscious decisions and engage in a volitional process about what general epistemic course of action to take, as well as in many specific instances as well. Through repeated training and inculcation in virtue, many aspects of the process of coordination may in fact become unconscious though. For example, a virtuous individual would not necessarily wake up every morning and declare to himself: *I will seek the epistemic goods of X, Y, and Z today*; he may very well wake up and just go about his routine. However, there must have been some point in the past when an agent decided to pursue some rational plan of epistemic action.

Particular intellectual virtues, including character traits such as inquisitiveness, autonomy, courage, etc. are generally united on the grounds that they enable an agent to pursue and select epistemic goods in a correct and appropriate manner but are diversified on the basis that each intellectual virtue is composed of unique and specific psychological states related to it. For example, when one considers the intellectual virtue of courage, one finds many features characteristic of it. The intellectually courageous agent feels emotions that inspire him to pursue epistemic goods in a manner that he deems suitable, and when coupled with other cognitive psychological states, produce behaviors that are characteristic of courage, such as perhaps giving him strength to
defend an unpopular view or to make justified assumptions currently dismissed in the field. Though the agent need not be aware of all his psychological states and behaviors that manifest courage, at some point in the past he must have made a decision to cultivate and exemplify courage.

At this point I would like to address some potential issues and objections. In arguing that an intellectual virtue is a coordinator of epistemic goods, I do not mean to insist that I have offered a necessary and sufficient conditions analysis of intellectual virtue. In fact, I think this is impossible to provide for the intellectual virtues for reasons fully discussed in chapter 2. The basic idea is that philosophers must necessarily be selective when stating such conditions because it is impossible to provide every condition that must hold true for a concept to be instantiated, such as knowledge, the favorite concept of many epistemologists. Recall that this point is made by Robert Roberts and Jay Wood, who state that in all the proposed definitions of knowledge, not one epistemologist has added to his list of conditions that oxygen must be present.\textsuperscript{168} But of course there must be oxygen in order for a person to have knowledge, otherwise there would be no living individual there to have knowledge in the first place. We could very well add to this claim and insist that in order for there to be knowledge there must be an agent with a mind, that this mind itself must have the ability to understand abstract ideas, and so on with no apparent end in sight. When it comes to thinking of the intellectual virtues, then, one should recognize that providing necessary and sufficient conditions for them is also an invitation to generate a tedious and cumbersome list of conditions that could potentially fill pages without accomplishing the task of providing all such

conditions in the end. Instead of adopting this rather futile approach, I think it better that we take Roberts and Woods’ suggestion that in proposing a definition of intellectual virtue, we ought to selectively highlight what we view as centrally important about it, which to a large extent is determined by the context of discourse.

Therefore, when I say that the intellectual virtues are character traits that are coordinators of the epistemic goods, what I am offering is a central, defining feature of an intellectual virtue. Depending on the context in which intellectual virtue is being studied, a theorist may wish to draw out some other pertinent aspect of it. Perhaps a neuroscientist would want to explain coordination in terms of brain states and action potentials, or maybe a psychologist would want to explain what specific sorts of psychological states are involved when it comes to coordinating the epistemic goods. As a philosopher working in virtue epistemology though, what I am seeking to draw out and explain is the intrinsic value of the intellectual virtues, and in order to do so, I choose to highlight the coordination function of the intellectual virtues as a central and important feature. Though I have not provided necessary and sufficient conditions, I maintain that they do not, and indeed, cannot be provided in light of the above mentioned reasons.

Because of my lack of commitment to providing necessary and sufficient conditions for having intellectual virtue, no single counterexample is sufficient to derail my proposal in a manner analogous to the way epistemologists previously wielded counterexamples of knowledge against proposed necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge (see section 1, chapter 1). One might object though on the grounds that I am shielding myself from criticism through advocating a definition of intellectual virtue that is not maximally clear. In response to this worry, I would like to point out that my idea
may be fairly critiqued on numerous levels. First of all, even though my account lacks the level of clarity that only analysis through necessary and sufficient conditions can provide, I have made an effort to further characterize the intellectual virtues and the idea of coordination (in terms of psychological states, behaviors, etc.), and I have done so for the sake of enhancing clarity. So it is perfectly open to criticism on that level. Second, one can object to my proposal on the grounds that I have incorrectly highlighted the central feature of intellectual virtue as it relates to epistemology. This may involve, for example, returning to the idea that truth is essential when it comes to intellectual virtue and arguing why that is the case. However, given my arguments in chapter 2, one would have to rebut all the criticisms I made against the truth-centered accounts of intellectual virtue first.

Though the above general methods for criticizing my proposal have their merits, I anticipate that critics may have other, more important issues that they would like to see addressed. One of these may be some frustration with how to handle terms that I have used in describing how the intellectual virtues function. For instance, I have said that the intellectual virtues enable agents to correctly or appropriately or suitably or optimally pursue and select among the epistemic goods—but what do all those words mean? So the critic may allege that even though necessary and sufficient conditions were not given for having intellectual virtue, the proposal is far from being sufficiently clear. And the critic in making this criticism would be right—so far I haven’t clarified or explained what these words mean and how they are to be understood. This is a very important consideration, one that will be addressed in the upcoming section.

Another serious objection: I have stated that an intellectual virtue is a second-
order epistemic good, and as such, always remains good. But one could attack this claim by arguing that intellectual virtue itself is vulnerable to the same issues facing the first-order epistemic goods. For example, it could be the case that someone with the virtue of open-mindedness is so open-minded to the point of vice, seriously considering every viewpoint, every belief, even ones that are clearly deceitful or foolish. Perhaps this is the sort of individual who seriously entertains people from conmen to cult leaders; how is it the case that the virtue of open-mindedness is always good? Just like the first-order epistemic goods, which can have their values corrupted in particular situations and contexts, it could be maintained that intellectual virtue is no different in that regard. Whether an intellectual virtue is intrinsically valuable depends to a large extent on the person exhibiting it and the situation she finds herself in. So someone may object to my proposal on the grounds that intellectual virtue is in the same boat as the rest of the epistemic goods and that my proposal doesn’t solve the issues I have previously identified. This too is a perfectly valid criticism that deserves a reply, and interestingly, a good response to this objection involves answering the previous one as well, which is a task I take on shortly.

2. A Reconception of Practical Wisdom

In thinking about how to respond to the above concerns, it is helpful first to consider some ideas in virtue ethics, as the criticism that virtue is not necessarily an intrinsic good is a classic one frequently leveled at theories of virtue ethics. Probably the best description and reply to this objection is to be found in an article written by Gary
Watson, who dubs the issue as the virtue in excess problem. According to this objection, a virtue cannot remain a virtue if it is manifested in excess and instead approaches something much closer to a vice. A typical example adduced involves the virtue of honesty: it is generally a good character trait to have, but one can easily come up with scenarios that speak against the virtuousness of honesty, such as when it is manifested to an excess. The classic philosophical example of an axe murderer comes to mind: if one is sheltering a good friend in one’s closet from this vicious criminal, is one obligated to tell this individual that the person he is looking for is in the closet? If yes, then that seems absolutely wrong and immoral, but if no, then the virtue of honesty ceases to be a virtue in some circumstances.

Watson replies to this objection by pointing out that someone who criticizes virtue theory on this basis has misunderstood what a virtue is and is thinking of it as something that maximizes some good. As Watson points out, if an agent possesses the virtue of honesty, he is not obligated to be honest everywhere, all the time, without exception. Instead, what the virtue theorist has traditionally insisted upon is that the virtues enable agents to appropriately respond, or in Watson’s words, to show “due concern.” In the case of the axe murderer, if the one opening the door has the virtue of honesty, he may refrain from answering the villain’s question, or he may even tell a lie. It would be immoral to tell the truth to this murderer because that would put one’s friend in jeopardy, and the person with the virtue of honesty is not obligated to tell the truth in this situation. At least with regard to the virtue of honesty, an important conclusion to


draw is that it is not equivalent to telling the truth all the time, as the virtue of honesty calls for an individual to tell the truth for the right reasons in the right way at the right time.

Watson’s reply invokes a phrase that I flagged as a potential source of frustration, that of *due concern* or *appropriate response*. What exactly do these terms mean? In Watson’s case, as well as for classic virtue theorists, including Aristotle, to manifest a virtue appropriately entails that one have the ability to determine what sorts of thoughts and actions are to be exhibited in a particular situation. Considering again the case of the axe murderer, one can weigh all the considerations pertinent to the virtue of honesty with other virtues, such as that of kindness, and ultimately choose to spare one’s friend hiding in the closet because the considerations pertinent to kindness override those of honesty. Ancient virtue theorists believed that this was possible because they held the *reciprocity of the virtues* thesis—that in order to truly possess one virtue, one must possess them all, for that is how the virtuous individual determines whether to act according to considerations pertinent to honesty versus that of kindness or any other virtue. When one has all the virtues to their fullest degree, one is said to possess the virtue of *practical wisdom*, that of exemplifying wisdom across every aspect of the living of her life such that one always acts appropriately in making decisions, thinking thoughts, and manifesting behaviors. Thus, practical wisdom is the virtue that enables agents to act appropriately in a situation because it bestows upon one the ability to weigh every sort of pertinent consideration relevant to a given situation (including facts about the agent herself). To talk about

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171 Furthermore, it may be the case that the ancients thought that the reciprocity of the virtues thesis derives from the *unity of the virtues*, which is the claim that all virtue is the same—that there is in fact only one virtue that is exemplified across different domains, despite the virtues having different names. I say more about the unity of the virtues soon.
manifesting virtue appropriately means that a virtuous agent utilizes practical wisdom to holistically and thoroughly evaluate the totality of a situation so that she may respond optimally to it.

Practical wisdom is frequently mentioned in works of virtue ethics but it has received considerably less attention in virtue epistemology. This is quite unfortunate, because without some sort of connection between the lower level virtues and practical wisdom, the virtue theorist can be guilty of the virtues in excess problem. The truth-centered accounts of the intellectual virtues, for example, frequently run into this problem because many of them are committed to the idea that an intellectual virtue's purpose is to maximize truth, but we have already encountered several ways that the pursuit of truth can go wrong. These virtue epistemologists potentially have the option of arguing that the intellectual virtues can't be taken to excess because they instead involve showing appropriate response or due concern. However, no virtue epistemologist has advanced a conception of intellectual virtue like this because most accounts of intellectual virtue have been very narrow and furthermore don't situate lower level virtues in the context of a higher level one like practical wisdom.

There is much benefit in thinking of the intellectual virtues as intimately linked to practical wisdom. For one thing, it helps the virtue theorist escape the virtues in excess problem since practical wisdom implies that one knows how, when, and why to act and think in a particular way. Second, and more importantly, it would explain why the intellectual virtues are always intrinsically valuable, as I have insisted on in labeling them as a second-order good. For these reasons, the virtue epistemologist ought to explain

what the connection is between practical wisdom and the other intellectual virtues. I now turn to this task.

An important idea to keep in mind is one that I discussed in chapter 1, and that is the idea of the modularity of the virtues. Recall that there was considerable debate about how to distinguish between the moral and intellectual virtues, and I advocated the idea that we should think of them as modules of a moral general virtue. So, for instance, one might wonder what the difference is between the moral virtue of courage and the intellectual virtue of courage. In many respects, they would function similarly. In light of this, I recommended that we view these virtues as modules of a more general virtue, in this case, just the general virtue of courage. But we can take the idea of modularity a step further and understand these general virtues, traits such as honesty, courage, temperance, etc., as themselves modules of the most general virtue—practical wisdom. What this means is that, ultimately, there is only one virtue, which is to say that I advocate a unity of the virtues thesis understood in modular terms.

There are some further points to keep in mind as well. What I am not saying is that the terms designating the specific moral and intellectual virtues mean the same thing as as the term practical wisdom. What one means by talking about temperance is not what one means by speaking about practical wisdom. Furthermore, when one refers to a particular virtue, such as generosity, one doesn’t necessarily refer to practical wisdom because one can legitimately refer to the former as it is a module of the latter. Though there is only one virtue, practical wisdom, it is manifested in different ways. When it is expressed in a particular way, we may call it by a specific name. It is through conceiving of individual virtues as expressions of a more general virtue that the virtue theorist is
able to surmount the virtues in excess objection and hold onto the thought that virtue is always intrinsically valuable.

I believe that thinking of the intellectual virtues as modules of practical wisdom is superior to the way other virtue epistemologists view this relationship. Among the few virtue epistemologists who have even ventured forth into this domain, some confusion stems from viewing the relationship between the intellectual virtues and practical wisdom as they do. For example, Zagzebski and Roberts and Wood think of practical wisdom as a master virtue that regulates the lower virtues. Already in this idea there is some affinity with the idea that practical wisdom is the ultimate virtue, but there are important differences too. These theorists conceive of the intellectual virtues as character traits, and hence, psychological features of human beings. However, when one reflects on what this means in an actual human being, one finds that their proposal is unworkable. Since the intellectual virtues, including practical wisdom, are character traits, and since practical wisdom is regarded by these theorists as the regulator of the other intellectual virtues, the conclusion that one must necessarily draw is that one character trait is regulating the others. This, I maintain, is an implausible characterization because it is only true at the level of metaphor. We often colloquially speak of “battling with ourselves,” or trying to “overcome” some bad trait of ours, but in the end these are all just metaphors; at the end of the day there is only one individual making decisions, not multiple aspects of our personality waging war with each other. The virtues are

174 This point relies on the assumption that there is a unity of consciousness and decision-making. That idea has been attacked before, but I take it that neither neuroscience nor psychology has discredited this psychological account of individuals (even when considering purported issues such as multiple personality disorder, which does not establish that there are discrete persons or personality traits at war with others).
aspects of our personality, and to talk as though practical wisdom “gave orders to” or “commanded” the lower virtues into obedience is simply wrong because personality traits don’t communicate with each other in this manner.

Furthermore, Zagzebski and Roberts and Wood are thoroughly committed to the idea that the intellectual virtues are always intrinsically valuable. But how could that be the case if practical wisdom is necessary to regulate them? The virtue epistemologist would have to deal with the fact that the lower level intellectual virtues could be taken to excess (or deficiency), and if that’s a possibility, there is no reason to suppose that they always retain their intrinsic value; they could be extremely bad in many circumstances. If Zagzebski and Roberts and Wood intend to stick with their characterization of the relationship between the lower intellectual virtues and practical wisdom, they should be prepared to admit that only one virtue always remains intrinsically valuable—practical wisdom, while the others have varying value.

I hope that it is now clear why I prefer thinking of the intellectual virtues as modules of the most general virtue of practical wisdom: it explains why the virtues are always intrinsically valuable, justifying their status as a second-order good and doesn’t engage in metaphorical talk that is clearly false at the literal level. Of course, there are some important objections that can be raised against me as well at this point. One is that virtue, as I have conceived of it, is unreal, for no one has the virtue of practical wisdom because no person is able to think the right thoughts in the right way all the time. Furthermore, I agreed with James Montmarquet’s claim earlier that accounts of intellectual virtue must correspond to real life virtue exemplars (section 2, chapter 2). Addressing this worry is a good time to further describe my conception of practical
The first thought I’d like to highlight is that the possession of virtue is not an either-or phenomenon; that is, it’s not the case that either one has practical wisdom or does not have it. In contrast to some other virtue theorists, I maintain that virtue occurs along a spectrum. If one were to imagine this spectrum pictorially, at the very center would be a completely neutral state between virtue and vice. At the left extreme would be a state of complete viciousness, such that no further gain of vice is possible. At the right extreme would be a state that I will call perfect virtue, which is practical wisdom possessed in its fullest and most complete state such that no further improvement is possible. My proposal is that we think of individuals as being metaphorically placeable on this line. We can think of those closer to the middle of this line as real individuals (since we can reasonably assume that many actually existing people tend not to have much virtue or vice) while those located toward the ends can be thought of as hypothetical or ideal individuals. Agents closer to the two ends exemplify virtue or vice to a greater degree, with those at the two ends exemplifying virtue or vice to the highest degree. It is probably the case that no human being has ever been perfectly virtuous or completely vicious, but there have been exceptional individuals, both exceptionally virtuous and vicious, that are notable and can thus be placed farther from the middle of the line than most. My preferred way of thinking about the virtue exemplars is that they occupy a place toward the right end of this line, at some point away from where most human beings would fall. Now the virtue exemplars by no means possess perfect virtue; they occasionally commit a fallacy, make unfounded assumptions, and give inconsistent arguments (among other things), but their psychological states are still vastly superior to
most individuals because they are able to coordinate the epistemic goods exceptionally well, which is why they merit being called virtue exemplars. Though the virtue exemplars lack perfect virtue, they nevertheless have virtue to such a great degree that we honor them by calling them virtue exemplars.

Some of the previously encountered virtue epistemologists may very well wonder: where does epistemic success fit in this picture? Is the individual with perfect virtue an omniscient god? As one may remember, there are many virtue epistemologists who insist that intellectual virtue involves one actually obtaining truth, not just trying really hard for it and failing. This is a major cause of division within virtue epistemology and is the primary distinguishing factor between the truth-centered reliable theories and the motivational ones. The mixed theorists attempt to adjudicate this dispute by building both success and motivational components into their understanding of intellectual virtue with results that are less than impressive. However, there is now a different way of proceeding about this contentious issue. Since I have insisted that virtue occurs along a spectrum, we can state that perfect virtue is a state involving complete optimization of coordinating the epistemic goods.

Virtue epistemologists may wonder: does perfect virtue involve an agent actually or successfully acquiring all the epistemic goods, such as all truths? The answer to that question depends on the nature of reality. An agent who has perfect virtue has done his absolute best in terms of coordinating the epistemic goods; no more can be asked of him. Perhaps this is an evil demon world or a world in which our cognitive apparatus simply fails to capture reality in its totality. If that's the case, the perfectly virtuous person is ultimately fooled—he lacks complete understanding of reality in the form of
truth or coherence or some other epistemic good. However, the world may be perfectly intelligible and “cooperative” enough such that a perfectly virtuous individual will ultimately comprehend the totality of reality. If that is true then perfect virtue would entail having complete and comprehensive coordination of all the epistemic goods such that one epistemically lacks nothing, including truth, coherence, justification, and other epistemic goods.

So to answer the initially posed question: it is an open question as to what epistemic goods the perfectly virtuous individual will ultimately acquire; she may succeed in acquiring all the epistemic goods, or she may fail at doing so. Perfect virtue would be a towering human accomplishment, but what epistemic goods the perfectly virtuous agent secures depends on the nature of reality. Conceiving of the intellectual virtues in “spectromatic” terms (along a spectrum) reveals a new way of approaching the issue of whether the intellectual virtues involve successfully coming to possess the epistemic goods. Additionally, it has the theoretical advantage of not denying virtue to those who are unable to secure a particular epistemic good, such as truth, through no fault of their own.

Having perfect virtue does not entail reaching some sort of static state in terms of learning or acquiring the epistemic goods, as such a state could be dynamic if it’s necessary to coordinate the epistemic goods optimally. For instance, it could be the case that there are a large or indefinite array of epistemic goods that could be acquired in some subject area. If this happens to be true, then the perfectly intellectually virtuous individual could choose to acquire as much of these goods as possible. Whether in fact she does so or not depends on an overall assessment of that course of action. If one
with perfect intellectual virtue does in fact decide to acquire an indefinite supply of epistemic goods, she would do so with optimal coordination of those goods such that they come to be possessed in an orderly and intelligent way. As such, having perfect virtue does not necessarily lead to either the end of learning or the cessation of acquiring the epistemic goods under the assumption that there are an indefinite amount of epistemic goods worth possessing. Additionally, it may be the case that in the process of learning an agent comes to discover something about the process of coordinating the epistemic goods and needs to modify the procedure itself. If that is the case, then the agent with perfect intellectual virtue would be able to modify it optimally as well, which could turn out to be an indefinitely long process. Perfection of intellectual virtue, then, does not mean that one remains frozen in some state, but rather could be temporarily or permanently dynamic if the intellectually virtuous person deems it necessary to adjust something about the process of coordination.

Another issue that some may raise concerns the value of the intellectual virtues and the idea of perfect virtue. Since I have said that an intellectual virtue is a second-order good that retains its value in a way that first-order goods do not, one might question what the value of practical wisdom is in an incomplete and only partially realized state. Is it always good to have? One might think that it may not necessarily have its good value any longer since anything less than perfect virtue implies the possibility that practical wisdom too would suffer the same fate as the rest of the first-order epistemic goods, potentially losing its status as a good.

However, I maintain that this is not the case. Though practical wisdom admits of degrees it is important to remember what those degrees actually are—they are modules,
or aspects of the most general virtue of practical wisdom. Mastery of one aspect of practical wisdom could mean, for example, perfecting the virtue of inquisitiveness or sobriety, but even these virtues cover extremely large domains; they too are composed of modules, and those modules themselves are composed of even smaller modules, and so on to the point of extreme specificity. The fact that the modules of practical wisdom can be divided into such small aspects provides a way to understanding the preservation of the good value of intellectual virtue in all circumstances. Mastering one module of intellectual virtue means that one has perfected some (very small) aspect of coordinating the epistemic goods. If one has a module of practical wisdom then one never goes wrong in that aspect of coordinating the epistemic goods but rather knows how appropriately to think and act in that specific situation. To say that someone has more or less practical wisdom is to claim, on my view, than an agent has more or less more modules of practical wisdom. Regardless of how many modules of practical wisdom an agent has, those modules are intrinsically valuable; their value is never corrupted as they function as second-order epistemic goods.

On a somewhat different note, I would like to add that possessing practical wisdom to its fullest degree does not imply that there is only one correct way of exemplifying that virtue. I mention this issue because one might be wondering how objective or subjective a state practical wisdom is. The only objective condition that must be satisfied in order to have perfect practical wisdom is for an agent to coordinate the epistemic goods optimally. If two agents were to cultivate perfect practical wisdom, they would not necessarily mirror each other in thought (although they could). This

175 The process is probably not infinite, assuming that there is a smallest quantum of a psychological state.
could be the case, for instance, if two epistemic goods were exactly on par with each other. It may be that, in order to have a complete view of reality, one at the end of the day must choose between making two different justified assumptions that appear equally valid or embracing two incompatible paradigms that explain data equally well. In a case like this, no particular option is favored over the other, so one agent may choose one epistemic good whereas the other might choose a different one. In both cases, perfect virtue can be exemplified because there is nothing to suggest choosing one epistemic good over another.

Consider too other ways in which perfect intellectual virtue may vary from person to person. Intellectual virtue is only as good as what one is given to work with in the first place. Because of social roles, cultural influence, environmental conditions, neurobiology, etc. there may be great variety in the way that complete practical wisdom is ultimately manifested. So if the reader is wondering whether perfect virtue implies some very specific way of coordinating epistemic goods such that all humans tend to approach it the closer they get to cultivating perfect practical wisdom, the answer is that it’s not necessarily the case that perfectly virtuous individuals would exactly resemble each other in how they coordinate the epistemic goods. Of course, those with an incomplete state of practical wisdom—in all likelihood, every human being—are bound to be different in several respects because they approach the coordination of the epistemic goods in a multitude of ways.

Now that I have finished describing my new conception of practical wisdom, it is time to move to the most important section of the dissertation—one that brings together all the most important points of discussion as they have occurred over the
previous chapters. Of particular importance is my ultimate explanation of the relationship between intellectual virtue, characteristic activity, and flourishing.

3. Intellectual Virtue and Flourishing

At last, we have arrived at the culmination of my overall argument. In one form or another, everything that I have said in this entire project has been for the sake of explaining why the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable, beginning with why it’s important to consider the intellectual virtues in epistemology and how they should generally be thought of (chapter 1), to examining the shortcomings of other views (chapter 2), to exploring the relationship of virtue to flourishing and characteristic activity (chapter 3), and then finally to an investigation of the nature of virtue itself (chapter 4). It is my sincere hope that after this final statement about the value of virtue and its relationship to flourishing that important advances will have been made in understanding the nature and value of the intellectual virtues.

As mentioned earlier, virtue theorists are frequently accused of only providing thin, formal descriptions of the relationship between virtue and flourishing. I agreed that this criticism had some merit and took it upon myself to advance virtue epistemology beyond this. At this point, I believe that I have largely accomplished the task I had set out for myself, as I have developed a substantive understanding of intellectual virtue and characteristic activity, both of which in turn help in developing a substantive specification of what flourishing is. Recall that from the previous chapter, I took the position that (departing from Aristotle) there is no reason to suppose that there is only one human characteristic activity; there could potentially be many. This ultimately
led me to propose that a characteristic activity of humans is using and seeking the epistemic goods. Intellectual virtue is that which enables agents to perform this characteristic activity well. I then developed the view that the intellectual virtues are coordinators of epistemic goods, such that they enable agents to properly and correctly choose how, when, and why to pursue some epistemic goods over others in a particular situation. After that, I explained what it meant to *properly* and *correctly* relate to the epistemic goods in the above-specified manner, which involves an agent exemplifying practical wisdom. All the intellectual virtues are ultimately expressions of one virtue, and manifesting that virtue occurs along a spectrum, all the way to the point of perfect virtue. Given the development of these views, there definitely has been a substantive conception of intellectual virtue and characteristic activity advanced, as intellectual virtue (practical wisdom) is that which allows agents to perform their characteristic activity of using and seeking the epistemic goods well through enabling an agent to coordinate the epistemic goods in an appropriate manner.

The human characteristic activity of utilizing and pursuing the epistemic goods is never ending and is common to virtually all individuals. As such, it is an activity that we are always engaged in *as* or *qua* human beings in basically every endeavor in which we participate. For many reasons, human beings consider the epistemic goods to be valuable and we are devoted to pursuing and using these goods in our lives. Any goal that a person may have involves thinking about the epistemic goods, how to come to possess them, and how best to put them to use when one obtains them. The intellectual virtues enable us to perform this human task well, as they are the coordinators of the epistemic goods; they are a part of us, as character traits are a part of our personality. If
the intellectual virtues were suddenly to disappear from someone who formerly possessed them, that person would instantly cease to perform his characteristic activity well. Furthermore, he would also no longer be able to flourish because intellectual virtue partially constitutes a flourishing life.

Another task I gave myself earlier was to explain how intellectual virtue benefits the one who has it. Once one recognizes how embedded the epistemic goods are in the process of living life, and how in acting for the sake of any goal at all one necessarily presupposes using and seeking those goods, it is clear that performing this task well is of significant benefit because it improves upon an activity that human beings find themselves already doing (because they, consciously or unconsciously, suppose the activity to be a good one worth participating in). There is now a clear reply to the question: why should I acquire intellectual virtue? The answer is that one should do so because as a typical human being, one participates in the characteristic activity of using and seeking the epistemic goods in daily living, from mundane tasks (such as paying for groceries) to quite sophisticated ones (perhaps developing a Theory of Everything). And since one participates in this activity because she believes it to be good, she ought to perform it well, that is, virtuously.176

Of course, at the end of the day, this may not ultimately convince the person

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176 As I argued in chapter 3, the reason we should act on this characteristic activity is that we have established it to be a good one. Some may wonder what the ultimate justification is for the idea that agents should or ought to cultivate the intellectual virtues (moral versus prudential or self-regarding normative justification). The reason might be understood to be prudential because one recognizes in oneself that it is good to perform this characteristic activity since one, as a human being, relies on the epistemic goods; in that sense acquiring the intellectual virtues are in one's prudential interests. However, I also leave open the possibility that the justification for cultivating the intellectual virtues may be moral as well; if moral truths are a subset of epistemic ones, it may just be that in wanting to perform this characteristic activity well, agents also aim for moral truths insofar as they aim for epistemic goods in general.
who does not heed the call of virtue. Rare is the argument that is so rationally
convincing as to compel others to accept it. In this regard, the philosopher must simply
accept that he has done his part by explaining why it is that one should behave in the
manner that an argument implies. With that said though, I do believe that I have gone
significantly past other contemporary virtue epistemologies in explaining why one ought
to cultivate intellectual virtue. There is no mystery here about what makes intellectual
virtue worth possessing. In living a typical human life, we participate in our characteristic
activity of seeking and using the epistemic goods; since virtually all of us live this life, we
ought to live it well through virtue.

Another issue that may be of concern is whether virtue is sufficient for flourishing.
Since the beginning of the dissertation, I have continuously hedged by stating that
intellectual virtue is a partial constituent of a flourishing life. And now it will be clear
why I have insisted on this partial constituency; intellectual virtue, or practical wisdom, is
not enough for a complete state of flourishing. Though virtue is a second-order good
that is clearly valuable beyond first-order goods, it doesn’t follow that virtue by itself is
sufficiently able to constitute a flourishing life. There may be quite a list of items (some
mundane) that are necessary to flourish, such as food, water, shelter, family, friends, etc.
Of course, it should be pointed out that virtue would inform one as to what degree of
food, water, etc. is necessary to the living of a good life in a manner that those first-order
goods could not. But importantly, it’s critical to recognize that these first-order goods
permit individuals to cultivate virtue in the first place. Beyond these, there are even more
fundamental goods, such as existence, which is what allows for the possession of
anything, including virtue, at all. Flourishing, therefore, requires many different goods,
and virtue is not sufficient to bring one to a state of flourishing. For this reason too one should not devote one’s life solely to the acquisition of virtue (perhaps locking oneself in a room reading books all day long), as a flourishing life involves a complete cultivation of all that is good. With that said though, virtue is an important and necessary part of a flourishing life, and its value is beyond that of most typical goods.177

We are now finally in a position to see why my main thesis is true and furthermore, to understand what exactly it means: the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable because they partially constitute a flourishing life. Flourishing (eudaimonia) is the highest intrinsic good for human beings; nothing lies beyond it, as it is the ultimate object of our choice. Those who flourish desire nothing else because they have achieved the highest good. Since flourishing is the highest human good, one needs to know what humans are and what they aim for—in other words, one needs to understand what the characteristic activity of human beings is. Since human beings engage in the good activity of using and seeking the epistemic goods, it follows that whoever can accomplish this task well can partially realize a state of flourishing. The intellectual virtues, character traits that function as the coordinators of the epistemic goods, are what enable agents to perform this characteristic activity well. They are worthy of ultimate choice because in actively exercising them, one performs his characteristic activity well and thereby flourishes along this dimension. Whatever is a constituent of a flourishing life is intrinsically valuable, and the intellectual virtues, being partial constituents of such a life, are therefore

177 The historical reason that Aristotle rejects the idea that virtue in itself fully constitutes a flourishing life is that he thinks one may have the virtues but not exercise them; it is only through exercising the virtues that one flourishes. Furthermore, he thinks that virtue is a state of character and that flourishing is an activity so on that level too they are not equivalent. The Stoics, who argue that having virtue is sufficient for flourishing, contest Aristotle (and his later followers) on this point. See Annas, Morality of Happiness, chap. 15–18 for this prominent historical debate.
intrinsically valuable.

The idea of flourishing has clearly been critical to my argument, but one might be expecting a more specific characterization of it so that one knows what sort of human activity or life is implied by it. Does, for instance, flourishing require us all to become philosophers? To initially note, flourishing has been substantively described to the extent that intellectual virtue and characteristic activity were. Additionally, other goods (existence, sustenance, friendship, etc.) are also plausible constituents of a flourishing life. Ancient virtue theorists frequently disagreed on what sort of life is implied by flourishing. Aristotle himself thinks that the highest flourishing life is pure intellectual activity in relation to the most perfect objects, in particular, God.\textsuperscript{178} That might strike some as an obvious non-starter. (He also states that a life of politics is second best.) Other ancient virtue theorists think that flourishing implies no specific lifestyle.\textsuperscript{179} In agreement with these virtue theorists, it is my position that flourishing does not necessarily imply some very specific life or commitments in the manner that Aristotle thinks it did. I say this because there could be multiple ways of realizing a state of flourishing. Beyond the general requirement that flourishing be in accordance with virtue, as a flourishing life definitely involves coordinating the epistemic goods well, the possibility is left open that other goods could be arranged in different ways and

\textsuperscript{178}There has been considerable debate about how to reconcile Aristotle’s thoughts here with his insistence that a flourishing life be in accordance with virtue. That is, does Aristotle think that one should contemplate God at the expense of developing one’s virtue or vice versa (or engage in balanced pursuit of both)? There is no conclusive answer in his works. See Cooper, \textit{Reason and Human Good} for a description of this textual ambiguity.

proportions, such as choice of one’s career, choice of hobbies, etc. This is especially true when one considers that individuals live in different cultures and occupy various roles, so flourishing could vary along with individual differences to some extent. In light of these considerations, I leave open the possibility that flourishing could be realized in multiple ways.\textsuperscript{180}

Hopefully it will assuage doubts that my proposal doesn’t imply implausibly specific lifestyle recommendations. But one could take a step backwards and question the entire idea of flourishing itself. The skeptic might ask: why should I want to flourish? Why would I especially want to flourish \textit{in accordance with virtue}? To begin answering this question, it is important to accept some truths as axiomatic, especially the idea that \textit{good} ought to be pursued. Flourishing, as the highest intrinsic good, structurally occupies the highest rung at which humans should aim and thus should be pursued. This doesn’t mean though, for example, that one should sell all one’s property and devote oneself only to studying Aristotle because that would be neglecting one’s own good on some level. As previously mentioned, flourishing doesn’t imply one specific life. There, of course, is much worthy debate to be had about what sorts of things are good and why. But one of the reasons we should want to flourish \textit{in accordance with virtue} is that it allows us to coordinate the epistemic goods well in the first place, enabling us to take an intelligent position regarding the good and how it ought to be pursued, as opposed to blindly hobbling around in the dark with no intelligent opinion whatsoever.

But what if the skeptic were not satisfied with that line of response? What if he

\textsuperscript{180}This point is analogous to how some philosophers of mind insist that consciousness could be realizable in multiple ways. That is, they take the position that a brain made up of neurons is one way of realizing consciousness, but there could be others, perhaps one involving silicon and a central processing unit.
questions a claim that I labeled as an axiom—that good ought to be pursued? At some point it must be recognized that certain skeptics can never be pleased and will continue to doubt no matter the force of reason used against them. In speaking to diehard skeptics, one is only capable of providing a solid argument for a position, but whether they understand or accept it ultimately lies with them and their psychology. But this is not terribly problematic. In considering the teaching and learning of mathematics, for instance, there will invariably be someone who clings to erroneous ideas, for example, that $2 + 2 = 5$. But this is no cause for worry, as the individual who protests this equation will just be thought of as someone who doesn’t understand the subject. And the reason this is so could be due to psychological defect of some sort (among other things). So if one encountered someone who seriously objected to the axiomatic idea that good ought to be pursued even after having given serious thought to it in multiple ways, a legitimate conclusion to draw is that this individual is confused on some level because he doesn’t understand what goodness is, which would be similar to someone making basic mathematical mistakes. That is, if one understands on a basic level that good things should be pursued, then one would think it rational to try to obtain them in some form or another. The ultimate takeaway point from this discussion is that if one doesn’t want to flourish, one doesn’t understand what goodness is.

That wraps up my discussion of intellectual virtue, characteristic activity, and flourishing. The one final thing that I would like to show in this section is how my conception of intellectual virtue avoids problems common to the virtue epistemologies examined in chapter 2. Below, I reproduce all the criticisms I directed toward the other accounts of intellectual virtue (from section 7, chapter 2) and comment directly below
each highlighted problem.

*Triviality* (problematic for Sosa, Greco, Montmarquet, Riggs, Baehr, potentially Zagzebski and Fairweather): having an intellectual virtue should not be compatible with memorizing trivial truths, having a motivation to memorize trivial truths, or loving trivial epistemic goods. There isn't intrinsic value in pursuing or having trivial epistemic goods.

Comment: Conceiving of intellectual virtue as a coordinator of the epistemic goods entails that it does not revolve around just one epistemic good. There is no problem of triviality because the intellectual virtues, as I have conceived of them, don't involve blind commitment to just one good, but instead require an agent to select carefully among a multitude of choices as they concern the epistemic goods so that an optimal outcome is reached.

*Irrelevance* (problematic for Sosa, Greco, Montmarquet, Riggs, Baehr, potentially Zagzebski and Fairweather): having an intellectual virtue should not be compatible with having one epistemic goal, X, and pursuing epistemic means, Y, when X and Y are clearly unrelated. For example, if one wants to learn how to play chess, one should not embark on a quest to study orchestral composition.

Comment: Since the intellectual virtues are coordinators of the epistemic goods, and one of the epistemic goods is relevance, it follows that it too is coordinated with other epistemic goods in an intelligent manner, blocking this problem from materializing.

*Doxastic* (problematic for Sosa, Greco, Montmarquet, Riggs, Kvanvig): there is much more that is intrinsically valuable about an intellectual virtue than simply belief formation. For example, there are emotions stemming from conviction as well as understanding, which doesn't necessarily reduce to belief.
Comment: The intellectual virtues involve far more psychological states than just belief; there are desires, intentions, perceptions, memories, emotions, attitudes, viewpoints, motivations, imaginings, and potentially many others. Since any of these states can compose intellectual virtue, any of them can be intrinsically valuable as well.

Obsoletion (problematic for Sosa, Greco, Kvanvig): what makes the intellectual virtues intrinsically valuable if there is another, more efficient means to truth or justification? If there is a more efficient route to these epistemic goods, then the intellectual virtues are obsolete.

Comment: The intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable because they are a constituent of a flourishing life. If there happens to be some extremely effective way to acquire truth, such as simply pressing a button, then intellectual virtue still retains its intrinsic value since there still needs to be coordination with other epistemic goods. For instance, truth needs to exist in a system of coherence, understanding, and evidence, and intellectual virtue is that which coordinates all these goods together.

Identification (problematic for Sosa, Greco, Zagzebski, Fairweather): others or an agent herself should be able to reasonably tell if her character trait is in fact an intellectual virtue or not on the basis of facts about her own character and personality. There is no need to know whether, for example, there is an evil demon that exists who feeds agents false perceptions.

Comment: My conception of intellectual virtue does not require that an agent know the ultimate nature of the world. Perfect intellectual virtue involves coordinating the epistemic goods optimally, as best as can humanly be done given the nature of the
world. If this does happen to be an evil demon world or one in which our cognitive capacities are unable to comprehend the ultimate nature of reality, one could still be intellectually virtuous, even perfectly so, and that agent would be able to tell whether she is virtuous on the basis of how well she coordinates the epistemic goods.

*Countenancing* (problematic for Greco): it shouldn't be a requirement for one to have a pristine history of completely countenancing epistemic norms in order to be regarded as intellectually virtuous.

Comment: My proposal does not imply that an intellectually virtuous agent has had a perfect history of countenancing epistemic norms. Virtue is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon, and as such, agents can exhibit partial virtue (have some modules of practical wisdom), and it need not be the case that they countenance epistemic norms perfectly or even at all depending on how they go about coordinating the epistemic goods.

*Copying* (problematic for Driver): on the assumption that the intellectual virtues are *not* intrinsically valuable, but rather instrumentally valuable, it follows if one agent, A, believed truths through ability, whereas a second agent, B, believed those exact same truths through copying A, it follows that both A and B are equally intellectually virtuous. This is erroneous because A clearly has something of value which B does not. The problem can be avoided by arguing that A and B are not equivalent in terms of having intrinsically valuable character traits but are only equivalent along instrumental epistemic dimensions.

Comment: My proposal is not susceptible to this problem because I argue that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable.
Persistence (problematic for Driver): on the assumption that the intellectual virtues are not intrinsically valuable, but rather instrumentally valuable, it should not follow that one agent, A, has or lacks intellectual virtue simply and solely on the basis of a second agent, B, being physically present, as A's intellectual virtue involves personality traits that exist independently of B's presence.

Comment: Just like the previous reply, my proposal is not susceptible to this problem because I suppose that the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable.

Demarcation (problematic for Montmarquet, Riggs, Baehr): there should be some clear distinction between the virtuous and the non-virtuous. Why should a default setting, such as a motivation to believe truth, be regarded as intellectually virtuous? Virtue, by literal definition, is an excellence, not an average commodity.

Comment: I argued that we should conceive of the difference between virtue, vice, and neutrality by imagining a line divided by a neutral point, which helps us determine where to conceptually place individuals if we know their character traits. Those on the neutral point and to the left of it are not virtuous to some degree and all those to the right of it are virtuous to some degree. Those significantly to the right are the virtue exemplars, those whom we recognize as possessing virtue to a high relative degree on account of their ability to coordinate the epistemic goods exceptionally well.

Subsumption (problematic for Zagzebski, potentially Montmarquet, Riggs): if a theory does include a motivational component for intellectual virtue, it shouldn't allow for an intellectual virtue to be considered intrinsically valuable if an intrinsically good motivation were ultimately produced by an intrinsically bad one.
Comment: An intellectual virtue is considered intrinsically valuable because it is a coordinator of epistemic goods, a component of a flourishing life. It does not derive its intrinsic value from motivations of any kind alone.

**Guarantee** (problematic for Zagzebski, Fairweather): excellent intellectual character traits in themselves can't guarantee truths to an agent. Having truth is only partially a function of one's personal character, as having guaranteed true beliefs requires other things outside the control of the agent, such as a cooperative and non-deceptive world.

Comment: Only perfect intellectual virtue might guarantee true beliefs, but that is on the assumption that a perfectly virtuous individual inhabits an epistemically cooperative world. A partially virtuous person (one with some modules of practical wisdom) will not have all true beliefs, but will still be virtuous to some degree (see also my comment to the identification problem).

**Justification** (problematic for Kvanvig): it can't be true that the only way to possess justified beliefs through intellectual virtue is via having and exemplifying *all* the intellectual virtues. Even having just one intellectual virtue in itself almost always leads to justification.

Comment: The plurality of the intellectual virtues were revealed to be an expression of just one underlying virtue, that of practical wisdom. Though virtue is not required to possess a justified belief, to systematically and optimally form justified beliefs requires intellectual virtue.

**Presupposition** (problematic for Roberts and Wood): on the assumption that love of knowledge is a virtue, it's not necessary that one first love knowledge in order to possess *any* of the other virtues.
Comment: Love of knowledge (as a virtue) is not necessary for having other virtues because there is ultimately only one virtue—practical wisdom. If love of knowledge is a virtue, then it too would be an expression of practical wisdom.

*Emotion* (problematic for Baehr): simply loving epistemic goods does not render an intellectual virtue intrinsically valuable. One could love all epistemic goods but not understand why one loves them; love should not be conflated with understanding.

Comment: Love of the epistemic goods is just one potential psychological state of the many that constitute having an intellectual virtue. It in itself is not necessarily intrinsically valuable, though when coordinated with other psychological states and epistemic goods it can be.

This brings us to the end of this section and to my overall argument. Not only do I believe that I have given a novel and credible defense of how and why the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable, but I have done so in a manner that avoids problems common to previous virtue epistemologies.

**4. Summary and Conclusion of Chapter 4**

There were two primary goals that I sought to accomplish in chapter 4: to characterize the nature of intellectual virtue and to explain how it relates to flourishing. I found inspiration in Aristotle's ideas about moral virtue and derived a distinction from him regarding the value of goods. A first-order good is one that is generally good but does not retain its value as such for variable reasons, whereas a second-order good always retains its value as good since it allows one to correctly pursue and choose among the
first-order goods. I argued that the reason virtue epistemologists run into many problems in characterizing intellectual virtue is that they don't consider virtue a second-order good that always retains its value. Using this distinction, I categorized the epistemic goods as first-order goods and intellectual virtue as a second-order good. The latter is a second-order good because it is a coordinator of epistemic goods, which are first-order goods. I insisted that the value of intellectual virtue is never corrupted because all the intellectual virtues are just modules of one virtue—practical wisdom. The intellectual virtues are aspects of our personality, and as such, are character traits encompassing a potentially wide variety of psychological states and behavioral dispositions.

Following the characterization of intellectual virtue, I then explained the connection between it and flourishing. Flourishing (eutaiamonia) is the highest intrinsic good for human beings; in order for humans to flourish, we need to know what humans are and what they aim for. The idea of characteristic activity takes this into account, as it identifies defining features of human beings by reference to what they aim for. As argued for previously, one good characteristic activity that human beings participate in is using and seeking the epistemic goods; the intellectual virtues are character traits that enable agents to perform this activity well. In doing so, an agent partially flourishes. My overall argument for explaining the value of virtue largely parallels Aristotle's though I modified some aspects of his theory in the process of developing my own account of intellectual virtue:
Aristotle's Argument

1. Flourishing is the highest intrinsically valuable human good.

2. Whatever constitutes a flourishing life is also intrinsically valuable.

3. Performing one’s good characteristic activity well is a partial constituent of a flourishing life.

4. The virtues are character traits that enable one to perform one's characteristic activity well.

Therefore: The virtues are intrinsically valuable because they partially constitute a flourishing life.

My Argument: A Eudaimonistic or Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Epistemology

1. Flourishing is the highest intrinsically valuable human good.

2. Whatever constitutes a flourishing life is also intrinsically valuable.

3. Performing one’s good characteristic activity of utilizing and seeking the epistemic goods well is a partial constituent of a flourishing life.

4. The intellectual virtues, as coordinators of the epistemic goods, are character traits that enable one to perform one’s characteristic activity of utilizing and seeking the epistemic goods well.

Therefore: The intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable because they partially constitute a flourishing life.

In defending my account of intellectual virtue, I believe that I have significantly advanced virtue epistemology by explaining in a considerably deeper way how and why the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable. It can be thought of as a eudaimonistic virtue epistemology on the grounds that it intimately links intellectual virtue to flourishing, as well as a Neo-Aristotelian one because it utilizes Aristotle’s general strategy for establishing the intrinsic value of virtue.
Conclusion

This dissertation is both a step forward and a step backward: forward in the sense that my proposal aims to explain the value of the intellectual virtues in a far deeper and more systematic way than previous contemporary attempts, but backward in that it looks to ancient wisdom from the past, drawing inspiration from Aristotle’s thoughts on the relationship between virtue, characteristic activity, and flourishing. My eudaimonistic or Neo-Aristotelian virtue epistemology thus stands in contrast to recent trends in virtue epistemology and virtue ethics that attempt to rip virtue away from its ancient theoretical and conceptual framework. Many virtue theorists today view virtue as a mere belief or attitude that revolves around just one good. Since these philosophers have proposed a significantly diminished idea of virtue compared to how it was viewed in ancient times, it’s no surprise at all why their theories run into troublesome and fatal flaws.

Thinking about the logic of heart transplants is particularly instructive here. Surgeons perform heart transplants under the assumption that a removed heart will be transplanted into another human being with a similar constitution and physiology. These physicians believe such a transplant will be successful because the body from which the heart is removed resembles the body that will receive the heart. It would be foolish to transplant a heart from a donor who is significantly different than the recipient because the originating system does not resemble the destination system; this is why it is so critical to match transplant donors and recipients. To a large extent, virtue epistemologists are guilty of performing theoretical surgery on virtue, ripping it from its original theoretical supporting apparatus and then expecting it to perform well in its new
home. Of course, this is forgivable and understandable because the consequences are not as obvious as a failed heart transplant; but now after contemporary virtue epistemology has proceeded some decades employing intellectual virtue with deeply problematic results and without substantive development of virtue’s supporting conceptual cast, it is time to start asking questions about why intellectual virtue doesn’t appear to have the value virtue epistemologists think it does. My account goes back to virtue’s ancient roots and reestablishes connections to important related ideas, reinvigorating it as a theoretically powerful force.

Here too the heart transplant metaphor is apt. Even in transplanting a heart from one human to another, the old environment is still different than the new one. Though it is true that the heart begins and ends in a body, the fact remains that the bodies are different. Likewise, I as a contemporary virtue theorist bring with me a different set of problems and assumptions, a different paradigm, than the virtue theorists of the past did. Though I expressed skepticism regarding other contemporary virtue epistemologists’ idea that intellectual virtue can solve traditional problems in the theory of knowledge and instead sought to understand the value of the virtues by the role they play in a flourishing life just like ancient virtue theorists did, my affinity with the latter group should not be overstated, as I modified many ancient ideas. And I did this for the sake of avoiding contemporary criticisms regarding virtue theory, criticisms that may neither have concerned Aristotle nor any other ancient virtue theorist. So there has indeed been a transplant of virtue from the past to the present, and changes have been made, but it is my hope that the transplant was done intelligently and with reasonable expectations.
Though my dissertation is an exercise in academic philosophy, I hope as well that a basic and important point was not lost in the process. Intellectual virtue is valuable and should be a goal to which individuals aspire to. Virtually all human beings want to better their lives in some regards. Though we are constantly in an informational firestorm, being bombarded with all sorts of quotidian advice to improve our lives in various facets from losing weight, to saving money, to finding true love, to an endless list of others, it is clear that some goods are better than others and thus worth more of our comparative attention. In our quest to become the most excellent versions of ourselves, it is my sincere hope that I have explained the value of intellectual virtue and have given others an even firmer desire to cultivate it in their own lives.
References


