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Epistemology

Introduction

Human knowledge, understanding, and experience are as distinctive of our life as anything, including even the opposed thumb and erect posture, and the varieties of them are among the deepest distinguishers of human beings from one another. Virtually every people across the world are concerned to educate their children in what they take to be knowledge, understanding, and powers of recognition. The human tribe form universities for finding and transmitting knowledge, and many of us think a university education to be far more than equipment for survival and financial prosperity. We think that knowing what the sciences and history can teach, and understanding what great literature and philosophy can help us to understand, are themselves a kind of prosperity, indeed a necessary and central component of the highest human flourishing. In some societies, and in some corners even of our own society, some of the elderly are held in special esteem because of their wisdom, which is taken to be a rare achievement and legacy of great value.

The ancient discipline that philosophers call epistemology is the study of human knowledge and related epistemic goods. Every university discipline is, of course, a study of human knowledge (chemistry studying chemical knowledge, history historical knowledge, and so forth), but epistemology is a study of the *concept* of knowledge. It turns reflective about this ubiquitous concern, this central and distinctive human good, and asks critical and normative questions about it: What is knowledge and what are its limits? Can we know anything? How do we know what we know? Can we know something without knowing that we know it? What is the proper basis of knowledge? What are the faculties by which we know? What are the

proper objects of knowledge? Is genuine knowledge immune from error, or is fallible knowledge a coherent concept?

Philosophers have offered various and conflicting answers to such questions, but since knowledge, like ethics, is everybody's practical business, epistemology's aims have seldom been merely descriptive. Accounts of the nature and reach of our faculties typically come bundled with prescriptions concerning how we ought to regulate our intellectual lives. "Don't look to the senses for knowledge" (Plato); "Don't look beyond the senses for knowledge" (David Hume); "Accept testimony only from sources whose reliability is known to you" (John Locke); "Accept testimony from any source you do not have good reason to question" (Thomas Reid); "It is wrong always, everywhere, for anyone, to believe anything on insufficient evidence" (William Clifford); "It is not wrong to accept some beliefs in the absence of evidence" (Alvin Plantinga).

Epistemological debates in the twentieth century were especially tumultuous. Early twentieth-century rationalisms and idealisms gave way to an empiricism that, as if unaware of what Kant had written, thought that everything we know about the world must arise out of sensory experience (tautologies are also an important sort of truth, but not about the world). The nature of sensation and perception and debates about sense data figured prominently in epistemological controversies of the first half of the twentieth century. Some empiricists noted that although one may be mistaken in claims about material objects and states of affairs, no such errors attach to immediate sensory deliverances: I may err in thinking I'm seeing a tree, but I can hardly be mistaken in seeming to be seeing a tree. Thus Rudolph Carnap, a logical positivist, believed that an incorrigible science could be constructed from the invincible reports of sensation and the connectives of first-order predicate logic. If this were possible, it would show that empirical science could deliver knowledge that satisfied the ancient Greek gold standard for knowledge, viz., indefeasible certainty.

Empiricists tended to think science the premier knowledge-generating enterprise. If any practice can confer irrefragable epistemic goods, it is science, not metaphysics or religion. And the success of science is due to its methods. Given sufficient background information and skill, one need only ply the right technique or follow the right rules to achieve knowledge and justified belief. Looking longingly on the success of modern science, epistemologists have devised methods of their own: the Baconian

method, Descartes's *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, Locke's Historical Plain Method, Mill's methods, Husserl's phenomenological method, and so forth. So the concerns of epistemology were bound up with the concerns of science. Does scientific knowledge form a hierarchical or foundationalist structure? Are the observations on which scientific claims are based free of theoretical content? Must scientific standards of evidence and confirmation be met before we are justified in believing something? Linked to these questions are the familiar epistemological controversies over foundationalism, the theory-ladenness of observation statements, and the standards for epistemic justification.

Starting in the 1950s, the association of science with foundationalism and its aspirations to certainty came under heavy attack from philosophers of science such as N. R. Hanson, Stephen Toulmin, Michael Polanyi, and Thomas Kuhn, whose personal acquaintance with science and scientific methods suggested to them that science falls far short of the foundationalist ideal of an edifice consisting of a groundwork of unshakeable basic statements fastened firmly to a rich superstructure of knowledge by the well-tempered bolts of modern logic. The problems with this picture are legion. Our empirical observations are theory-laden and susceptible to error, our reasoning depends on unprovable assumptions, our criteria for dividing justifier and justified are unclear, and our standards of evidence and argumentation contested, to cite just a few of the problems. The reigning epistemological paradigm of the first half of the century came under withering fire, from which, some say, it has not recovered.

Whatever difficulties epistemologists may have faced in describing the sources and structure of knowledge, at least they shared a common concept of knowledge as justified true belief—until 1963, when Edmund Gettier's famous three-pager appeared,[1] offering a small array of cases of justified true belief that seemed pretty clearly not to be cases of knowledge. The rough consensus about the definition of knowledge that had held for over 2,000 years unraveled. A cottage industry sprang up in response, as scores of epistemologists wove thousands of pages to repair the damage done when Gettier tugged on that loose thread. Notions of truth, certainty, belief, justification, and other epistemological concepts were also judged inadequate or unworkable after similar deconstructive analysis. Epistemologists

[1] Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?", *Analysis* 23 (1963): 121–3.

appeared to think that salvation from Gettier lay in fastidiousness and technical finery, so that epistemology became increasingly ingrown, epicyclical, and irrelevant to broader philosophical and human concerns. The fortunes of the guild were in steep decline from the halcyon days when discussions about the right use of reason were supposed to lay the groundwork of lasting epistemological happiness.

The last thirty years have seen radical departures from old ways of doing business. Epistemological naturalists, such as W. V. O. Quine, think that the time-honored task of describing the nature and limits of reason should be handed over to cognitive scientists. Anti-theorists like Richard Rorty urge us to look to literature and poetry for guidance about the right use of reason. Epistemologists of a more traditional vein, like William Alston and Alvin Plantinga, nevertheless break ranks with long-standing views about justification and warrant. Others have simply despaired. Articles with titles such as "The False Hopes of Traditional Epistemology"[2] and "Recent Obituaries of Epistemology"[3] have appeared. In an article entitled "Overcoming Epistemology", Charles Taylor writes: "it seems to be rapidly becoming a new orthodoxy that the whole enterprise from Descartes, through Locke and Kant, and pursued by various nineteenth and twentieth century succession movements, was a mistake."[4] No neo-orthodoxy has emerged concerning the proper projects of epistemology. Contemporary epistemology's disarray has nevertheless yielded this positive result: the discipline is more receptive than ever to new ideas.

Virtue Epistemologies

A most promising development is epistemologists' recent attention to the human virtues. Philosophical reflection about the intellectual virtues is still in its infancy, but we think it holds enormous promise for the recovery of epistemology as a philosophical discipline with broad human importance.

[2] Bas van Fraasen, "The False Hopes of Traditional Epistemology", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60 (2000): 253–80.

[3] Susan Haack, "Recent Obituaries of Epistemology", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1990): 199–212.

[4] "Overcoming Epistemology", in Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy (eds), *After Philosophy, End or Transformation*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), p. 465.

The first stirrings of this recovery were Ernest Sosa's early essays,[5] the first of which is now more than twenty years old. Sosa and some of his disciples tended to think of the intellectual virtues as faculties (eyesight, hearing, introspection, memory, inferential reason, a priori intuition, etc.),[6] but more recently Linda Zagzebski,[7] with some inspiration from Lorraine Code[8] and James Montmarquet,[9] has focused on virtues like intellectual courage, generosity, tenacity, openness, and humility—dispositions that are not faculties, but character traits. Thus her notion of virtue is much closer to that of the philosophical tradition and our contemporary ordinary language. Focusing on virtues in this sense also seems to offer a better prospect of humanizing and deepening epistemology.

Another important philosopher in this development is Alvin Plantinga. Although Plantinga, like Sosa, focuses his epistemology on the performances of faculties, but, unlike Sosa, does not use the language of virtue, we think that his epistemology is an incipient virtues epistemology[10]—indeed, more so than Sosa's, for two reasons. First, he defines knowledge as warranted true belief and defines warrant in terms of the proper functioning of epistemic faculties in a congenial environment.[11] The notion of proper function is reminiscent of the classical and medieval understanding of virtues: virtues are bases of excellent human functioning, and epistemic virtues are bases of excellent epistemic functioning. Second, Plantinga's thought stretches in the direction of virtues that are not merely properly functioning faculties, because his religious commitment draws him away from the trivial examples of belief formation that are so characteristic of recent epistemology (believing that one's wife is home or that the lawn in one's backyard is green). In the third volume of his epistemology Plantinga focuses on the deep and character-involving knowledge of God, and follows Jonathan Edwards in giving the emotions an important role in

[5] See the essays collected in Ernest Sosa, *Knowledge in Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[6] See Ch. 4 below for refinement of this statement.

[7] Linda Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[8] Loraine Code, *Epistemic Responsibility* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1987).

[9] James Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993).

[10] We will pursue this thesis further in Ch. 4; we developed it in a somewhat different direction in R. C. Roberts and W. J. Wood, "Proper Function, Emotion, and Virtues of the Intellect", *Faith and Philosophy* 21 (2004): 3–24.

[11] Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

the formation of this kind of knowledge. In attending to the involvement of emotions in the knowledge of God, Plantinga is striking a theme that has been nearly constant across the ages in philosophical discussions of the moral virtues. The life of virtue is composed of appetitive dispositions, and emotions are consequences of caring about things, of taking some things to be important, of having steady, long-term desires for things of value.

The triviality of standard epistemology's examples is due in part to the historical preoccupation with skepticism. If one cannot secure so simple a claim as "I have two hands" or "The world has existed for quite a while" against the mischief of evil demons and manipulative brain scientists, it makes little sense to worry about how we know difficult truths about the causes of the Second World War or the structure of DNA. Anti-skeptical maneuvers are a strong motif in the history of philosophy: Plato opposes the Sophists, Augustine the academic skeptics, Descartes Montaigne, Reid Hume, and Moore and Wittgenstein set themselves against skepticism inspired by Russell. However dominant anti-skepticism may be historically, some of epistemology's most productive moments—in Aquinas, Kant, Plantinga—arose because philosophers were willing to set aside skeptical worries and look into what ordinary practitioners of science, religion, politics, and humanistic inquiry were willing to call knowledge. Intellectual virtues of the kind that interest Zagzebski and us seem likely to have relevance to high-end kinds of knowledge like scientific discoveries, the subtle understanding of difficult texts, moral self-knowledge, and knowledge of God, while being marginal to knowing, upon taking a look, that a bird is outside my window, or that what is in front of me is white paper.

Given the central place of knowledge and understanding in human life, one would expect epistemology to be one of the most fascinating and enriching fields of philosophy and itself an important part of an education for life. We might expect that any bright university student who got all the way to her junior year without dipping her mind in an epistemology course would have to hang her head in shame of her cultural poverty. But the character and preoccupations of much of the epistemology of the twentieth century disappoint this expectation. We think that the new emphasis on the virtues and their relation to epistemic goods has the potential to put epistemology in its rightful place. And we hope that the present book, whatever its many shortcomings in detail, will suggest the rich ways in which epistemology—the study of knowledge and related

human goods—connects with ethical and political issues, with the practice of science and other forms of inquiry, with religion and spirituality, with appreciation of the arts, and with the enterprise of education.

Defining Knowledge

The concern to broaden and humanize the discipline is at best a peripheral concern of the contemporary epistemologists we have mentioned. The concepts of the virtues and proper function interest them chiefly as providing new strategies for achieving old epistemological goals, prominent among them that of defining knowledge in the traditional style. Zagzebski, for example, says, that "the most critical concern of epistemology … [is] the analysis of knowledge" (*Virtues of the Mind*, p. 259). All these philosophers accept the general model of knowledge as adequately grounded (warranted, justified) true belief and seek a conception of such grounding, or some supplement to that grounding, that enables them to specify the logically necessary and sufficient conditions for any belief's being a case of knowledge. Let us call this kind of knowledge "propositional knowledge", to distinguish it from the broader and richer concept of knowledge that we will outline in Chapter 2. And we call a definition of propositional knowledge an "e-definition" when it is in the style that has dominated recent epistemology—namely, a formula proposing logically necessary and sufficient conditions. Consider some proposed definitions of knowledge in this style.

Sosa distinguishes "animal knowledge" from "reflective knowledge" and defines animal knowledge as any true belief produced by an intellectual virtue (that is, an epistemic faculty) in an environment that is appropriate for that virtue; reflective (that is, distinctively human) knowledge is animal knowledge about which the epistemic subject has another ("reflective") belief: namely, the belief that his animal knowledge in question was produced by a virtuous belief-producing process, and this reflective belief too is true and produced by a virtue. Plantinga defines knowledge, roughly, as any true belief produced by a faculty or faculties that are aimed at truth and are functioning properly in an appropriate environment according to a good design plan. We say "roughly" because in the second chapter of *Warrant and Proper Function* Plantinga considers a number of needed

qualifications of his already complex formula and gives up the effort to produce a precise definition with the words, "What we need to fill out the account is not an ever-increasing set of additional conditions and subconditions; that way lies paralysis" (p. 47). Earlier he had said, "Maybe there isn't any neat formula, any short and snappy list of conditions (at once informative and precise) that are severally necessary and jointly sufficient for warrant; if so, we won't make much progress by grimly pursuing them" (p. 20). And he goes on to fill out the account by looking in some detail at several particular faculties, to show how the proper function approach to knowledge solves problems that stymie other approaches. We have said already that the kind of virtue that Zagzebski makes central has potential for deepening and humanizing epistemology, but little potential for the routine epistemological goal of e-defining knowledge. The reason is that an e-definition has to specify conditions that are necessary for all the cases, including very simple ones, such as the following: I am sitting in a room at night with the lights blazing, and suddenly all the lights go out. Automatically, without reflection or any other kind of effort, I form the belief that the lights have gone out. Clearly, I *know* that the lights went out, and it didn't take any act of intellectual courage, humility, attentiveness, perseverance, or any other virtue to do so.[12] Despite the apparent awkwardness of making the concept of an intellectual virtue the key to an e-definition of knowledge, Zagzebski defines knowledge as any true belief produced by an act of intellectual virtue, and she struggles to accommodate the low-end cases of knowledge to her definition (see *Virtues of the Mind*, pp. 277–83).

We see here a dilemma for the virtue epistemologist. Plantinga's and Sosa's definitions of knowledge are pretty good at specifying conditions that are necessary for the whole range of cases, because they aim *very low*. They are particularly well-designed to accommodate cases like the lights-out case, because really, all you need in such simple cases is well-functioning faculties in an appropriate environment. But faculty-oriented definitions are poor at specifying conditions that are sufficient for the whole range of cases. It is implausible to think that all you need, to make great scientific discoveries or gain a deep understanding of your own moral

[12] We owe the example to Jason Baehr. See his article "Virtue Epistemology" in the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

nature, is well-functioning faculties like eyesight, hearing, logical powers, and the like. It seems that you do need traits like courage, perseverance, humility, and love of truth. So definitions like Zagzebski's are pretty good at specifying sufficient conditions: a person with trait virtues will be able, in all likelihood, to get knowledge from the highest to the lowest. The trouble for her definition is that it's implausible to think you need such virtues to know that the lights have just gone out. It seems that neither kind of virtue epistemologist will succeed in e-defining knowledge. So we might think that we need a disjunctive definition that says something like the following: A true belief is knowledge just in case it is produced either by a faculty virtue in a congenial environment or by acts or an act of an intellectual trait virtue, but not necessarily both. Toward the end of this section we will see why such a definition will not succeed.

Let us take a closer look at Zagzebski's definition of knowledge. She argues that Gettier cases (see pp. 283–99) all have a common structure in which the subject gets a true belief, and does so in a way that is canonical (that is, justifying, warranting) by some definition of knowledge, but in which the connection between the way the belief is justified or warranted and the truth of the belief is somehow accidental. Accordingly, she offers a recipe for concocting Gettier cases that works no matter whether you make the canonical grounding internalist justification, externalist justification, or warrant.[13] Here is Zagzebski's recipe: Start with a case of well-grounded (justified, warranted) belief (by well-grounded, we mean well-grounded enough that, if the belief is true, it will ordinarily be knowledge). Make the belief epistemically unlucky (that is, such that, despite being well-grounded, the belief would not be true except in very lucky circumstances).[14] You

[13] Internalist justification is justification by some factor, such as evidence, to which the subject has reflective access, at least potentially. Thus a person might be justified in believing that he is famous by seeing himself often discussed in newspapers. This is an internalist justification because the subject has reflective access to the justifying factor, as well as, in all likelihood, the *way* in which such a factor justifies. Externalist justification (warrant) is justification by some factor to which the subject does not necessarily have access. A person might be justified in his belief that there is white paper in front of him by the fact that white paper is appearing to him visually, without his having reflective access to how such an appearance justifies his belief.

[14] Zagzebski says, "Start with a case of justified (or warranted) false belief. . . . Now amend the case by adding another element of luck, only this time an element that makes the belief true after all" (*Virtues of the Mind*, pp. 288–9f). But obviously, the false belief cannot be the main belief of the Gettier example, since that is a justified true belief. The Gettier examples do not involve any belief's changing truth-value. Thus we have slightly reformulated Zagzebski's recipe.

can do this only because well-grounding does not entail truth. Add another element of luck to the case, which makes the unlucky belief true. And *voilà*! You have whipped up a Gettier case. Consider some.

An internalist case. In the original Gettier case of *Smith owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona* you are justified in believing the proposition because you have excellent evidence that Smith owns a Ford, though you have no idea where Brown is. However, Smith has been pulling your leg; but improbably enough, Brown happens to be in Barcelona. Thus you have a justified true belief, but not knowledge. You are unlucky enough to be plausibly lied to by Smith, but your mischance is reversed by the luck that Brown is in Barcelona.

A reliabilist case. You're driving in rural Wisconsin, where the inhabitants, eager to appear prosperous, have erected three fake barn façades for every real barn. You are a reliable barn-spotter and, happening to look at one of the real ones, you form the belief *there's a barn*. Your belief is true and justified, but not knowledge. In this case you're unlucky enough to be driving through a neighborhood beset by deceptive appearances, but this misluck is corrected by your just happening to fix on a real barn.

A proper function case. Mary has properly functioning but not infallible eyes; she looks at her husband's usual chair in normal lighting from about fifteen feet away and forms the belief that her husband *Herb is sitting in the living room*. So the environment is normal, and her faculties are functioning properly. But the man sitting in the chair is her husband's brother, who looks very much like Herb. But, as it turns out, Herb is sitting in the living room, out of her sight. So she has a warranted true belief that is not knowledge.

But can't we construct, following Zagzebski's recipe, a counterexample to her own definition of knowledge? Consider

A virtues case. Sam is a forensic pathologist well known for his care, creativity, and persistence in solving difficult cases. A case of poisoning has stumped him because at the current state of the art the poison involved is undetectable. Sam wracks his brain for a compound that will detect the suspected poison, and after several days of agonizing research and a few sleepless nights he hits on a formula. He goes to the lab in the middle of the night and combines three substances according to a formula that calls for particular amounts in a particular sequence. Unknown to him, a jar from which he got one of the substances was mislabeled by his lab assistant

and in fact contains something completely inert. He goes home satisfied that in the morning he will have a solution to the case. During the night the janitor inadvertently spills a bit of the needed third substance on the slide that Sam will use the following morning to conduct his test. When Sam runs the test the next day, he gets the result he wanted, and declares that *the murder poison was X*, as indeed it was. Thus Sam has a true belief, acquired by the performance of acts of intellectual virtue, which is not knowledge. The assistant's mislabeling the jar is Sam's bad luck, and the janitor's spilling the right substance on the slide in just the night amount, is his good luck.

Zagzebski does not apply her recipe to a virtues case. In fact, she offers it as a prelude to showing that her e-definition succeeds where all the others fail. She thinks it succeeds because grounding in intellectual virtues, unlike grounding in all the other ways, *entails truth*. She holds that acts of virtue necessarily succeed in their goals, and so acts of intellectual virtue always succeed in securing the truth. She argues as follows. Suppose a jury judges a case as virtuously as possible. All the jury members deliberate with consummate skill and desire with the purest hearts that justice be done in the case before them. But the result of their verdict is that an innocent man is sent to prison for twenty years. In that case we do not call their action an *act of justice*. An act of justice is by definition one that succeeds in bringing about justice. The jury may well have acted justly, but it has not performed an act of justice. And similarly for all other cases of virtues, we can distinguish *acting V-ly* from *performing an act of V*. Since intellectual virtues are virtues that aim at the truth, we can make the same distinction there, with the result that no act of intellectual virtue can fail to secure the truth.

Zagzebski errs in extrapolating from the case of an act of justice to all other acts of virtue. We think that her intuition about the English phrases "act justly" and "perform an act of justice" has some merit, but most of the other virtues do not follow suit. From the fact that I performed an act of generosity, it does not follow that I actually helped anybody. From the fact that I performed an act of perseverance toward some goal, it does not follow that I achieved the goal. The same is true of intellectual virtues. A person can perform acts of open-mindedness, of diligence in investigations, of charity in his interpretations of others' views, of honesty with himself and with others, and still not hit on the truth. For example, had it not

been for the clumsy janitor, Sam would not have got the truth about the poisoning case, despite an impeccable sequence of acts of intellectual virtue.

The requirement, in Zagzebski's definition, that the act of intellectual virtue guarantee the truth of the belief that it generates, trades on so artificial a conception of an act of intellectual virtue as to make the definition *ad hoc* and insufficiently informative, thus violating her own stated standards for a good definition. In her discussion of desiderata in definitions, Zagzebski says that while a definition needs to be Gettier-proof, it must not be artificially tailored to guarantee this result.[15] For example, it would not be legitimate to avoid Gettier examples by defining knowledge as "*justified true belief that is not a Gettier case*" (ibid., p. 102). The concepts of a virtue and of an act of virtue have the merit of being uncontrived: they are widespread in the history of philosophy and in ordinary discourse about both ethics and knowledge (see ibid., p. 106). But the infallibility of acts of virtues presupposed by her definition of knowledge is not a noticeable part of that history, or of ordinary people's use of 'virtue'; her particular twist on the concept of an act of virtue seems specially tailored for closing the gap between justification and truth. Besides avoiding *ad hoc* stipulation, the definition should be informative, giving us insight into the nature of knowledge that we would not have without it. In particular, her definition should allow us to identify cases of knowledge if only we know whether the beliefs in question were produced by acts of intellectual virtue. But on her understanding of "act of intellectual virtue", we cannot tell whether an intellectual act is an act of intellectual virtue unless we know *independently* whether the belief that it generated was true.

We might wonder whether the same strategy of avoiding Gettier examples by defining the justifier so as to guarantee its achieving truth is not available to advocates of other epistemological theories. What if a reliabilist were to distinguish beliefs produced by a reliable belief-producing process from beliefs produced reliably by such a process? Couldn't the reliabilist then claim that any false beliefs produced by a reliable belief-producing process were not *produced reliably* by such a process, and therefore could not be used in constructing Gettier examples? Or perhaps Plantinga could close

[15] Linda Zagzebski, "What is Knowledge?", in John Greco (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 92–116, p. 104.

the gap between properly functioning faculties and truth by distinguishing beliefs produced by properly functioning faculties from beliefs *produced properly* by such faculties.

We earlier offered a simple counterexample to Plantinga's proper function account. We expect that Plantinga will regard our "counterexample" as anything but such. Following the drift of his discussion of Gettier cases in *Warrant and Proper Function* (pp. 31–7), no doubt he will say that we haven't made the environment normal or paradigmatic. There is something "tricky" about this environment, and consequently Mary is *not* warranted in believing that Herb is sitting in the living room. Such an answer as this raises the question: Exactly *how* normal or paradigmatic must the environment be for a belief produced by properly functioning faculties in that environment to be warranted for the subject? If the concept of *normal* here is such that for any Gettier case, necessarily, the environment (or the functioning of the faculty) is not normal, then of course the proper function construal of warrant avoids Gettier problems. But this solution seems as artificial as Zagzebski's redefinition of *act of intellectual virtue*, because surely, in normal everyday discourse and thought, a person might well think that Mary is warranted in her belief, despite the trickiness of the environment. And if such an ordinary epistemological thinker were asked why he thinks she is warranted in her belief, he might (if articulate enough) cite Plantingian criteria for warrant: she has good eyesight, the lighting was decent, her distance from the object was in the range prescribed for good viewing, etc. So we might think that for the Plantingian criteria to be realistic, there must be the normal flexibility in the concept of *normal* and thus some room for warranted beliefs that are not true (or that are, as in Gettier cases, true only by a stroke of good luck). Otherwise there is something fishy about the concept of warrant.

It might be thought that our counterexample fails to meet the conditions of Zagzebski's definition of knowledge because the *truth* of Sam's belief that the poison was X does not derive from his acts of intellectual virtue. Admittedly, his acts of intellectual virtue had something to do with his getting the truth, but the clumsy janitor seems to be causally crucial too. So it is hard to tell what to say about the case. As Zagzebski admits, it is unclear what *because of* means in her requirement that the believing of the truth be *because of* the agent's acts of virtue (see ibid., pp. 108, 111).

John Greco[16] uses a strategy similar to Zagzebski's in defining knowledge, but seems to avoid the pitfalls of Zagzebski's definition. In particular, he does not try to make justification entail truth, and he gives us a clear enough account of what 'because of' means when he says that the agent believes the truth because of his intellectual virtue. Like Zagzebski's project, Greco's definition is largely driven by the desire to avoid counterexamples in which the subject's justified true belief fails to be knowledge because of something accidental in the way the belief turns out to be true. The lottery problem is such a case: Nate buys a lottery ticket and then, on the basis of information about the odds against winning, forms the true belief that he will lose. His inductive evidence is excellent, much better than for many cases of inductively based knowledge; yet we do not think he knows he will lose. The Gettier cases are other examples. Greco's solution is to develop a concept of responsibility for getting the truth, and then to say that an epistemic agent knows a truth *p* only if he is responsible, in that sense, for getting the truth in believing *p*. He says, "The key idea here is not that knowledge requires responsibility *in* one's conduct, although that might also be the case, but that knowledge requires responsibility *for* true belief" (p. 111).

We can explain Greco's concept of responsibility by comparing it with a couple of other concepts.

A) Responsibility *in* one's conduct:
   One does what it canonically takes to get X right.
B) A common concept of being responsible *for* getting X right:
   One does what it canonically takes to get X right.
   One gets X right.
C) Greco's concept of being responsible *for* getting X right:
   One does what it canonically takes to get X right.
   One gets X right.
   What one does *in* getting X right is the most salient causal explanation *of* one's getting X right.

His explanation of why Nate in the lottery case, and the subjects in the Gettier cases, do not have knowledge, is that the epistemically virtuous behavior by which they form their true belief is not the *most salient*

[16] John Greco, "Knowledge as Credit for True Belief", in Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski (eds), *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 111–34.

explanation of how they came to have the right belief; instead, something accidental is *more* explanatorily prominent. By contrast, in cases of knowledge by induction the act of induction is salient in the causal story, and in cases of justified true belief that are knowledge the justifier is salient in the explanation of how the agent got the true belief.

> Greco's definition of knowledge has three clauses: S knows *p iff*
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> S's believing *p* is *subjectively* justified in the following sense: S's believing *p* is the result of dispositions that S manifests when S is trying to believe the truth,
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> and
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> S's believing *p* is *objectively* justified in the following sense: the dispositions that result in S's believing *p* make S reliable in believing *p*. Alternatively, the dispositions that result in S's believing *p* constitute intellectual abilities, or powers, or virtues,
>
> and
>
> S believes the truth regarding *p* *because* S is reliable in believing *p*. Alternatively: the intellectual abilities (i.e., powers or virtues) that result in S's believing the truth regarding *p* are an important necessary part of the total set of causal factors that give rise to S's believing the truth regarding *p*. (pp. 127, 128)

The structure of this definition makes clear that the causal condition is *added to* the two justification conditions; justification does not *entail* getting the truth. In particular, it specifies how the objective justifier—the traits that make S a reliable producer of true beliefs—must cause S's believing the truth in believing *p*, if believing *p* is to amount to knowledge. And Greco's concept of being responsible *for* getting X right (see above), in which the notion of salience or importance or prominence plays a key role, seems to us to be an ordinary and natural concept, not one that is contrived simply for avoiding counterexamples. The concept of salience or importance that is crucial to Greco's explanation of believing the truth because of S's intellectual virtues is vague (just *how* important or salient must S's intellectual virtues be in the explanation of how S gets the truth of *p*? and what is salience, after all?), but this vagueness may not prevent its being informative.

However, once the causal condition is made informative, the definition becomes vulnerable to both Gettier examples and straightforward

counterexamples. Our case of Sam the forensic pathologist is a Gettier-type case. Sam's virtuous epistemic behavior is very salient in his getting the truth that the poison was X; the accidental intervention of the clumsy janitor seems a minor contribution by comparison, though it is admittedly crucial. Greco might defend his definition by saying that Sam's virtuous behavior is not salient *enough*. But this would be exactly the kind of special pleading that everybody admits we need to avoid. However, even if we allow the definition to escape the counterexample on the grounds that Sam's virtuous behavior is not a salient enough cause of his getting the truth, the definition falls prey to straightforward counterexamples.

In Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* Ebenezer Scrooge lacks the knowledge that he is a mean old miser. With rationalizations such as "I've worked hard for every penny I've got" and "if those shiftless poor would only bestir themselves, they wouldn't be so wretched", he explains away every challenge to his picture of himself as a frugal hard-working businessman. Then comes the epistemic pressure. First Jacob Marley's ghost appears to Scrooge, doomed to carry the symbols of his greed chained to his body. He comes to warn Scrooge that he is indeed a mean old miser and will suffer a similar fate unless he changes his ways. Scrooge explains away the apparition by attributing it to undigested beef, then he goes to bed and promptly falls asleep. The ghost of Christmas Past appears next, taking Scrooge back to a kinder and gentler time of his life, to convince him that he once embraced a different understanding of himself. He still resists. Then the ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge the family of Bob Cratchit and the suffering Tiny Tim. Scrooge is softened, but still not to the level of assent. Finally, the ghost of Christmas Future pulls out all the stops, and shows Scrooge his own lonely, unmourned, pathetic death, and the hell that awaits him. The cumulative effect of these cognitive onslaughts is to disarm his ability to resist assent; Scrooge's will-to-ignorance is overwhelmed. The knowledge comes to him unbidden. Of course Scrooge's epistemic capacities make some contribution to his getting knowledge; he hears and understands the words of the various ghosts, and there is a limit to his powers of rationalization. But Nate in the lottery case, and the subject in the case of Smith owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona, also display a modicum of virtuous behavior. Greco's point is that the primary or salient explanation of how they got their true beliefs is something other than their virtuous behavior, and this is true of Scrooge as well. We say that Scrooge

has genuine knowledge of himself, and in the causal story of this knowledge Scrooge's intellectual virtues play a relatively minor role.

We have seen that recent virtue epistemologists have tried to use the concept of a virtue to answer routine[17] questions of late twentieth-century epistemology, especially in formulating definitions of justification, warrant, and knowledge. We have given our reasons for thinking that the latest efforts have not succeeded. It appears to us that the reason why simple definitions fail is the complexity and diversity within the concept of knowledge. The concept may be held together by a set of overlapping resemblances between kinds of cases, as Wittgenstein argued that the concept of *game* is, rather than by a single set of properties that are both individually necessary and jointly sufficient for any case to belong to the class.[18] To take Greco's definition as an example, he is surely right about *many* cases of knowledge, that it is a necessary condition of their being knowledge that the agent's epistemic excellences have a prominent place in the explanation of the agent's being in possession of the truth. But to claim that this is a necessary condition for *all* cases seems to be going too far.

In the anxiety to get a definition of knowledge, philosophers have sometimes lost sight of the basic purpose of definitions: namely, to facilitate *understanding of the concept* in question. The real goal is not just to get a formula that "works", by triumphing over all its enemies armed with the latest precision anti-Gettier weapons. The great purpose of philosophical epistemology is to sharpen our understanding of knowledge and related epistemic goods. Somewhere in Plato's *Republic* Socrates remarks that the point of the dialectic about justice is not the formulas in which the concept of justice may be more or less successfully defined; its point is the cultivation of the minds of those who participate in it. The process of thinking in the context of a rigorous conceptual debate does clarify

[17] David Solomon has shown a similar tendency among recent virtue ethicists. In "routine" virtue ethics the concept of a virtue is exploited to answer the central question of modern moral theory—what is the foundation of morality?—while in "radical" virtue ethics it is put to purposes less traditional, or at least less *modernly* traditional. See his "Virtue Ethics: Radical or Routine?", in DePaul and Zagzebski (eds), *Intellectual Virtue*; pp. 57–80.

[18] For an illuminating exposition of Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances, see Renford Bambrough, "Universals and Family Resemblances", in George Pitcher (ed.), *Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 186–204. While it may not be a new orthodoxy among epistemologists, a growing segment of its practitioners are sympathetic to Timothy Williamson's judgment that "the upshot of [the debate over the definition of knowledge] is that no currently available analysis of knowledge in terms of belief is adequate" (*Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 4).

and deepen the participants' understanding of the concepts discussed, even if no "conclusion" is reached. (In the next chapter we will point out that understanding is a kind of knowledge that is subject to degrees.) The definition may elude us, as Plantinga seems to admit that the strict definition of knowledge eludes him in *Warrant and Proper Function*, but still, all the hard head work involved does result in (some, or a better) knowledge of what knowledge is. Which shows that the wise course is to use formulas for their heuristic value, which is very great, but to have good sense for when paralysis has begun to set in, and to be supple enough in our imagination and adventuresome enough to try a new approach. The concept of an intellectual virtue invites us to a new way of thinking about epistemology, but one that has, up to now, not been far pursued. The practitioners of "virtue epistemology" have been trammeled by the character of late twentieth-century debates about the nature of knowledge.[19]

Finally, let us offer a brief comment on a way in which our enterprise resembles the definition project. If we think of a definition not as a single formula that captures without remainder the essential characteristics of every instance of some kind, but rather as an expedient for making a concept more "definite" for some person or group of persons, then we too are offering "definitions" of various concepts—in Chapter 2 of the concept of knowledge, in Chapter 5 of the concept of an intellectual practice, in Chapters 7–12 of the concepts of various virtues.

Analytic and Regulative Epistemology

Nicholas Wolterstorff[20] distinguishes two kinds of epistemology, which he calls "analytic" and "regulative". Analytic epistemology aims to produce theories of knowledge, rationality, warrant, justification, and so forth, and proceeds by attempting to define these terms. The English-speaking epistemology of the twentieth century is chiefly of this kind, and all of the virtue epistemologies of the last twenty-five years have been attempts

[19] Several years ago Jonathan Kvanvig said something similar. See *The Intellectual Virtues and the Life of the Mind: On the Place of the Virtues in Contemporary Epistemology* (Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1992), p. 187.

[20] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

to turn the intellectual virtues to the purposes of analytic epistemology. Regulative epistemology, which is the kind mostly practiced by Locke and Descartes and others of their period, does not aim to produce a theory of knowledge (though something like classical foundationalism does get produced as a by-product by Locke and Descartes). Instead, it tries to generate guidance for epistemic practice, "how we ought to conduct our understandings, what we ought to do by way of forming beliefs" (p. xvi). Regulative epistemology is a response to perceived deficiencies in people's epistemic conduct, and thus is strongly practical and social, rather than just an interesting theoretical challenge for philosophy professors and smart students. This kind of epistemology aims to change the (social) world. According to Wolterstorff, Locke's regulative epistemology was a response to the social and intellectual crisis created by the breakup of medieval Christendom's intellectual consensus. As Locke and others saw it, people's intellectual lives needed to be reformed—based on reason, rather than tradition or passions—because only thus could disagreements about the most fundamental issues, along with the resulting social conflicts, be resolved. But Locke also saw the need for reformation as perennial and generically human: "I think there are a great many natural defects in the understanding capable of amendment." Since "we are all short sighted", seeing things from our own particular angle and not possessing comprehensive faculties, we need to learn the habit and inclination to consult others whose opinions differ from our own and read outside our discipline.[21]

In effect, Wolterstorff distinguishes two kinds of regulative epistemology, a rule-oriented kind and a habit-oriented kind (see pp. 152–4). Rule-oriented epistemology, exemplified by Descartes's *Discourse on Method* and *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, provides procedural directions for acquiring knowledge, avoiding error, and conducting oneself rationally.[22] By contrast, Locke's regulative epistemology, as exemplified in Book IV of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, aims less at the direct regulation of epistemic conduct than

[21] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* and *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, ed. Ruth W. Grant and Nathan Tarcov (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996). See *Conduct*, §§2, 3, pp. 168, 169.

[22] But notice that Descartes writes of "practicing the method I had prescribed for myself so as to *strengthen myself* more and more in its use" (*Discourse On Method*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), Part 2, p. 13; italics added).

at the description of the habits of mind of the epistemically rational person. As Locke comments,

> Nobody is made anything by hearing of rules, or laying them up in his memory … and you may as well hope to make a good painter or musician, extempore, by a lecture and instruction in the arts of music and painting, as a coherent thinker, or a strict reasoner, by a set of rules, showing him wherein right reasoning consists. (*Conduct*, §4, p. 175)

We need not rule-books, but a *training* that nurtures *people* in the right intellectual *dispositions*.

Wolterstorff emphasizes that Locke focuses not on the belief-producing mechanisms or faculties that are native to the human mind, but instead on the ways in which such natural faculties are employed in more complex intellectual practices, which have a social dimension and are culturally shaped. Locke aims to reform that culture, to reshape the practices, and thus to foster in his contemporaries habits that support the reshaped practices. It is implicit in Locke's discussions, and often explicit as well, that the habits in question are not mere habits, but virtues. Many habits are nothing more than skills—expertise in plying methods and techniques—but the habits that Locke describes are in many cases "habits of the heart", determinate dispositional states of concern, desire, and pleasure and pain, rather than mere habituated aptitudes. We will return to Locke when we take up the topic of intellectual practices in Chapter 5.

The virtues epistemology of this book is a return to this tradition of the seventeenth century, to a regulative epistemology which, like Locke's, describes the personal dispositions of the agent rather than providing direct rules of epistemic action. It focuses on forming the practitioner's character and is strongly education-oriented. The stress on intellectual virtues that has arisen among us is a start that can be felicitously developed in the regulative direction. Like Locke's, our book is a response to a perception of deficiency in the epistemic agents of our time. But it is not a response to any particular historical upheaval or social crisis. We see a perennial set of deficiencies which in every generation need to be corrected, and a perennial positive need for formation in dispositions of intellectual excellence. Our response to pluralism of belief systems differs from that of Locke and his fellow promoters of the life of "reason". Our regulative epistemology does not aim at quieting fundamental disagreement. Virtues presuppose

one or another particular metaphysical or world-view background, and the prospect of securing universal agreement about that is dim. However, several of the virtues that we will discuss in Part II broaden minds and civilize intellectual exchange.

The formation of excellent intellectual agents is clearly the business of schools and parents. They are the chief educators of character. But Locke and Descartes think that philosophers have a role as well, and we agree. What is that role, and how does it work? How do philosophers contribute to the regulation of intellectual character? The role that we picture for ourselves both resembles and diverges from the one that epistemologists in the twentieth century implicitly accepted for themselves.

Concept Exploration versus System Creation

The preoccupation with e-definitions of knowledge is often part of a larger project of theory building. Many in the modern period assume, almost without reflection, that a philosopher's business is to regiment the concepts in a domain (say, moral concepts, or epistemic concepts, or ontological concepts) in a monistic, reductive, hierarchical, or derivational style. In epistemology, the debate between rationalists and empiricists has this character, with the empiricists thinking that knowledge about the world ought really to be derivable from sensory experience alone, so that knowledge is somehow "ultimately" a product of experience; while the rationalists think that knowledge is essentially theoretical or conceptual, and experience is, at best, just a kind of material of, or stimulus to, the production of a conceptual system. In metaphysics, physicalism would be an example, with Berkeleyan idealism the mirror opposite. The theory of meaning in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is another example: every sentence that *has* meaning has it by picturing a possible state of affairs. In his later writings Wittgenstein rejects this monistic view for a rich pluralism about how language works. No doubt there are dualists in metaphysics and Kantians in epistemology; but philosophers with the mind-set we are describing feel that such "mixed" theories are a sort of unfortunate compromise, a concession to "impure" thinking or "weak" theorizing. The real goal of philosophy, perhaps unachievable but still ideal, is reduction, the derivation of all the concepts in a given field from some single, key concept.

We find the same monistic presumption in recent virtue epistemology. Simon Blackburn,[23] supposing virtue epistemology to be modeled on modern ethical theories, considers what it would take for an epistemology to be "anything worth calling virtue epistemology" (p. 24). The question, he says, is about conceptual priority: in particular, whether it can be made out that the concept of an epistemic virtue is prior to other crucial concepts like justification (of beliefs), knowledge, and truth (see p. 17). He considers various ways of conceptualizing truth and looks for a way to avoid the conclusion that the intellectual virtues are "handmaidens to the truth" (p. 24). To admit that truth is "prior" to intellectual virtue would be to "throw in the towel" for virtue epistemology. To avoid this defeating conclusion, he suggests adopting an expressivist theory of truth. On this view, truth is a property of propositions, but "propositions are a kind of abstraction from the nature of judgment", and "judgment is an activity somehow constituted by what counts as exercising virtue in doing it" (p. 25). Thus truth, as a product of human activities, might derive from human virtues, in which case we might be able to satisfy the formal requirements for any account to be legitimately called a virtue epistemology. Blackburn does not thoroughly develop this theory, or even advocate it. His purpose is just to determine what it would take for an epistemology to be a virtue epistemology. Any "virtue epistemology" according to which virtues are conceived as dispositions to get the truth by "adjusting our confidences to probabilities", and in which "knowledge arises when we accept propositions in circumstances that require their acceptance", is so weak as to be "only a fig leaf for reliabilism" (p. 18).

All philosophy consists in proposals about the relations among concepts, in proposed orderings of concepts, and the arguments for those orderings. This is clearly what Blackburn is doing in his paper. In philosophy we ask why-questions that are usually not causal. Thus we might ask, Why is intellectual courage a virtue? or Why is it essential to acts of intellectual charity that they be motivated by goodwill for the interlocutor rather than a concern to crush him in argument? or Why is this one belief a case of knowledge and that other one not? or Why does this belief require evidential support and that one not? Why is it good to be motivated in this

[23] Simon Blackburn, "Reason, Virtue, and Knowledge", in Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski (eds), *Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 15–29.

particular way and not that? We might call these *conceptual* why-questions, because answers to them show how one concept can be explained in terms of another, or "derived" (at least partially) from another. Explanation or derivation of this sort is the central activity of philosophers, and not just of philosophers promoting reductive, monistic, hierarchizing theories.

But a philosophical theory, on the hierarchical understanding of it that we have been considering, is not just a pattern of answers to a set of why-questions of this sort, but one that is constrained by special rules concerning what counts as a theory.

> Rule 1: If "A" is an answer to "why B?", then "B" cannot be an answer to "why A?"
>
> Rule 2: There must be one and only one ultimate answer to the string of why-questions: that is, one and only one answer about which further why-questions cannot be asked. (This answer provides the name of the theory.)

So, on the hierarchizing view of philosophy, if we ask, "Why is intellectual honesty a virtue?", and the answer is, "Its motivational component is the desire for truth *and* it is a disposition to be reliably successful in the pursuit of truth", only one of these answers will be ultimate. So if you ask, "Why does being reliably successful in the pursuit of truth make honesty a virtue?", the answer can be given, "Because this kind of success is what the motivational component aims at", but if that is the answer, then you can't answer the question, "why does being motivated by the desire for truth make intellectual honesty a virtue?" by saying, "The desire for truth aims at reliable success in the pursuit of truth". You have three options. You can derive the value of the success component from the value of the motivational component (in which case you have what Linda Zagzebski calls a "pure virtue theory"[24]). Or you can derive the motivational component from the success component (in which case you have a consequentialist theory, "reliabilism"). Or, finally, you can derive both components from a concept of human well-being: the answer to "Why A?" and to "Why B?" is "C": both of the components are virtuous because dispositions with these characteristics are constitutive of human flourishing (in which case we have a "happiness theory"). But the thing you can't do is both or all at the same time—e.g., say "The motivation

[24] Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, pp. 77–80 and *passim*.

component is virtuous because it aims at knowledge, and knowledge is good because it satisfies the motivational component, and both are good because they contribute to human happiness, and they contribute to human happiness because they are good.'' In that case you wouldn't have a theory at all, and would simply be a bad philosopher, since Rules 1 and 2 say what a theory is, and conceptual theories are the proper business of philosophers. If you violate these rules, then if the result can be called a theory at all, it is neither pure nor strong.

In this book we follow a different standard. In fact, in light of what mostly counts as theory among philosophers today, we prefer to say that we are offering no theory, and would say this, except that when we do, our friends start quibbling about what counts as a ''theory''. We will make many conceptual proposals—proposals about how epistemic and epistemic-moral concepts relate to one another, how virtues interact with and depend on one another, the varieties of intellectual goods and how they are connected with one another and with the various virtues, the relations that virtues bear to human faculties and various epistemic practices. In Part II we will offer extended analyses of particular virtues. These analyses will constitute something like ''definitions''; at any rate we aim, by way of our discussions, to make the concepts more definite in our minds. If *such* definition and conceptual clarification is theory, then we are doing theory; but our ''definitions'' will not be formulas that aspire to specify the logically necessary and sufficient conditions for anything's falling under whatever concept is in question; nor will we have any qualms about multi-directional ''derivations'' of concepts. It seems to us that in fact this messy, non-hierarchical logic is actually the logic of the concepts that govern the intellectual life, and that attempts to regiment them into hierarchical orderings satisfying the strictures of typical philosophical theorizing result only in confusing and pedantic analyses that are ill fit to regulate anybody's epistemic life.

We hope that the philosophical work presented in this book will bear out the metaphor of cartography. A map is a schematic representation with a bent toward some particular aspect of the mapped territory. In these two ways, a map is a little bit like a theory, since a theory too is a *schematic* representation pitched toward *certain* questions and not towards others. Thus any map of West Virginia will be an abstraction in these two ways. It is never as big and detailed as West Virginia itself, and it can be

a road map or a topographical map or an economic map of one sort or another, in which case it can ignore many other aspects of the territory. But while cartographers are abstracters with particular interests, they are quite far from being hierarchical derivers. Maps generally have an empirical and messy look. Philosophers, by contrast, are often done in by a neatness compulsion. They like to make crooked lines straight and differences the same. If a philosopher goes to a conference and proposes to some other philosophers that justice is really utility maximization, or that minds are just brains, or that knowledge is always the product of acts of intellectual virtue, or that knowledge is nothing but beliefs produced by properly functioning faculties, she may meet with a lot of disagreement from her colleagues, but she will not be hooted out of the profession. But if a cartographer went to a professional conference and proposed a kind of map showing that swamps are nothing but very wet and low-lying mountains, or that rivers are a deceptively fluid and meandering sort of forest, he would fall on hard times professionally.

Maps are pictures that are typically meant as guides to something or other. The present book means to represent the intellectual life in some of its conceptual messiness, and by virtue of this "realism" to function as a guide. We are particularly attentive to the character traits of the excellent epistemic agent. Our "map" is pitched in that special way, and it is toward the virtues that it is especially designed to guide. Our sketches of the other, related things are subordinated to that primary object of interest. Just as the cartographer can draw a map that highlights the railway system of a country, without any pretension that the railway system is somehow the foundation or source of derivation of everything else in the country, so in this book we want to map the intellectual virtues, without any pretension that they are the key or the foundation or the wellspring of everything intellectual.

How Regulative Epistemology Regulates

We have distinguished regulative epistemology from analytic epistemology. But to say that our virtue epistemology is regulative is not to deny that it's analytic. In fact, what we call analysis is our chief expedient of regulation. By the conceptual work that is distinctive of philosophical discourse, we

propose to facilitate the improvement of intellectual character. If conceptual analysis is done right, it clarifies the character of the intellectual life in a way that can actually help people live that life. Conceptual clarification is an important part of education, and the improvement of intellectual character is a kind of education. It is a truism that greater understanding of a practice or way of life can facilitate that practice. Conceptual clarification is not the whole of education; a person can be quite adept at explaining the relevant concepts without being very serious about the intellectual life, just as a philosopher of ethics may be good at explaining ethical concepts without being very ethical herself. But if conceptual clarification is not the whole of character education, it is at least something, and it is what the philosopher is well suited to contribute.

A few pages ago we noted that all the virtue epistemologists who have written in the recent past are "analytic" or theoretical epistemologists, still focused primarily on the twentieth-century problems of defining knowledge, justification, warrant, and so forth. It is noteworthy and a symptom of this aim that they write almost nothing by way of sustained analysis of particular virtues.[25] If one's purpose is to formulate a definition of knowledge or an account of justification, it might seem an extravagant expenditure of analytic energy to explore in detail the individual virtues. A general conception of intellectual virtue, with a bit of attention to one or two virtues by way of illustration, should suffice.

But if one aims to provide guidance, the focus shifts to a fairly detailed exploration of the particular dimensions or territories of the life of knowledge—in the present study, the intellectual virtues themselves. The descriptions we offer of the virtue we call love of knowledge and the virtues of epistemic humility, caution, courage, tenacity, openness, charity, and generosity *are* the chief regulators, insofar as philosophers can provide such. The concrete description of particular virtues is central and essential to what we are doing here, and distinguishes it from everything else in the field. Thus the chapters of Part II, which are devoted to exploring particular virtues, are the heart of our study. Even someone who denies that the particular virtues ought to be the central focus of virtue epistemology may

[25] The central core of Plantinga's *Warrant and Proper Function* does offer fairly sustained analyses of several of the epistemic faculties insofar as they function properly in the kind of environment to which they are suited, which are Plantinga's counterparts of the intellectual virtues. In Ch. 4 we hope to show that his chapters invite completion in an account of the virtues.

find it useful to have an extended discussion of a few of them. After all, if one is going to base a theory of knowledge on the concept of a virtue, it might be helpful to start with the kind of clarity about virtues that comes from detailed knowledge.

As our brief discussion of Locke indicates, regulative epistemology is nothing new. But regulative philosophical ethics is perhaps easier to recognize. Indeed, before the modern period, in which it seems to be an invisible, compelling, and unquestioned assumption that any philosopher who "does ethics", including "virtue ethics", will be found doing moral theory in the hierarchizing sense, philosophical ethics was often and probably mostly a regulative enterprise. Early in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle comments that "the present inquiry does not aim at theoretical knowledge like the others (for we are inquiring not in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, since otherwise our inquiry would have been of no use)".[26] Yet he also says that the book will bring "no profit" to the ethically immature—the young, the incontinent, those who are ruled by their passions (1095^{a}2–13, pp. 3–4)—the ones whose lives seem to be most in need of regulation. Thus Aristotle envisions the philosophical analysis in his *Nicomachean Ethics* as regulating the lives of his contemporaries and posterity not directly, by the reading of the text, but for the most part indirectly through the work of leaders such as city planners, governors, and teachers who will have read the book and thus gained insights into what virtue and the good life are and how things should be arranged to promote virtue. We might call this the social engineering model of the regulative philosopher's role.

At the other end of the directness continuum is Søren Kierkegaard, who crafts a diverse literary *oeuvre* designed to influence the reader directly. Even the parts of Kierkegaard's writings that are most indirect—the pseudonymous ones—aim to influence the reader without human intermediary, and the most direct of his works are discourses that he calls "upbuilding" because they are intended to build up the character of the reader. He addresses these discourses to what he calls "that single individual whom I with joy and gratitude call *my* reader". His discourses explore virtue concepts such as love, patience, gratitude, hope, faith, humility, and

[26] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross, rev. J. O. Urmson and J. L. Ackrill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1103^{b}26–29, p. 30.

courage. The conceptual work in them is clearly philosophical, in that they explore with great finesse the web of conceptual connections in which the virtue concepts have their definition,[27] but the hierarchizing characteristic of modern ethical theory is entirely absent.

Where does the present work fit among these alternatives? We would like to think that it will serve both the individual reader who wishes, by becoming more conscious of the structure of intellectual virtues, to be "built up" in the intellectual life, and the educational leader or teacher or deviser of curriculum who wishes to know more about intellectual character so as to "engineer" the school, the classroom, his own pedagogical activities, or the curriculum for maximum educational benefit. It is also, of course, for the professional epistemologist who might be interested in exploring another way of doing epistemology, perhaps in the wake of indecision about the state of the discipline.[28]

A Map of the Map

The chapters of Part I lay out some considerations that will orient our analysis of the particular virtues, and they introduce some general theses about epistemology for which the book as a whole will serve as an argument. In Chapter 2 we will examine the intellectual goods—the aims of the intellectual life—and suggest that, for purposes of regulative epistemology, and indeed for an adequate understanding of the intellectual life, we need a broader and richer conception of the epistemic goods than has characterized recent epistemology. In Chapter 3 we will try to refine the concept of an intellectual virtue, in a general way, and suggest that, for purposes of drawing a useful map of the intellectual life, we need to be more sensitive to the rich diversity of structure among the intellectual virtues than virtue epistemology has been heretofore. The virtues themselves come in integrated sets in which particular virtues, some pairs of which

[27] See Robert C. Roberts, "Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, and a Method of 'Virtue Ethics' ", in Merold Westphal and Martin Matustik (eds), *Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 142–66.

[28] See Jason Baehr's "Character in Epistemology", *Philosophical Studies* 128, 3 (April 2006): 479–514, in which he argues that, while virtue epistemology is not very promising as a strategy for addressing the routine questions of late twentieth-century epistemology, it is promising for taking epistemology in quite different directions.

may initially seem to be opposites, balance one another and support, enrich, and qualify one another in a variety of ways. Chapter 4 examines the natural faculties on the basis of which intellectual virtues are built up, and we will argue for diversity here as well. In particular, while most of the faculties play a role something like that of *equipment* for the activities of intellectual virtues, the will—a faculty much neglected in discussions of the intellectual virtues—plays quite a different and central role. The virtues that enable the highest kinds of epistemic functioning involve the *integration* of the faculties, especially the ''will'', and crucial epistemic virtues have this integrative character. Lists of faculties are controversial, and the virtues are relative to schemata of beliefs about human nature and the nature of the universe, so that epistemology is inescapably shaped by metaphysical commitments. Chapter 5 addresses the topic of intellectual practices, since these are the activities that the virtues fit us to pursue. William Alston has brought the notion of epistemic practices into epistemology, but his concept is not the full-blooded commonsense concept of practice that we see at work in sciences, for example. While recent epistemology has devoted almost exclusive attention to the role of the virtues in *acquiring* the epistemic goods, we think that a more adequate guide will need to pay attention to their role in the transmission and application of those goods as well. Part I can be regarded as a sort of general or high-altitude map of the intellectual life, one that provides a perspicuous representation of the relations among the major parts of the territory in question. Part II zooms in on a series of areas within that territory, with attention to their placements in the whole.

2

Goods

Introduction

Intellectual activities, like other human activities, have aims. We collect information and ascertain facts: What is the migratory pattern of the Northern Mockingbird? How many people voted a straight ticket in the last American presidential election? Who murdered President Lincoln? We seek to explain things: How do plants grow? Why do some children develop into delinquents? We seek to predict the future: When will the stock market improve? Will it rain tomorrow? We like to know the truth-value of counterfactual conditionals: If an election were held next week, would the President be re-elected? All of the foregoing is a matter of acquiring and improving beliefs, and the quality of beliefs as beliefs (assuming that they are true) is perhaps well described as their *warrant*.[1] Do we have good reasons for what we believe? Is our information well grounded in some canonical procedure? Do we have good reasons for thinking that the procedure by which our information was generated is likely to yield truths? Do our explanations really explain, or only seem to do so? Have we stopped the regress of explanations prematurely? Are we being too demanding in pushing the regress back? Are our predictions and counterfactual beliefs well-founded, or just guesses? Do the newcomers among our beliefs cohere well with other beliefs that we are pretty confident

[1] We adopt Plantinga's word here, and intend it to be very encompassing. Thus it covers both what philosophers have called "justification" and what Plantinga calls "warrant". Plantinga himself sometimes uses the word this way (see Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 3). "Warrant" is better than "groundedness", because it includes more naturally the excellence in beliefs that coherentists favor; and it is better than "justification", because of the voluntarist and deontological associations that some people feel that word carries. However, we will occasionally use "justification" in the same broad sense, if it seems more natural in the context. It is often used this way (see William P. Alston, *Perceiving God* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), esp. ch. 2).

about? As efforts to improve or test ourselves intellectually, these are all questions with respect to actual or possible *beliefs*.

But we also have intellectual aims that are not belief-oriented. We sometimes seek to improve our minds by way of the immediacy of experience. Even if, by going to Italy, I were to gain no additional warranted beliefs about Italian Renaissance architecture than I had before, nor improve the warrant for the ones I have, I might still want to go to Italy and feast my eyes on the buildings themselves, get a sense for what it is like to walk from one end to another of a great hall, to see the buildings from the various angles that are afforded by bodily presence in a place, to sniff the odors of the centuries. And I may well think my *knowledge* supplemented by the experience. Such immediate experiences do often give me new beliefs or improve the warrant for my beliefs about the buildings, but this need not be the whole point of my wanting the experience. In experiencing the buildings for myself, I come to know the buildings better, whether or not I gain new propositions or improve the warrant for my beliefs.

Again, we may take a course in nineteenth-century Russian literature to deepen our understanding of its novels, and may think that this deepening improves at the same time our understanding of human nature. We also find that as we grow older, we understand the novels of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky in improved ways. We have a perspective on the dialogue and actions that is deeper, broader, and richer than when we were twenty, perhaps because of intervening personal experiences. We think too that our emotional development makes it possible for us to understand these novels in more fitting ways. The same is true in the natural sciences. As a scientist progresses in her research, she does not just accumulate more and better warranted beliefs, or better and better warrant for her beliefs; nor is this the only aim or chief lure of science. The scientist gains, in addition, a deepened understanding of the part of nature to which she directs her attention, and this may be the most satisfying aspect of scientific endeavor. Science is not just about collecting information and proving things. The understanding at which science aims is an explanatory power, no doubt, and in that way is a matter of belief warranting; but it is also a kind of systematic *appreciation* of things.

So we have identified three large rough categories of epistemic goods: warranted true belief, acquaintance, and understanding. These goods don't generally come isolated from one another. Understanding and warranting

are often joined in explanation, and we will argue that an important kind of understanding is exemplified in a certain sophisticated kind of acquaintance. We think that greater attention to the connections between warranted true belief, on the one hand, and acquaintance and understanding, on the other, can help epistemology plumb its potential depths and help it be the serious and important discipline that it can and ought to be.

Routinely, epistemology is denominated the ''theory of knowledge''. Are all the epistemic goods that we call aims subsumable under the concept *knowledge*? That may depend on what one means by ''knowledge''. That well-established information about the migratory patterns of the Northern Mockingbird, gathered in ordinary contexts, counts as knowledge is uncontroversial except among philosophical skeptics. Many ordinary speakers of English are comfortable calling the deepened understanding of Russian novels (or even of human life) ''knowledge'' even if they do not have in mind just the plain information they gained about the historical background of the novels, or biographical information about their authors, or ''factual'' knowledge about the characters and the novels' plots. ''I know more now than I did when I was twenty'' can mean ''My understanding is deeper''. Nevertheless, ''understanding'' does seem a better word than ''knowledge'' for this deepened cognitive grasp. As for the immediate experience of the Italian Renaissance buildings, it seems natural to say, ''Before the trip I had a lot of book learning about those buildings, but now I have first-hand knowledge''. Here we are reminded of the distinction in French between *savoir* and *connaître*. To *connaître* something is to have personal, direct experience of it in some way; the word is particularly used of knowing people, and the person who *connaît* another does not just know *about* him or her (have lots of warranted beliefs about him), but knows *him*, usually by having met and interacted with him.

The kind of knowledge in which twentieth-century English-speaking epistemology specializes is almost entirely some form of belief, where belief is regarded as a propositional attitude. In particular, the definition of knowledge that is tested and debated in, and lies behind, the vast majority of discussions is that knowledge is belief that is good in two ways: it is both true and warranted (justified, well-grounded). And most of the discussion in recent decades has been about the second of these two good-making properties. Is a belief warranted by something like reasons (having reasons, giving reasons, contemplating reasons, being in a position to give reasons,

contemplating the fact that one has reasons, knowing that one is in a position to give reasons, etc.), or is it more like being the seat of a process or mechanism that strongly tends to spawn true beliefs? William Alston has pointed out that the seeming interminability of the debate between internalists and externalists about justification can be explained by the fact that the two main camps do not have the same concept of justification.[2] They trade on different paradigm cases and have divergent intuitions about the same cases because they are really focusing on different epistemic goods, or what Alston calls epistemic "desiderata". In a moment we will look at Alston's "iconoclastic and revolutionary" take on the debate, and will suggest some ways in which it can be extended and exploited in the interests of our own project.

But our current point is that the focus on belief in these debates seems to sideline some of the epistemic goods that must be kept in mind if one is to see "knowledge" fully in the context of the fullest human life. Neither acquaintance nor understanding is adequately understood as a qualification of belief. Did Adam, upon "knowing" Eve, acquire some new beliefs, or ground better some that he already had? Perhaps, but that hardly seems to be the most outstanding aspect of his epistemic progress. Does the person who at age 40 understands *War and Peace* better than he did at 19 do so in virtue of having more beliefs about it, or better warranted ones? Maybe so, but this is far from being the most important part of the story. So the epistemology that focuses exclusively on knowledge and makes knowledge some kind of belief or other has tended to neglect some of the most interesting and important aspects and kinds of knowledge. In the present book we want to do some kind of justice to the whole range of epistemic goods, in particular by thinking about how the personal virtues of the epistemic agent contribute to their acquisition and transmission.

Warrant of Beliefs

Much of the late twentieth-century debate about the nature of knowledge was about just what kind of warrant (or justification) a true belief had to have to count as knowledge. Alvin Plantinga opens his *Warrant and*

[2] William Alston, "Epistemic Desiderata", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 53 (1993): 527–51.

Proper Function with a list of twenty-one "epistemic values" and observes that rival conceptions of warrant "appeal to different epistemic values". Then, in a prodigal gesture of pluralistic liberality, he ends his list by saying "there are a thousand other[s]". Among the "values" that Plantinga lists, some have more obviously to do with warrant (in the broad sense that we are using) than others. Some of the most obviously relevant are "doing one's subjective epistemic duty, doing one's objective epistemic duty, and doing both; ... having a set of beliefs that is coherent to one or another degree; ... [or] the disposition to have coherent beliefs; ... having adequate evidence or good reasons for your beliefs; ... having a reliable set of faculties or belief-producing mechanisms, ... knowing that you have a reliable set of epistemic faculties" (p. 3). The schools or theories in late twentieth-century epistemology form by picking *one* such kind of warrant and trying to defend the thesis that their own favored brand satisfies both the necessary and the sufficient conditions for *any* true belief's being a case of knowledge.

With similar openness to variety in the kinds of warrant, William Alston has responded to the apparently undecidable debates between internalists and externalists, and between different kinds of internalists, and between different kinds of externalists, by saying, in effect, that most of the camps have identified *some* kind of genuine good-making property of beliefs in the general area of warranting, but, suffering from a philosophical monomania about warrant, have overgeneralized their own favorite "necessary and sufficient" conditions. For any of the more reasonable kinds of warranting that are proposed as generally necessary for beliefs to be in good epistemic shape, some beliefs will actually need it, or at any rate can profit from it; but there may be no single set of conditions that all beliefs must meet to be warranted, and that are sufficient to warrant any belief. We think Alston's broad-minded pluralism is a recipe for liberation, health, and a new lease on profundity in epistemology. A natural way to bring together the diverse epistemic desiderata is in a *person* who has the power, inclination, and intelligent flexibility to meet the demands for these desiderata *as occasion arises*. So let's illustrate our point by looking at some of the main kinds of warrant, with a view to showing their necessity in *some* cases, and the general need for agents to be able to achieve these kinds of warrant if they are to be epistemically high-functioning.

Consider first *the basing condition*. Justified beliefs are based on such grounds as perceptual experiences (seeing the bird in the tree), rational insights (seeing the necessity in the truth *no prime minister is a prime number*), and other beliefs. On most views of justification, it is not enough that the ground be present, in some sense; the justified belief has to be *based on* the ground. To use an example from Alston, I believe the true proposition that my wife is not home at the moment, and the ground of that belief is that she told me she'd be out with her friend Suzie. The basing condition says that justification requires that my belief that my wife is not home at the moment be *based on* the belief that she told me she'd be out with Suzie; it would not be enough for me just to *have* the belief that she told me she'd be out with Suzie *and also* the belief that she is not home at present. We could also say that the first belief has to be *my actual reason* for believing the second.

Now consider the following scenario. I have a good reason (she told me she'd be out with Suzie), but I have temporarily forgotten it and now believe the proposition on the basis of the inadequate reason that it is a beautiful spring day. The latter reason is inadequate because it does not, let us say, make the belief that my wife is not at home probable enough (it is too low in what Alston calls "*truth-conducivity*"). The belief that would justify it—that she told me she would be out—is still present but has slipped, for the moment, out of consciousness. So my true belief, that my wife is not at home, is based on an inadequate ground, and thus is not justified, even though an adequate ground is somewhere in the neighborhood.

More than one story might be told about this case. One possibility is that my *real* reason for believing my wife is not home is the good ground that I have forgotten: it is, unbeknownst to me, what is causing me to believe that she is not home, and I am making a mistake of introspection in thinking that the other belief—that it's a beautiful spring day—is my reason for thinking she's not at home. An externalist might think that as long as the truth-conducive reason for believing the proposition is the actual cause of my believing it, my true belief is justified (thus knowledge), while one sort of internalist might think that if I'm not currently applying the one belief to the other, then my belief is not based on its (potential) ground, or that my mistake in identifying my reason for believing my wife is not at home is enough to vitiate the basing relation. In other words,

the internalist may see a necessary connection between the agent's *access* to the basing relation and the basing relation *itself*. For such an internalist, the access is necessary to establishing the basing relation (a weaker internalism requires only that one be *able* to access the basing relation). But for the externalist, the basing condition can be satisfied independently of such access.

The internalist and the externalist will agree that the basing condition needs to be met, but they are of different minds about what it is. What shall we say about the case in which I am being caused, by a truth-conducive ground, to believe that my wife is away from home at the moment, but think, mistakenly, that my belief has another ground which, as it turns out, is not sufficiently truth-conducive? Am I justified in believing that my wife is away from home at the moment, or not? Intuitions will differ. Some will be inclined to think that I am justified, others that I am not. We think that these different intuitions reflect attention to different kinds of case. I will not be able to explain my belief, so if we are in a context where such explanation is a test of knowledge, then I will not be justified in believing the proposition; but in contexts where that ability is not required for knowledge, I will count as knowing. Imagine a context where the stakes are very high. My wife is accused of burning our house down, and when the police ask me how I know that my wife was not at home on the day of the crime, I say it was because it was a beautiful spring day. Here we have reason to think that I am not justified in my belief, because the standards of justification are higher when the stakes are higher. Here I will not only have to have the right reason, but will have to know what it is. But in the usual case, with rather low stakes, most people will happily admit that I was justified in believing that my wife was not at home, and indeed knew it, as long as her having told me she would be out was the real cause of my believing that she was not at home.

So we say that neither the internalist nor the externalist is right insofar as he is making a theoretical generalization about all cases; but that each of them is focusing on a kind of case which does occur, and each has an intuition that is right for that kind of case. Both epistemologists probably use both concepts in their daily lives, but when it comes to philosophizing, they become theorists and give monistic, legislative preference to one of these kinds of justification. Excellent epistemic agents are disposed to practice and accept both kinds of justification, depending on context.

The disposition to form warranted beliefs on the basis of true beliefs that I may not at present be able to access consciously[3], and the disposition to form warranted beliefs by consciously accessing adequate belief bases, are two aspects of epistemic virtue. Through long intellectual discipline, excellent epistemic agents come to have a store of true beliefs that tend to cause them to generate other true beliefs; it would be very cumbersome and intellectually disabling to have to access consciously all the beliefs on the basis of which any new belief is formed. Of course, it is also epistemically virtuous to be able to give an account of current beliefs in terms of earlier established ones, and for some purposes we may want to rule out, as insufficiently warranted, cases like my failure to access consciously the real reason for my belief about my wife's absence from home. For optimal functioning, we need to be able to call some of these earlier beliefs to mind and thus become conscious of their efficacy in bringing about new beliefs. The virtuous agent will have both of these powers of warrant, and will tend to exemplify them at the appropriate junctures of noetic life. Thus Alston's and Plantinga's openness to distinguishing epistemic goods and allowing for a plurality of them, in combination with the virtue epistemologist's focus on the powers of an intellectual agent, makes for a better picture of knowledge than either internalist or externalist theories provide; and it does so by eschewing the typical theoretical project. The virtue epistemologist just looks for an epistemic virtue—or more likely a dimension of intellectual virtues—out of which each of the legitimate kinds of justification might issue, and refrains from generalizing any of them as necessary and sufficient conditions for justification.

Coherence in one's belief set is another epistemic value that helps to warrant beliefs. I walk into the house and see that my wife's tennis racquet is hanging in the closet. I have other beliefs: She told me she'd be playing tennis this morning; she has only one racquet. I seem to have an inconsistent set of beliefs. I am epistemically uncomfortable and set about trying to form other beliefs that will resolve the puzzle. Did she in fact buy that new racquet she's been wanting? Or was it tomorrow she was to be playing tennis? Did she borrow somebody's racquet? Once I resolve the apparent

[3] For some vivid illustrations of this kind of case, see Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2005).

incoherency in my belief set, either by eliminating one or more of my beliefs or by finding another belief that shows the coherency of the original set, each of the beliefs in the set gains warrant.

As long as we do not try to defend coherent*ism*—the view that coherence is a necessary and sufficient condition for any belief's being warranted—we can easily add the coherence disposition to our picture of excellent epistemic character. Human beings have a natural coherence disposition: we are susceptible to puzzlement if our beliefs do not cohere. This natural disposition can be developed into a mature trait that regularly issues in explicit investigations of the coherence of one's beliefs. People can be more or less subject to puzzlement when their beliefs seem incoherent, and more or less resolute and skilled at ferreting out incoherencies and resolving them. Notice that the coherence disposition is not just an ability, but what we might call a "passion". It is like a desire or concern: the concern that my beliefs form a coherent set, that they hang together in relations of implication and non-contradiction. This is an example of a phenomenon that we will be stressing in this book: the functioning of the "intellect" is shot through with "will". The life of the intellect is just as much a matter of loves, concerns, desires, emotions, and the like as the other parts of our lives. A person might have a very great ability to detect and correct incoherencies in his belief sets, but if he didn't *care* about coherence—if he were not subject to discomfort with incoherencies in his belief set—he would not function well intellectually. A mature concern for intellectual coherence will not be an indiscriminate tendency to be fussy about incoherencies, but will be governed by good judgment about which apparent incoherencies are *important*, and about whether they are important *for oneself*, and about whether now is the *time* to be concerned about them. In addition to having the seriousness to care rather intensely about the coherence of one's beliefs, and the practical wisdom to discern which incoherencies are worth getting worked up about, it can take a cultivated imagination and logical skills to notice incoherencies in high-level intellectual contexts.

If firmness is a virtue (see Chapter 7), one also needs to be able to live with incoherence in one's belief system. It is seldom virtuous to give up large numbers of one's important beliefs because of anomalies in one's experience. High intellectual functioning sometimes requires living for periods of time with what appears to be an incoherent set of important

beliefs. So intellectual virtue includes the ability to live with the discomfort of puzzlement: if it is a defect for a person to be able to dismiss from his mind the discomfort associated with having an apparently inconsistent belief set, but also less than excellent to give up too easily on important beliefs and beliefs that seem obviously to be true, then one needs to be able to live with a certain amount of intellectual anxiety. This disposition is akin to courage, which is an ability to function well despite fear and cognate emotions (see Chapter 8). The dialectic between the puzzlement sensitivity, firmness, and courage requires a kind of intellectual practical wisdom to determine when to jettison a belief for coherence's sake and when to live with apparent incoherence. It is noteworthy how much intellectual virtues in this area involve a proper adjustment of emotion dispositions.

A desideratum stressed by some internalists is the fulfillment of *epistemic obligations*. The theory would be roughly that a belief is justified if and only if its holder has performed all his subjective or objective obligations, or both, with respect to its warrant. Since on one view or another of intellectual obligations, we could be obliged to have good reasons or evidence for our beliefs, or consciously to access such reasons, or to have good reasons for thinking that our reasons are good ones, or to have coherence in our belief set, or to be aware of the coherence of our belief set, etc., etc., it is clear that intellectual obligations can include a number of other desiderata. Yet the notion of an obligation does seem to add something to the notion of these other desiderata. It adds the notion of *requirement*, of the agent's being under some kind of *authority*. This might be conceived as the requiring authority of Reason, of Truth, maybe even of God.

What shall we say about intellectual obligations? We happily admit that we have some, but we would make at least three points about them. First, it does not make sense to speak of intellectual duties in every case of knowledge. In knowing that the lights have gone out, by virtue of having open, properly functioning eyes in a room where the lights have just gone out, it seems a stretch to say that I have fulfilled any obligation, and even more of a stretch to say that my fulfilling some obligation is what makes my belief a case of knowledge. Second, intellectual obligations are contextual: *what* I am obliged intellectually to do will depend very much on my circumstances—for example, the circumstance that my belief has been effectively challenged, or that I have been given reason to think that I may have formed it too hastily—and so doing what I am obliged to

do will depend on my having a power of good judgment as to what I am obliged to do. Sometimes I will be obliged to examine critically my reasons for believing what I believe, and sometimes not. Sometimes I will be obliged to give up a belief because it fails to cohere with others of my beliefs, but not always. So the application of the notion of intellectual duty requires the virtue of intellectual practical wisdom, as an ability to judge correctly what is required from situation to situation. And third, we point out a passional virtue that is associated with obligations: namely, intellectual conscientiousness or the sense of intellectual duty. People vary in how strongly they feel the compulsion to do their intellectual duty. The person who is reliable in doing whatever intellectual duties present themselves is a person who not only recognizes and distinguishes duties in context, but who cares about doing what he ought to do intellectually, and so sometimes acts, not just in *accordance* with his epistemic duties, but *from* the sense of duty.

We have argued for abandoning the project of e-defining propositional knowledge by reference to some particular conception of warrant. Every conception of warrant or justification that has been proposed by epistemologists identifies some way in which beliefs are in fact warranted, but none works as a basis for e-defining knowledge. However, all of these legitimate epistemic desiderata can be brought together in one conception—that of the excellent epistemic agent, the person of intellectual virtues. The virtues are traits that include both the abilities and the drives that tend to deliver these epistemic goods, these aspects of propositional knowledge.

Understanding

However, the intellectual virtues are more than the personal basis for attaining propositional knowledge. In fact, we will argue in the rest of this chapter that propositional knowledge, as it is understood by many contemporary epistemologists, is something of an abstraction from knowledge. It is seldom by itself the kind of knowledge that fully functioning human beings (including, we believe, most epistemologists) seek.

Several recent writers have noted that thinking of intellectual virtues as traits of character encourages us to expand our conception of epistemic

goods beyond warranted true belief.[4] Understanding is often named as one of the bonus goods, and in this section we offer some thoughts on that topic. Then in the next section we will discuss an epistemic good that is equally tied to virtues. And we will argue throughout that these diverse goods are frequently so intimately intertwined as to be inseparable. That is why treating propositional knowledge as a separate topic without regard to the knowledge that surrounds and supports it turns it into something artificial.

Consider, first, two related features of propositional knowledge as it is usually treated in contemporary epistemology. The first is that it is knowledge *of a relatively isolated proposition*. The proposition is true, and the subject holds it in an attitude of believing (that is, of attributing truth) and is warranted in holding it with that attitude. The second feature is that, for any proposition, you either know it or you don't; this kind of knowledge *does not come in degrees*. Both of these properties are differences between propositional knowledge and understanding, which is often of complex bodies of propositions (stories, theories, books) or things other than propositions (a drawing, a symphony), and which does come in degrees (a person can increase in his understanding of a proposition or a text or a symphony).

In connection with this last point, it is also instructive to compare understanding's relation to truth with that of propositional knowledge. Something like truth is typically a condition of understanding: If we think that somebody's understanding of a text is incorrect, then we say he doesn't understand it. We admit that he has an interpretation, maybe even an intelligent and highly coherent one (and thus *an* understanding of it), but we say nevertheless that he doesn't understand it. Just as a proposition is thought to be true in virtue of matching the state of affairs that it is about, so understanding anything typically has to be more or less adequate to

[4] See Linda Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 43–50, and *idem*, "Recovering Understanding", in Matthias Steup (ed.), *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 235–51; John Greco, "Virtues in Epistemology", in Paul Moser (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 287–315; Jonathan Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 8; and Wayne Riggs, "Understanding 'Virtue' and the Virtue of Understanding", in Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski (ed.), *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 203–26. See also our report of Plantinga's words at the end of our paper "Humility and Epistemic Goods", ibid. pp. 257–79.

what it is about. When the object is complex and deep, like one's wife or a great text, the understanding of it can be indefinitely *more* right, *more* adequate, *closer* to the "truth". People differentiate understandings of texts with such qualifiers as "deep", "insightful", and "penetrating", and with some objects there seems to be almost no limit to the quantity of depth, insight, and penetration that an understanding can have.

Hugh Benson argues convincingly that Socrates' concept of knowledge in the early dialogues is a concept of understanding.[5] But that concept is not satisfied by an ability to make *some* true connections concerning the object of understanding (say, piety); it requires that its subject be able to produce "an interrelated coherent system of true cognitive states involving that object" (p. 190), thus one that is entirely free of false beliefs and so of any incoherence. So the kind of understanding that Socrates takes knowledge to be does not have the gradual character that we have just ascribed to understanding. Benson tries to make the case that in modern English we have at least *a* concept of understanding that corresponds to this one of Socrates: "We say things like Albert Einstein understands gravity, Richard Feynman understands quantum mechanics" (p. 212), and we contrast their cases with those of people who know a bit about these subjects, but don't *understand* them. Benson is right that we say this sort of thing, in some contexts; but in other contexts we say that Benson's high school physics teacher understands gravity, and if pressed, we would always allow that understanding could be greater: we think that Einstein could have understood gravity even better, had he been able to see how general relativity fits with quantum mechanics.

Not all understanding is deep or insightful, not even potentially so. Consider the understanding of linguistic representations. "I understood what he said, but I don't know what he meant [that is, I don't understand his meaning]." A person says this when he (a) recognizes the uttered sounds as particular words of a language known to him and (b) grasps the syntax of the speech, but either does not know (c) what proposition is being expressed by the sentence or (d) how that sentence fits with other sentences (say, what it follows from or what it implies) and how it fits with particular other sentences that it is supposed to fit with (say, how it

[5] Hugh Benson, *Socratic Wisdom: The Model of Knowledge in Plato's Early Dialogues* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

is consistent with them). Another feature of understanding a sentence is brought out by (e) a person's ability to paraphrase it. The paraphrase may merely trade on a grasp of vocabulary and syntax, but it may also depend on, or be an extension of, grasping how the sentence fits with other sentences; here we are talking about the agent's ability to "go on".[6] (a) through (e) are all matters of understanding. To understand in all five senses is thus a complicated and rich epistemic accomplishment, one which ordinary shallow people succeed at countless times daily. All five of these senses or levels of understanding language involve *grasping connections* or *fitting things together.* To recognize a sound as a particular word in a known language is to "place" it within that language; to grasp the syntax of a sentence is to connect the words of the sentence in a grammatical, logical, sense-making way. To hear a proposition in a sentence is to pick out a place in logical space (though not in Wittgenstein's atomistic understanding of that space's structure). To know what the sentence implies or what implies it is to place the proposition it expresses within a system of propositions. To be able to formulate heretofore unformulated propositions that are nevertheless implications of or proper extensions of the system of propositions is to grasp the connections among both the previously formulated propositions and the new ones. (c) blends into (d) and (e), and (d) and (e) are extensions of (c). A person might understand a sentence well enough to formulate its denial, or to identify some simple implication of the proposition it expresses, without being able to go very far or very creatively. Again, understanding admits of degrees of depth. Consider the following.

A person might be said to understand Schleiermacher's theology well. Maybe this means that if you give him a paragraph of Schleiermacher, or even just a sentence, he not only understands the words, and how the words go together syntactically; in addition to this he can draw the connections of this passage to a number of other things the theologian says or would say. He can perhaps answer, after the manner of Schleiermacher, questions that Schleiermacher didn't actually answer, because he knows how to think like Schleiermacher. Here again, understanding is an ability to grasp or draw connections. And again it admits of degrees. We can imagine people who can do this just a bit, and people who can do it quite a bit more, and then

[6] See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953), Part I, §§151–5.

also people who understand Schleiermacher's thought as well as or better than Schleiermacher understood it himself—people who might surprise Schleiermacher by extending his thought in ways that are authentically Schleiermacherian but which never occurred to the theologian himself.

Zagzebski, accepting the epistemologists' convention of identifying knowledge with propositional knowledge, tries to keep knowledge and understanding quite separate and distinct from one another. She admits that Plato has no analogous distinction, that his discussions of *epistēmē* blend the two concepts that she wants to distinguish. "But since knowledge these days almost always means propositional knowledge, and since I have proposed that understanding has no propositional object, understanding differs from knowledge as normally understood."[7] But the kind of cases we have just considered refute the generalization that understanding is non-propositional. They present a mixture of propositional and non-propositional understanding. The case of understanding the sentence from Schleiermacher is surely a case of understanding a proposition in the sense of (c) and (d); it is a matter of grasping the significance of a sentence and seeing its connections with other propositions in a body of propositions expressed in the sentences of Schleiermacher's theology. On the other hand, (a) and (b) do seem to be non-propositional (or perhaps pre-propositional?). The identification or placing of a word in the vocabulary of a language is not itself the grasping of a proposition, although a case might be made that to grasp a word as a word presupposes the *ability* to construct at least rudimentary sentences. Similarly, but perhaps less clearly, to understand the syntactical structure of a sentence is not itself to understand a proposition. Consider, for example, the sentence "Every first-order theory with an infinite model has models of every infinite cardinality". The present authors think we have no problem grasping the syntax of this sentence, though we do not understand the proposition that it expresses. And we would resist the claim that what we understand in understanding that syntax is a bunch of implicit propositions about English grammar.

So on our view, understanding can perfectly well be directed at propositions, and this is one of the most common kinds of case. But there are also plenty of cases of non-propositional understanding. You can sometimes tell, when amateurs play instrumental music, that they don't understand

[7] Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding", pp. 243–44.

it, or don't understand it very deeply. And clearly, what they are failing to understand are not propositions. When we say that someone knows Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony well, we don't mean that he knows some proposition about it; we mean that he understands it, and also, no doubt, that he is acquainted with it (see the next section of this chapter). Not everything that an excellent basketball or football player understands can be captured in sentences. Maybe understanding how a lawn mower engine works is not propositional. If one is working on the engine, and knows what to do next, propositions may be pretty remote from one's mind. One knows how to get the thing apart and back together, and knows why it won't run if you leave out the camshaft, and so forth. One can imagine someone with excellent mechanical understanding who is unable to put his understanding into words. Again, such understanding is clearly a matter of seeing connections among things. It is also, in most or all of the cases we have mentioned, knowing how to do things (with words, with a lawn mower engine). At least, it is an ability to recognize things (e.g., a word as belonging in a language); understanding is ability.

So understanding differs from propositional knowledge, not in being necessarily non-propositional, but in not being necessarily propositional. Another way it differs is in not necessarily being true (except in the sense we identified a few pages back). One can understand Schleiermacher's theology without its being true, but one cannot know that *p* without *p*'s being true. Very commonly we understand propositions, stories, and theories that we take to be false. We would be in quite a fix intellectually if we couldn't.

Related to the difference between understanding and propositional knowledge is the possibility of alternative understandings of the same text or artwork. Ancient texts like the works of Plato and Aristotle, and the Bible—indeed, all "great texts"—are subject to somewhat divergent interpretations, some of which, though divergent, may be equally validated by the text itself. (Even here there is something like truth, since not every such interpretation is equally true to the text.) In every period of history, the interpretations of these texts are somewhat different, and the reason seems to be that people read the texts in terms of their own questions and concerns, in relation to other things they know and believe, in accordance with their own patterns of thought. It is a mark of the great texts that they have this intergenerational (or inter-epochal) versatility. And because

understanding is a graded good, a text that has great depth may be read and reread by a single individual over a lifetime with changing and possibly increasing understanding.

Given what we've said so far about understanding, it is clear that propositional knowledge cannot stand on its own. Our beliefs often gain their justification via inference, and inference is a phenomenon of understanding—of seeing connections between conclusion and premises. And of course you can't very well know a proposition without understanding it. Even if what you know is not expressed in a sentence—"The bird outside my window is red"—to see a red bird out of one's window involves something like understanding: recognizing the situation as having the elements and structure that it has: namely, that it is a bird, sitting on a branch, outside your window. It involves grasping connections between things, making sense of an array. This involvement of understanding in perception is made more obvious by considering gestalt drawings. Some of them are such that when you first look at them you don't understand them at all: you just see a jumble of lines or patches, of which you make no sense. Then, perhaps as you stare at the figure, you come to see how it works, how the lines or patches make some kind of coherent whole, how the parts of the figure go together.[8] So we see a third way in which understanding is involved in propositional knowledge: not only do you have to understand to believe a proposition, and to ground one belief in another; you have to understand even to have perceptions that give rise to propositional knowledge by way of basic belief formation. Part of the analysis of the proper functioning of basic belief-producing faculties is understanding: a faculty like vision or hearing functions as it was designed to do only if the possessor of the faculty recognizes to a sufficient degree its deliverances.

Some may be inclined to associate understanding with reflective awareness of understanding—to think that one cannot understand something without being aware of understanding that thing. Perhaps this inclination

[8] Here the relation of understanding to truth seems to differ from that of propositional knowledge to truth. Clearly, the person who sees the gestalt figure in one way, and then in another, understands it in the one way, and then the other; but since there seems to be no truth of the matter in this case, there is no such thing as getting it right and getting it wrong. One might think that a figure like the old-woman young-woman figure has two correct ways of being seen, and only if you see it in one of these ways do you understand it (or maybe you fully understand it only if you can see it in both ways). But we think that if an especially virtuosic visualizer were able to see it as a hot air balloon collapsing into a valley, it would not be right to say that she had failed to understand it.

comes from thinking of high-end instances of understanding (understanding a complex novel, a difficult scientific theory), or perhaps from focusing on "aha!" experiences, in which one is vividly aware of the difference between what one now understands and what, prior to the insight, one understood. But we understand many things without being aware of understanding them. We understand the words of an interlocutor even if our attention is entirely on the inferences in the argument he is making. In reading a text we follow most of its logic without ever noticing the many unproblematic inferences we are following in it. When we make the "aha!" transition from seeing the gestalt figure as just a jumble of lines and patches to making sense of it, we are vividly aware of understanding it, but this is the relatively rare case. Most of the time we are unaware of the connection making that goes on moment by moment in our everyday experiences of pictures and the world.

Greco, Zagzebski, and Kvanvig[9] all emphasize the connection of understanding with explanation. The ability to give an explanation of what one believes indicates understanding, and the better the explanation, the deeper the understanding. Of course, the explanation itself expresses an understanding of what is explained only if the explanation is understood. Here too we see a connection with propositional knowledge: in many cases, a proposition is known only because it is based in a justifying proposition; and often the latter constitutes an explanation of the former.

Understanding as we have briefly sketched it is a good that pervades knowledge from bottom to top, from the most modest instances of perceptual recognition to the grasp of the deepest scientific, conceptual, and narrative truths. It is understanding in the upper reaches of this range whose acquisition is likely to profit from intellectual virtues. The understanding of deep and difficult texts and of natural phenomena by the practices of humanistic inquiry and natural science is achieved, typically, only after long and arduous effort, so that the virtue of perseverance seems eminently necessary. When texts are from a period other than our own, so that a cultural divide yawns between us and the writers, a courageous, empathic, and charitable imaginativeness may be required really to get into what the texts are saying, a humble willingness to learn from people we might be inclined to think of as naïve or primitive. Some scientists,

[9] See Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*, ch. 8.

like Barbara McClintock, think that even in the study of such a "lowly" organism as corn, a kind of love and sympathy for what one is studying is an aid or even *sine qua non* of a certain depth of understanding. Where one's intellectual community has a deeply entrenched method, paradigm, or style of interpretation, new understanding may require considerable intellectual autonomy, perhaps even courage. Though one does not always need to be aiming at the truth of the matter in pursuing understanding, one will probably be seeking an interpretation that is true to the text, and in science one *will* be pursuing the truth of the matter. For these reasons, a love of knowledge will be an enormous aid in driving excellence of understanding. Understanding often emerges only with concerted intellectual activities like exploring, testing, dialectical interchange, probing, comparing, writing, and reflecting. These practices require virtues for their best prosecution.

Acquaintance

John Locke comments that

> Knowing is seeing, and, if it be so, it is madness to persuade ourselves that we do so by another man's eyes, let him use ever so many words to tell us that what he asserts is very visible. Till we ourselves see it with our own eyes, and perceive it by our own understandings, we are as much in the dark and as void of knowledge as before, let us believe any learned author as much as we will. (*Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, §24, pp. 200–1)

Locke's generalization is a bit wild. We often know by other people's eyes. As Thomas Reid taught, reliable testimony is a perfectly legitimate way to know some things. Furthermore, we know some things we don't understand. The Babylonian astronomers, by meticulous record keeping, knew in advance when eclipses would occur, without understanding what they are or why they happen (though, as the previous section suggests, one cannot justifiably believe that a lunar eclipse will occur in three days' time without understanding *something* about lunar eclipses—as embodied, say, in knowing one when you see it). But if we take Locke to be making just the more modest point that seeing for yourself, and "seeing" for yourself, is one very important kind of epistemic good, his point is well taken. It would be extravagance in the other direction to claim that in no case is

seeing for yourself a necessary condition of knowing. When the apostle Paul speaks of "knowing the fear of the Lord" (2 Cor. 5: 11), the knowing has different conditions than knowing the price of corn or even knowing a phobia when you see one; here, a condition of knowing is having the experience oneself. In this section we want to explore briefly the good we call "acquaintance", experiencing for oneself.

When we say that someone is acquainted with something, we do not mean that she is currently in immediate cognitive contact with it. We mean that she *has had* such contact and carries within her, via memory, aptitudes of recognition, belief formation, and understanding that are consequent on that earlier contact. This is the kind of cognitive advantage that we ascribe to someone by saying that she has had "a lot of experience"—with, say, deep-sea fishing or the financial markets.

Sensory experience is a necessary condition of some kinds of knowing. It is hard to see how one could know what coffee tastes like without tasting some, and at a more sophisticated level, how one might know a Brahms symphony (in a certain sense of "know") without having heard it. As we commented in the opening section of this chapter, such "acquaintance" has a role or roles in our noetic life that only partially overlap with propositional knowledge. The acquaintance, along with memory, may, all right, form the warrant for believing that what I am now smelling and hearing are coffee and the Brahms symphony. But the epistemic value of being acquainted with the smell and sound is not exhausted in their forming grounds for beliefs. The epistemic point of the acquaintance may be just the "cognitive contact with reality" (to narrow the meaning of a phrase from Linda Zagzebski). In this book we will treat acquaintance not just as a justifier in propositional knowledge, but as an epistemic good in its own right for which virtues are often an interesting kind of condition.

We want to think of acquaintance as separable from belief in many cases. It is true that if I see the bird in the tree, I will most likely believe there is a bird in the tree. This is the force of the Reidian idea that perception is a belief-forming mechanism or faculty. But I don't always or necessarily form a belief as a result of acquaintance. For example, when I become aurally acquainted with a Brahms theme, it is not clear that I come to believe anything. And if I know that I am subject to bird-in-tree hallucinations, I may have the immediate first-hand experience of seeing a bird in a tree without believing that there is a bird in the tree. When I look at a stick in

a bucket of water, I am acquainted with its bent look; but after a bit of this kind of experience, I no longer form a belief that the stick is bent. I "don't believe my eyes". So acquaintance is a kind of knowledge that typically involves understanding, and does not necessarily involve belief, even when it is propositional. (This last occurs when, upon becoming acquainted with the bent look of the stick, I consider the proposition *the stick is bent*, which is the propositional form of my perception, and then deny it or withhold assent.) Here acquaintance is propositional but non-doxastic.

The smell of coffee may be an exception to our observation in the preceding section that most of what may appear to be simple deliverances of the senses are actually constructions that exhibit something like understanding—the placing of things in relation to one another, a grasp of the significance of an entire (if quite circumscribed) situation. Considering what it is to see the gestalt drawing for what it is alerts us to the synthetic complexity of many of our perceptions. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling (tactile), feeling (emotional) are all subject to subjective conditions of objectivity, and sometimes these conditions are very sophisticated. Only the trained mechanic can reach into a dark corner of your car's engine compartment and discriminate tactilely just the nut that needs to be loosened. Only the expert wine taster can discriminate subtle differences among closely related wines. Only the highly trained geneticist can see, through the microscope, the telltale knob on a chromosome. So Locke's phrase "perceive … by our own understandings" is apt. What we understand, in a dispositional sense, conditions what we perceive, and, as we intend to argue in this book and preview in the present section, our character often conditions what we understand.

Imagine two equally intelligent people witnessing the following scene: Because of his race, a member of a racial minority is being subtly directed away from a majority-race neighborhood in which he would like to buy a home, by his real estate agent.[10] The action is subtle enough to require intelligent discernment on the part of the two observers. They both understand the real estate agent's action, but they have different emotional reactions to it. One of them is highly displeased. He feels angry at the agent and sad for the home buyer, whom he sees as representing a long

[10] This example is borrowed from Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood, "Proper Function, Emotion, and Virtues of the Intellect", *Faith and Philosophy* 21 (2004): 3–24, p. 9.

history of senseless suffering at the hands of prejudice. The other observer feels no displeasure, but is mildly amused by the agent's adroit maneuvers and even feels a little admiration for his skill in handling such "problems". In one sense both observers understand what is going on, but only one of them "tastes" the injustice in the situation. Even the morally indifferent observer may be able to subsume the current case under the category *injustice*, thus showing her mastery of the concept of injustice, her moral understanding of the situation. But we want to say that by contrast with the angry observer, she is still missing something epistemically: she does not *appreciate* the injustice, feel it or perceive it as the nasty thing it is. She has a notional understanding of the action as an injustice, but in a moral or spiritual sense there is something she's not "getting". Thus the emotion is a peculiar and indispensable vehicle of knowing something, and the kind of knowledge in question is acquaintance. Emotional acquaintance of this sort is perception which is not sense perception, though the subject also has sense perceptions (sees the neighborhood, hears the real estate agent's voice, etc.).

In the moment of feeling the injustice in that situation, the morally sensitive observer expresses a virtue, his sense of justice. His having this perception depends on a complex background of beliefs, of understanding, and of concern. He has mastery of the concept of justice, easily discriminates justice from injustice in many cases, and cares about just states of affairs. This complex of abilities and inclinations goes into what we might call his understanding of justice, and is his virtue; and his virtue of justice makes injustices salient to him. The perception of the nastiness of an injustice is thus no simple receptivity or the proper functioning of mere faculties. It is the product, above all, of a virtue.

Consider another example. The following passage from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians also illustrates how complex acquaintance can depend on traits of character. Paul prays that his readers will be given first-hand knowledge of the greatness and goodness of God's gifts.

> I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe. (Eph. 1: 16–19a)

This passage is full of terms for epistemic goods: "wisdom", "revelation", "knowledge", "enlighten[ment]". It also has words for the mediators of these goods, perhaps something like what we will call faculties: "spirit", "eyes of the heart". But these faculty words are *encompassing*: They refer not to an isolated faculty—hearing, sight, touch, inference—but to the whole person. (In Paul's vocabulary, the spirit and the heart of a person are the central personal core.) The things that are known are very important: our hope, the riches of the glory of our inheritance in Christ, the greatness of God's power in us. And the way they are known seems to be through emotional response: to have the eyes of our hearts enlightened about these important things is to respond with gratitude, awe, reverence, admiration, love. The kind of knowledge in question here is a sense of appreciation. Expressions like "revelation" and "eyes of your hearts" suggest an immediate appearing or direct acquaintance analogous to sense perception but different from it. The virtues that condition the reception of these epistemic goods are faith, hope, and love. Only a person whose heart is oriented in these ways will "see" the things of which Paul speaks. Such direct acquaintance with the greatness of God's gifts is not necessary for warranted belief in them, but it helps the appreciation. This seeing with the eyes of the heart is a concentrated, perceptual, episodic sort of understanding. Like the moral example above, understanding and acquaintance converge in a way they do not (or do much less) in the smell of coffee.

One of the chief Greek verbs for "know" (*oida, eidō, eidenai*) has strong associations with "see", and the word from which we get "epistemology" (*epistēmē*) means "acquaintance with, skill, experience".[11] Another important word for "know", *gignōskein*, also has perceptual overtones. If you put together the ascent to the Forms in Plato's *Republic* with the ascent described in his *Symposium*, you see that love is an indispensable part of the highest epistemic access. A case can be made that in Plato the intellect and the will are integrated for epistemic purposes. This knowledge is also a kind of seeing, a kind of direct acquaintance by immediate beholding of what is real, including, all-importantly, its value: the object of knowledge (something ever so odd for the modern philosophical temperament) is the

[11] *An Intermediate Greek–English Lexicon*, founded upon the 7th edn. of Liddell and Scott's *Greek–English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996; 1st edn. 1889).

Good. Something formally similar to this is found in the Ephesians passage we just discussed and in the idea of Adam's "knowing" Eve.

Knowledge

Contemporary epistemology has been overwhelmingly preoccupied with knowledge on the model of "knowledge that *p*": that is, knowledge of propositions taken pretty much in isolation; and knowledge is conceived as warranted or justified true belief. In this chapter we have tried to show that such knowledge is only an aspect of knowledge. We say "only an aspect" rather than "only a kind", because propositional knowledge is thoroughly entangled with understanding and acquaintance. Even the most rudimentary cases, in which a true belief is generated by a properly functioning faculty in a congenial environment, require that the subject of the belief recognize something in consequence of the functioning of the faculty, and thus require a rudimentary understanding. In such cases, the understanding is delivered as an acquaintance. The dependence of propositional knowledge on understanding is only the more obvious in cases where the true belief counts as knowledge in virtue of its being inferred from some other belief; for in that case the subject must understand the relationship between the based belief and the basing belief—that and how the one is fit to serve as a basis for the other.

But, as we have seen, acquaintance and understanding do far more than serve as parts of the justification or warrant of beliefs. While they play crucial roles in warrant, they are proper epistemic aims independently of those roles. We often rightly wish to understand even where we are confident that the representations we are trying to understand are not true, and acquaintance often has epistemic value beyond what it adds by way of warrant. Furthermore, as we pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, understanding and acquaintance are classified as knowledge in ordinary, non-philosophical speech. What we seek, as intellectual beings, is not the abstraction that we have been calling propositional knowledge, but the fully orbed package that ordinary people, including educators, and indeed, we must charitably suppose, most professional epistemologists when off the job, call knowledge. If we take epistemology to be about knowledge in this rich, deep, and ordinary sense, the project of providing an e-definition

of it looks even more hopeless than we made it out to be in Chapter 1. We see, then, that the concept of knowledge is like the concept of a game as Wittgenstein describes it—held together not by a *single set* of properties that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for anything's being a case of knowledge, but instead by a *fund* of properties some of which will be necessary, and enough of which will be sufficient, in any given case. Among these properties will be truth, belief, acquaintance, grasp of coherence relationships, and various kinds of justifiers or warrants.

Like Zagzebski, Jonathan Kvanvig argues that understanding is not a kind of knowledge. To this end, he argues that one can have knowledge without understanding. He says,

> The central feature of understanding, it seems to me, is in the neighborhood of what internalist coherence theories say about justification. Understanding requires the grasping of explanatory and other coherence-making relationships in a large and comprehensive body of information. One can know many unrelated pieces of information, but understanding is achieved only when informational items are pieced together by the subject in question. (*The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*, p. 192)

Later (p. 202), Kvanvig describes "the distinctive element" in understanding simply as "grasped coherence relations", and this broader formulation is better, since, as we have seen, the relations in question need not be either explanatory or involve a large and comprehensive body of information. The central feature of understanding is the grasping of coherence in something complex; and a body of information about a subject-matter is *one* kind of complex. Kvanvig is right that people can be said to "know" bits of trivia about, say, Abraham Lincoln, without having any very deep understanding of Lincoln's personality and life, or the historical context. Perhaps they know these by testimony: they looked them up in a reliable book in the course of playing Trivial Pursuit, and have a good memory for such fact-bits. But understanding is required even for this trivial kind of knowledge. If the fact-bit is that Lincoln was elected President in 1861, or that he was the sixteenth President of the United States, the knower will surely have to be able to place *president* among political leader concepts and *United States* among names of nation-states, and *elect* among political mechanism-concepts, etc. A parrot that had been taught to say "Sixteenth US president" when given an authoritative cue would not know even this

bit of trivia, and one reason is that it wouldn't understand what it was saying.

In his effort to show that understanding is not a kind of knowledge, Kvanvig also argues that one can have understanding without knowledge. He imagines someone whose historical understanding of the Comanche dominance of the southern plains of North America from the late seventeenth until the late nineteenth centuries consists in her ability to answer correctly any question you might ask her; that is, she grasps all the coherence relations among the truths about this subject (p. 197). However, her beliefs are only accidentally true: among the history books from which she might have got her information, three out of the four give incorrect accounts; she happens to have read the one that gives a correct account, but without any basis for preferring it. So, because of this Gettier-like situation, she does not have knowledge of these historical truths, though she does understand the field. We have defended a "family resemblance" concept of knowledge that allows for differing sets of necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge, depending on differences of cases (e.g., low-end/high-end) and differences of context (e.g., casual versus rigorous). We have also seen reason for thinking that an ordinary careful speaker of English would have no hesitation in calling this woman's mastery of Comanche history "knowledge". And we might speculate that such an intelligent non-epistemologist, if asked why he calls her accomplishment knowledge despite its somewhat accidental character, would point to the following: she did, after all, get her facts right, she got them from a reliable source, and she grasps the coherence relations among them. Surely this is enough to claim that she knows that history!

Conclusion

In closing this chapter, let us think again briefly about the nature of epistemology. It is the study of knowledge and the conditions of its acquisition, transmission, and application. We have proposed, in outline, a concept of knowledge that is broader, richer, and deeper than the one on which most English-speaking epistemologists focused during the latter half of the twentieth century. In this book we are especially interested in the role of character traits in facilitating the acquisition, transmission, and application

of knowledge. How is our epistemology related to ''internalism'', ''externalism'', ''reliabilism'', ''virtue reliabilism'', ''virtue responsibilism'', ''proper functionalism'', ''agent reliabilism'', ''pure virtue theory'', ''coherentism'', ''foundationalism'', and other such theories? Our offering in this book is none of the above theories, and is not the same kind of discourse as such theories. Yet it is clear that each of those proposed definitions captured something important about at least some cases of knowledge. We will not hesitate to talk about reliability, proper functioning, coherence, responsibility, motivation, and indeed just about anything that any epistemologist has proposed as a condition of knowledge. We hope to show how such things are related to the epistemic virtues and the knowledge that they can condition, and our aim in sketching these connections and exploring this conceptual territory is to make ourselves, through philosophical thought, more excellent intellectual agents and to help others do the same.

Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology

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CHAPTER

3 Virtues

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Abstract

Regulative virtues epistemology does not give the concept of an intellectual virtue a foundational role in the development of a theory of knowledge. Instead, the virtues are a *focus* of analysis. Intellectual and moral virtues are not distinct categories of virtues, as other treatments have supposed them to be. The chapter attempts to answer such questions as: what makes a trait of personality a virtue? How are the intellectual virtues related to human nature? What accounts for competent, but divergent accounts of the virtues? What makes an intellectual virtue more than just an intellectual application of a virtue? Are virtues all 'perfections' of human nature? How are the tasks of the intellectual virtues divided among them? How are virtues individuated? How does motivation figure in the constitution of an intellectual virtue? Do all the virtues have a 'motivational component'? If so, do they all have it in the same way?

Keywords: human nature, motivational component, skills, success component, will

Subject: Epistemology, Moral Philosophy, Meta-Ethics

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Introduction

The central concept in our study—though not its theoretical basis—is that of an intellectual virtue. Part II contains discussions of several intellectual virtues, selected with a view to representativeness, to breadth of coverage, and to displaying both the diversity and the interconnection of the virtues. We hope that Part II will give the reader a balanced view of excellent intellectual character; it is the heart of the book and the place to go for a detailed understanding of the concept of an intellectual virtue. In the present chapter we intend merely to outline that concept, to discuss it somewhat abstractly and by way of introduction.

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. Virtues have both intellectual and non-intellectual bearing, though in one way or another all virtues have a cognitive aspect. We will explore the relations of the virtues to cognition. Many virtues are "perfections", or mature completions of natural (that is, given) human faculties; but some are dispositions that correct for pronenesses to dysfunction and error

in certain common situations. Many virtues are dispositions of the will—that is, of desire, goal seeking, concern, attachment, willpower, emotions, and choice; and again, all virtues bear some relation or other to the will (sometimes, as in the case of courage, virtuous motivation derives from other virtues). The will is so important that we will devote a section of this chapter to sketching it. Virtues can also be skills, or involve skills, though not all skills are virtues, since many skills fit us for functioning excellently, not in generic human contexts, but in specialized ones. Again, all virtues bear some relation or other to skills by which we
p. 60 negotiate generically human activities or situations for activities. ↳ Intellectual virtues, as we understand them here, are simply acquired bases of excellent intellectual functioning—this being one of those important and challenging generically human kinds of functioning. We find it unhelpful to try to draw a strict line between the intellectual and the moral virtues. So we will speak of intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual generosity, where more traditional usage might speak of a moral virtue applied to an intellectual context. If the classical division of theoretical from practical reason is artificial, given the enormous importance of practices in intellectual life (see Chapter 5), so is the division between intellectual and moral virtues. So all the virtues are intellectual (as well as "moral" and "civic"). The difference between our study and a study in virtue ethics is simply that we are interested in the relations between the virtues and the intellectual goods.[1]

We realize that our way of using "virtue" is not the only legitimate way. Earlier we mentioned some epistemologists who think of properly functioning cognitive faculties as epistemic virtues. While we do not deny that properly functioning faculties can be called "virtues",[2] they are not what *we* call virtues. Chapter 4 will explore the concept of a faculty and the relations of faculties to virtues in our preferred sense.

Will

Before we sketch our concept of a virtue, let us reflect on a notion that will be important throughout our discussion of virtues in this book. We propose that the will is a central epistemic faculty, and that its proper formation is crucial to intellectual character. What do we mean by "will"?

p. 61 People have abilities or aptitudes: for example, the ability to lift a certain amount of weight, to do calculations of a certain degree of complexity, to see very small objects with the naked eye, to play the guitar, etc. But these aptitudes are not put into play unless their possessor has the will to do so. Someone might be the best guitarist in the world, and yet never play, because he doesn't want to, isn't motivated, doesn't find the prospect attractive, doesn't have a reason that moves *him*. Thus we might say, as a first point, that the will is that in the human mental repertoire that motivates, that impels towards action. In English we have an extensive array of words that capture aspects of will: "desire", "attraction", "concern", "care", "appetite", "preference", "enthusiasm", "interest", "love", "urge", "inclination", "motivation", "attachment", and "goal", to mention some of the main ones. And the negative counterparts of many of these terms also refer to states of the will: "repugnance", "repulsion", "disinclination", which we might call positive negative counterparts, and then the simple negative counterparts (indifference), which we express with the word "lack": lack of inclination, lack of concern, etc., which are also states of the will, states in which the will is in abeyance with respect to some object or other.

So we might say that the will *moves* us. The notion of motion is built into the etymology of some of the will vocabulary: "motive", "motivation", "emotion", and, of course, "move". But the idea that the will moves us may not be quite right in this connection. We might better say that the *object* moves us *because of* the state or condition of our will. I am moved to play the guitar because the prospect of playing attracts me; I am moved to help a sufferer because I care about him. The passive language seems appropriate here: I *am attracted* to playing the guitar because I like to. Will in this sense is crucial to the intellectual virtues, because

the intellectually excellent person must be one who finds knowledge attractive, enjoys it, is moved to seek it both for himself and for others, and enjoys the epistemic practices.

The foregoing paragraph doesn't describe the will of an adult human being. Such a person is not simply a set of aptitudes plus a set of susceptibilities to be attracted by this or that prospect or object. People are not just moved to action or behavior by being attracted to this or that in virtue of some state of their likes and
p. 62 dislikes. People *assess* the objects of their urges and desires and attractions for their *eligibility*, and ↳ then *choose* what to do. People often have conflicting desires, and they may judge some of their desires to be inappropriate or inopportune, or just plain bad. This capacity to choose is also a function of the will. Someone may object that this is confusing because, clearly, choosing is not just a matter of being attracted to something and "going for it", so to speak, but involves thinking, deliberation, considering reasons pro and con; and that's not part of the will, but part of reason. But this objection makes the mistake of thinking that the will and reason have to be separate. Even the first aspect of the will that we mentioned—being attracted to something or some prospect—typically involves the "intellect" in human beings. For example, a person can't want to play the guitar unless he knows what a guitar is and what it is to play it. Will as the power of choice depends on will as attraction. Even if I choose to do what I don't want to do, because it is my duty, I have to want to do my duty. And generally, any consideration on which a person makes a genuine choice must have a certain attractiveness for him (which is not to say that it has to be the alternative that feels most attractive to him).

Here the passivity that we noted in connection with the first function of the will is mitigated. In deliberately choosing, a person takes some command of his desires and attractions and exercises his agency in adjudicating among them. But choice is more than adjudication of reasons. It is, upon such adjudication, the undertaking of action. It is acting on deliberation. Merely having settled on what to do is choice only if the person acts (or would have acted, in case he was prevented by circumstances, or compelling new reasons have brought about a change of mind). We include in the choosing function of will that of making an effort. Actions are sometimes not completed, but they count as fully chosen if the agent has made a sufficient effort. Let us call the first function of the will *attraction*, and the second (that of choice and effort) *execution*. Since this second function of the will is involved in many actions, and since intellectual practices (see Chapter 5) are made up, in part, of deliberate actions, the second aspect of the will is clearly relevant to intellectual virtues. With respect to both of the functions of the will that we have glanced at so far, the will can be well or ill formed. For example, in the attraction function, the will is well formed intellectually if it finds genuine intellectual goods sufficiently attractive (see Chapter 6), and in the executive function, the
p. 63 will is well formed if it is disposed to make good intellectual choices. We do not mean to suggest ↳ doxastic voluntarism; the choices we have in mind are not of beliefs, but of actions that are involved in intellectual practices, such as searching for more evidence and getting one's interlocutor to clarify his statement before launching into a criticism.

A third aspect or function of the will we call "willpower". Mature people engage in impulse management. They become wise about their emotions, their appetites, and their desires, and through self-management practices and efforts and the strengths that accrue from these, they come to be able to suppress unwanted behaviors and actions and to extinguish or modify unwanted deliverances of their wills. For example, a mature person will usually be able to conquer fear in situations where he or she needs to act in spite of the fear. This presence of mind may take the form of acting through the fear; but more typically, it will involve calming it. The same will be true of anger, shame, impatience, and physical appetites or social urges. The mature person is more or less constantly monitoring his own desires and other affects in situations where these are most aroused, and is not just monitoring, but also managing these, enhancing some and mitigating others. This aspect of the will is as important in the intellectual life as elsewhere. For example, in dialectical exchange, in classroom teaching, in reading (say, criticisms of one's work, or the irritating work

of people from other disciplines or of people with a very different approach to one's own discipline), emotions and urges will arise that need to be managed in the interest of excellent intellectual practice.

In a fourth aspect or function, the will as we understand it is the source of emotions. As in the other three functions, here too the "intellect" is involved. We take emotions—at least the paradigm cases of adult human emotions, the ones that chiefly interest us in our epistemological explorations—to be construals or "takes" on situations. The subject of anger, for example, perceives his situation as containing an offense (what he is angry about), an offender (the one he is angry with), and an offended one (this might be the subject himself, or someone he cares about, or a community or even some non-personal object such as a mountainside, in case the subject is angry about something the offender has done to the mountainside,—e.g., strip-mining). Furthermore, the subject construes the offender as culpable (if, through new information, the subject comes to construe the offender as not culpable of the offense, he ceases to be
p. 64 angry). What has this to do with the will? Emotions are not just any kind of ↳ construal, but are concern-based construals. A person will not be angry unless he cares about what is offended, and cares about the offense against him (her, it). So the emotion is based in the will (based on concerns), but it also generates a consequent concern—in the case of anger, the desire that the offender "get what he deserves". Other emotions have other consequent concerns—embarrassment, the urge to hide; fear, the urge to avoid a danger, etc.[3] Emotions are relevant to intellectual functioning in a variety of ways, some of which we will review later in this chapter.

These, then, are the four functions of the will as we conceive it in this book: (1) attraction, desire, concern, attachment, etc.; (2) choice, effort, and undertaking; (3) willpower; and (4) emotion.

What is a Virtue?

Certain activities or situation types for activities are generically human. Virtually every human group exchanges goods, pursues intimate interpersonal relations (friend–friend, spouse–spouse, parent–child), worships the divine, acts in the face of impeding or diverting impulses (fear, impatience, fatigue, irritation, anger, etc.), inquires, and passes knowledge from one person to another. Such activities, or activities in such situations, can be performed well only by people in whom certain capacities and dispositions have been formed by education (in a broad sense). Properly functioning faculties are not enough. The education in question is not just "technical"—a training in specialized skills—but is also a formation in *human* excellence. The trait products of such an education for life are called virtues.

As a way of introducing our concept of the intellectual virtues, we will consider, in this chapter, several questions that might be raised about their nature. What makes a trait of personality a virtue? How are the intellectual virtues related to human nature? What explains competent, but divergent, accounts of the virtues? What makes an intellectual virtue more than just an intellectual application of a virtue? Are virtues all "perfections" of human nature? How are the tasks of the intellectual virtues divided among them? How
p. 65 are virtues individuated? How does motivation figure ↳ in the constitution of an intellectual virtue? Do all the virtues have a "motivational component"? If so, do they all have it in the same way? To what extent must an intellectually virtuous person be "autonomous" in his possession of the virtue—that is, independent of communities that support his virtue in a variety of ways? We will pay close attention to the particular intellectual virtues, trying to avoid the abstraction and overgeneralization characteristic of recent discussions of them.

Virtues and human nature In the history of philosophy virtues have often been thought of as fulfillments, realizations, mature states, or "perfections" of human nature or some aspect thereof. Thomas Aquinas, for example, defines a human virtue as a "maximum of a [human] power [*potentia*, faculty]" (*Summa Theologiæ*, 1a2æ 55,1)[4] and, again following Aristotle, makes most central the distinctively human power of

reason (see *Nicomachean Ethics* I. 13). We draw on this tradition in developing our concept of a virtue. We think of human beings as persons and of the virtues as excellences of persons, traits that make one excellent as a person. The classical idea is that, like other biological species, the human species has a set of potentials and developmental parameters that must be respected if the individual is to become an excellent specimen of its kind. If the DNA of any species is or contains a set of instructions for what the mature individual is *supposed* to be like (no guarantee that it *will* be like this, since many influences from the environment have their effects on development; the environment can fail to cooperate with the instructions, so to speak), then human nature is a sort of psychological DNA, a DNA of the personal life (no doubt conditioned by the physical DNA). The instructions are an internal disposition or tendency of the organism, tuned to the kind of environment in which the organism will live out its life. As psychological, the instructions have to be honored in a process of education; the devices of education or upbringing are, in this case, the relevant environment, social and otherwise. If the education is right, the human nature will be realized, within the limits particular to the individual; if it is poor, the development and outcome are very likely to be poor too, no matter how excellent the instructions in the nature of the person.

p. 66 Human nature is tailored for an environment of certain specifications, both physical and psychological. Physically we do very poorly if we lack water or the right nutrients or an atmospheric temperature within certain bounds. Socially we are made for a set of relationships with parents initially, then with peers and friends, and very likely with a spouse and then children of our own. And these relationships need to be of a certain positive and benevolent nature if we are to develop properly and thrive. Here already environmental and developmental parameters, and consequently the shape of maturity, are somewhat contestable. The concept of virtue in the Stoics (what they call *apatheia*) is that of a fulfillment of human nature, all right, but the concept of human nature is not quite what it is among Christians and adherents of several other outlooks. The Stoics tend to think of human nature as that of a highly individualized rational psyche to which concerns—especially highly intense ones focused on changeable objects such as health and wealth and friends—are intrinsically foreign, and therefore vicious. This concept of human nature, with its corresponding virtue of *apatheia*, has consequences for the nature of the social relationships of the mature individual. Whereas Christians think it perfectly appropriate and mature to care about others to the extent of making oneself subject to intense grief at their loss, the Stoic thinks of such attachments as immature and vicious. Such a metaphysics of the person has obvious consequences, as well, for moral knowledge and any virtues that may be supposed to foster it. It also involves an understanding of the relation of the individual to his environment: The real environment for the Stoic is not so much an immediate society of friends and relatives and associates, and tasks relating to these, as the universe at large, thought of as a rational (ordered, law-governed) whole.

In Christianity, the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ makes most central and basic the virtues of faith (in that redemption and in God as the source of it), hope (for the completion of that redemption in the new world of resurrection), and love (as the reciprocation, towards God, and the imitation, toward one's neighbor, of the love that God has shown in that redemption). But, tied as these virtues are to the Christian story, they do not even occur in other outlooks. Furthermore, they influence the structure of the other virtues. If we think of ourselves as redeemed from sin by God and destined for an "eternal weight of glory",
p. 67 courage and humility and other virtues will be quite different than if we thought of ourselves ↳ as simply mortals in an indifferent universe. Because of the belief that we are creatures of a loving God, we are encouraged to stress our dependence and thus our interdependence in a way that Aristotle, for example, does not. Thus, gratitude is a virtue on the Christian conception of human nature, but not on Aristotle's; and consequently Christian generosity is an attitude significantly different from Aristotelian liberality (see our discussion in Chapter 11).

Thus, different conceptions of the human person and his place in the universe yield strikingly different pictures of proper human functioning, and thus of the virtues. We have offered a general characterization of

human virtues in the second paragraph of this chapter, but in light of the dependence of any human virtue on some conception of human nature, we see that this general characterization is only formal. If we actually analyze particular virtues, we see that at some point in the development of the specificity of the concept, we will have to advert to some contestable view of human nature. This fact is often hidden from view, in the writings of philosophers about the virtues, either because they do not admit the contestability of the conception on which their own analysis rests, or because their analyses remain too abstract to bring out the special features. One of our complaints about the literature on the virtues—intellectual and otherwise—is the paucity of analysis of particular virtues.[5] This deficiency is not just a gap, but a hole that causes structural weakness throughout the discussions. We hope that Part II of this book will begin to remedy this deficiency in the literature.

In our initial characterization of a human virtue we stressed the way in which virtues fit us for excellent functioning in generically human situations. We can see now that what one takes to be a generically human situation can vary from outlook to outlook. For example, non-Christians do not think that the situation in which all human beings find themselves is a universe ruled by a loving God who has offered redemption to us through Jesus Christ. So non-Christians do not think Christian faith is a virtue, but Christians do. By contrast, we can probably count on far more cross-outlook agreement that being inquirers and passers of
p. 68 knowledge and understanding to and from one another are generic features of our human ↳ nature and situation. Consequently, we may be able to secure quite a bit of cross-outlook agreement about features of traits that fit us to function well in those activities and situations.

Regardless of what, precisely, one thinks a human being is and what her generic situation is, we take virtues to be traits that make a person excellent *as a human being* rather than, for an example, *as a scientist*, *as a lawyer*, or *as a basketball player*. And this provides an answer to a possible objection to the notion of intellectual virtues as we conceive them. Having denied the classical distinction between moral and intellectual virtues, we might seem to have laid ourselves open to the following *reductio* argument:

> If courage is an intellectual virtue just because it fits one to pursue well the intellectual goods, then why are there not such virtues as ice hockey courage and tree-climbing courage and hostess courage? It is just as absurd to think that intellectual courage is a special virtue as it is to think that courages in these other contexts are special virtues.

We don't think so. Ice hockey, tree climbing, and hosting can be challenging, and they may be important for particular individuals, but they are neither generic nor as important to human life as intellectual activities are. We are not at all denying that courage can be applied in these special contexts; courage is nothing if it is not applicable in the special circumstances of an individual's life. We are saying only that courage in hosting contexts does not have a general claim to be set aside for special treatment in the way that courage and other intellectual virtues are being privileged for special treatment in this book.

What about the idea that virtues are "perfections" or "completions" of human nature? We have no objection to the idea if it is taken in a somewhat weak or casual sense, but both words have an absolute ring. We do not think that a trait can be called a virtue only if it is as good as possible. Aristotle is ambivalent about calling the traits of moral strength virtues. A person who is reliably able to control his untoward anger has a trait that we could call self-control (*enkrateia*), and Aristotle agrees that this trait is good conditionally: that is, it is good for someone who is disposed to episodes of untoward anger. But since the condition for self-control's being a good trait is a defect, Aristotle is reluctant to call *enkrateia* a virtue. He is pretty
p. 69 optimistic about the possibility of some people becoming "perfect" in the ↳ ordinary sense—entirely without defects. We are not optimistic about this. It seems to us that everybody is defective in one way or another, and thus in need of virtues that are not exactly "perfections", but "correctives". The virtues of strength of will are such corrective traits. Another implication of "perfectionism" that some thinkers feel is that no virtue can be expressed in evil action. This principle rules out such actions as courageous theft and

compassionate injustice. We will argue in Part II that such actions may express virtues. Furthermore, we think that virtues come in degrees or amounts. Thus one person can be more humble or courageous than another, and an individual can grow in honesty and self-confidence. So we do not exactly endorse a definition of virtue that attributes to virtues perfection or completion of the faculties.

Virtue and virtues Thomas Aquinas points out that a disposition is called a virtue for one or both of two reasons: (a) it *enables* us to do something, gives us an aptitude; (b) it induces or *motivates* us to practice the aptitude (*Summa Theologiae* 1a2æ 57.1, response). Under the influence of the Aristotelian tradition, Aquinas goes on to say that the intellectual virtues other than practical wisdom are called virtues for the first reason only. They have the character of an aptitude, but do not, in themselves, motivate. Linda Zagzebski's conception of a virtue has the same two elements, which she calls a "success component" and a "motivational component"; but, disagreeing with Aquinas, she insists that virtues, including the intellectual ones, each have both components. Thus she defines a virtue 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" (*Virtues of the Mind*, p. 137). These claims raise questions about how the individual virtues are related to the whole personality, and in particular the whole configuration of virtues in the virtuous personality. How are virtues related to virtue? How are the virtues interconnected in the personality? What justification have we for distinguishing particular virtues, as our ordinary language does when we speak of justice, humility, courage, charity, tenacity, and many others as distinct virtues? How do the success and motivation aspects of the virtuous life relate to the particular virtues? Do all virtues have both components, as Zagzebski thinks? Do the chief intellectual virtues lack the motivational (appetitive) component, as Aquinas thinks?

p. 70 Let us start with Aquinas, who says:

> Now since the speculative intellectual habits do not perfect the appetitive part nor concern it in any way, but have regard only to the intellectual part, they may be called virtues insofar as they confer an aptitude for good operation, namely, for considering truth, for truth is the good work of the intellect; however, they are not called virtues in the second way as though they made a power or a habit be used well (57,1, response).

But since the *use* of the intellectual virtue presupposes a movement of the will, Aquinas seems to be saying that a person would never actually achieve the goods proper to the speculative intellectual virtues if he did not have a properly disposed will. And if we look at people of extraordinary intellectual excellence, we see that they have both aptitude—well-trained intellectual powers—and a drive or concern or will to understand, to discover truth, to ground their beliefs ever more firmly. Richard Feynman had extraordinary powers of imagination and inference in his field of particle physics.[6] But these aptitudes were not separable from his love of figuring things out, his awe before the magnificence of the universe, and his drive to understand more and more about it. It is true that we can imagine Feynman in the situation of Antonio Damasio's "Elliott", a man with normal or above average intelligence as measured by the standard intelligence tests, who, because of damage to the frontal lobes of his brain, lacked motivation to put his intelligence to use.[7] Had Feynman suffered "Elliott's" kind of brain damage, he would, presumably, have retained his extraordinary *ability* to do the work, while ceasing to *care* about doing it. But in the normal, virtuous non-brain-damaged Feynman, aptitude and will were bound together.

Aquinas admits that one cannot actually bring the goods of the speculative intellect to fruition if the will is not contributing its bit, but he still wants to insist that virtues that fit people to do the kind of work that Feynman did are seated entirely in the intellect, and not in the will. We can offer at least two arguments to the contrary. First, notice the etiological reciprocity between these aspects of a person's intellectual
p. 71 constitution. Without the will to understand, one will not have developed one's powers of observation ↳ and inference, and without developing such powers of success in getting insights and truths, one will

become discouraged and will lose the will to proceed. Second, notice that the objects of a person's intellectual *abilities* are the very same things as the objects of one's intellectual *will*: in the case of Feynman, the facts about the fundamental physics of the universe. What he knew was the very thing he wanted to know, and what he wanted to know was precisely what his intellectual powers allowed him to know. A third argument for the inseparability of these faculties in the virtues of the intellect applies less obviously to the case of physical science than it does to moral and religious knowledge. Aquinas says that faith is a virtue of the speculative intellect, and that it cannot do its job unless moved by the consent of the will; but when the apostle Paul speaks of knowing the glorious things of the gospel by seeing them with the eyes of the heart (Eph. 1: 18), he seems to suggest that the truths come across to the knowing subject via such emotions as joy and hope; it is not just that the will *moves* the intellect *into operation*, but in this kind of case the will (as the seat of these *affectiones*) is *part* of the intellect. The operation of the intellect is itself affective; the will itself functions intellectually. The emotions of faith are a power of "seeing".[8] Something analogous could be said about our case of the person who, only through his indignation, appreciates properly the injustice of a racist real estate agent. (For both of these examples, see Chapter 2.) We grant the usefulness of distinguishing intellectual and other faculties, and will discuss this issue in Chapter 4. But it seems to us gratuitous to posit that each virtue must be "seated" in one and only one faculty. Damasio's Elliott, in losing his will for inquiry, has lost his intellectual virtue, even though his "intellect" remains intact. In what follows, we will suppose that virtues reside, not in faculties, but in people, and that they integrate functions from more than one faculty.

What about Zagzebski's claim that every intellectual virtue has both a success component and a motivation
p. 72 component? Our denial of Aquinas's ↳ principle might seem to imply our acceptance of Zagzebski's, but we think that a close look at the structure of intellectual virtues shows considerable variety among the virtues as to both the success and the motivation components.

It is beyond dispute that intellectual motivation dispositions and dispositions to epistemic success are components or aspects of the excellent intellectual life *as a whole*. The epistemically virtuous person values, cherishes, seeks, and appreciates intellectual goods. She wants to know important truths and to understand how things work; among the things she wants to understand is how the "whole" of reality works, so she is internally driven towards "wisdom", and thus considerations in the neighborhood of theology. She craves insight, or what we have called "acquaintance", in these matters; she wants to "see for herself" in some kind of striking, relatively unmediated way; she is not satisfied with operating on mere hearsay or induction or inference, but for some things wants contact with reality. Ultimately, perhaps, she wants to combine knowledge, understanding, and acquaintance in "the beatific vision". If we are Augustinians, we will think that the drive towards this worshipful contact with ultimate reality, a contact that is at the same time "epistemic" and "moral", is planted in the nature of every human being, whether that person is aware of the drive or not. In that case ultimate intellectual excellence will involve an *awareness* of the drive and an *intentional* pursuit of its object. And if such epistemic goods are the agent's desire, clearly she must be equipped to approximate success. She needs approaches to questions that will yield answers; she needs epistemic habits and skilled faculties that will accomplish the work of justified believing, seeing, and understanding. She needs the ability to oppose or circumvent obstacles, internal and external, to her coming to know. She needs education and training and formation to these ends. And she needs practices that are well designed for harvesting the epistemic goods.

But to say that *each* intellectual virtue has its *own* distinct motivation and success components, and that this motivation and success are distinctively intellectual, seems to us as awkward as the supposition that each virtue must be seated in one and only one of the intellect, the will, or the sensory appetite. Let us sketch briefly some of the intellectual virtues, to display the variety of ways in which motivation and success
p. 73 dispositions characterize ↳ intellectual virtues. (Some, but not all, of the virtues sketched here receive more extended treatment in Part II.)

Consider first *love of knowledge*, a virtue that is basic to the whole intellectual life. Love of knowledge is a disposition to take an interest in information, understanding, and direct epistemic contact with reality, to enjoy intellectual activities as such, to be excited by the prospect of learning, and so to engage in actions that aim at the acquisition, maintenance, transmission, and application of knowledge. It is eminently a formation of the will. Anyone who loves knowledge in a mature (virtuous) way will inevitably have some skills for acquiring knowledge and passing it on to others, because the love of knowledge matures in the context of intellectual practices. For the same reason he will also, very likely, have some degree of virtues such as intellectual autonomy, firmness, and courage. But if we are to think of the virtues as at all plural and distinct from one another, the love of knowledge will have to be thought of as *associated* with other virtues and skills rather than as *including* them. These coordinated skills and virtues supply various aptitudes for intellectual practice. If we ask what is the motivational component of love of knowledge, the answer is that this virtue is itself a motivational structure. It is not exactly a component of a virtue, since it is the whole virtue. It *is*, of course, a component of intellectual character as a whole.

Intellectual *charity* has a distinct motivation component, but unless we confuse it with love of knowledge (both being loves in some sense), charity's motivation does not seem to be directed at an intellectual good. A person is not said to be charitable on account of loving and seeking intellectual goods. Charity is love of *God* and/or fellow *human beings* and such objects are not intellectual goods. No doubt, the person of full intellectual virtue will have not only charity, but also virtues that involve loving the intellectual goods and the means to achieve them. Charity becomes intellectual charity when it applies in contexts of the intellectual life, so charity is an attitude toward, most notably, interlocutors and authors of texts. If one reads a text charitably, one is reading the text *as* coming from an author who would like to be treated with respect and goodwill. Such charity is an *intellectual* virtue because of its applicability to intellectual activities like text reading, and because it (presumably) enhances the agent's prospects of achieving the aims of the intellectual life.

p. 74 Consider an act of intellectual charity. I am discussing someone's philosophical book, and I disagree pretty fundamentally with what I take the author to be saying. If I am reading a certain passage charitably, I interpret it so as to attribute as much validity and intelligence to the passage as I can, compatibly with a careful and therefore critical reading. The act of charity in this case is the interpretation. The motive distinctive of intellectual charity (as contrasted with other intellectual virtues) is here my concern to treat the author as I would like to be treated were I the author. It is goodwill towards him, a valuing of him as a person and as an author. If I am broadly intellectually virtuous, I will also be motivated by the prospect of deriving intellectual goods from my reading of the book: I want to understand, to learn, to be better informed, and I take pleasure in such intellectual progress as accrues to me. But this motive is distinctive not of charity, but of the love of knowledge. The fact that I interpret the passage so as to attribute as much validity and intelligence to it as I can does not by itself make the act an act of intellectual charity, because as charity, the act has this motivational condition: I must act out of goodwill towards the author. If I make a "charitable" interpretation of the passage, because doing so will enable me better to crush the author in the noetic dust under my feet, then I have not acted charitably, even if I have acted "charitably". But even if I "use" charity in the interest of knowledge and understanding, rather than of crushing my opponent, I do not act from the virtue of charity, since the characteristic aim of charity is the well-being of a person.

What about the success component? What is it to be successful in one's goodwill towards an author? If goodwill towards the author *as author* is the desire that the author be right, then the success of the motivation will be *that the author is right*. But surely I do not need to desire that the author be right for me to have acted with intellectual charity towards him. We might think that the success in question would be the achievement of some intellectual good, since that is the characteristic goal of the virtuous intellectual personality taken as a whole, in reading a text. But such success is not the object of intellectual charity *as charity*. It may become clearer what success would be if we switch from the case of charitably reading a text

to conducting charitably a debate face to face with an interlocutor. In such a debate, the goal of my charity (as distinguished from the goal of my love of knowledge) will be such things as not embarrassing my
p. 75 interlocutor, making him aware of my respect for him, staying on friendly terms with ↳ him, and bringing it about that he gets some genuine intellectual goods out of our conversation. If I achieve such things as these in the course of my conversation with him, then my charity will have succeeded. In reading a text charitably, if the author is dead and/or will never be affected by my charity, I cannot realistically aim at any such outcome. In such cases, the charity has a virtual, or as-if, goal: it does not really aim at anything, though it is *as if* it aims as charity would aim if in conversation with a live interlocutor.[9]

What is the relation, in the intellectually charitable person, between the motivation to get the intellectual goods and the motivation of charity (goodwill towards the author or interlocutor)? Presumably the virtuous person does not behave charitably *just so as* to get some intellectual goods *for himself*, since this would deprive his behavior of the motive required for it to express genuine charity. On the other hand, he might behave charitably just so as to secure some intellectual goods *for his interlocutor*, because one perfectly fitting way to wish another well is to wish him to have some intellectual goods. In this case, love of the intellectual goods and charity for the interlocutor come together in a special way: wanting the intellectual goods (for the other) *is* the motive of charity.

How is the motive of charity related to the motive of getting the intellectual goods for oneself? We assume, as we have been doing, that having charity for the interlocutor does in fact promote one's getting the intellectual goods for oneself. Furthermore, the intellectually virtuous person may be aware of this connection. But he will try to keep the consideration that charity for his interlocutor is good for his own intellectual life in the background, where it does not come to the fore as a motivation for charitable behavior. We might describe the relation between the motivation characteristic of charity and charity's proneness to foster the epistemic goods as follows. If it is true that goodwill towards fellow intellectual agents promotes the acquisition, maintenance, and application of the intellectual goods, then someone who was designing epistemic agents of roughly the human kind for proficiency would design them with charity. He would also design them as seekers of the epistemic goods. But he would not design them to exemplify
p. 76 goodwill towards their fellow ↳ epistemic agents *for the sake of* acquiring, maintaining, and applying the epistemic goods. The instrumentality of the designer-agent would not be perfectly reflected in the reasoning governing the practices of the designed agent.

Intellectual *courage* is an ability to perform intellectual tasks well despite what one takes to be significant threats. The threats may be such things as loss of employment or other opportunities, loss of reputation or status, loss of home and friends, even bodily harm or loss of life. Intellectual courage is often needed in contexts where a political régime fears and represses critical thought and research, or in religiously reactionary contexts that ostracize, or in anti-religious contexts such as many present-day universities, or scientific contexts dominated by some defensive orthodoxy, and in many other contexts. Acts of courage may be speaking one's mind, continuing one's research, publishing one's ideas, thinking carefully, refusing to suppress data and arguments.

Although courageous acts must be motivated, no one type of motivation is characteristic of courage. Zagzebski speaks of "the emotions characteristic of the virtue of courage" (p. 131) that motivate acts of courage, but she says they have no name, and she does not describe them except to say that they are not just the absence of fear. We think that our inability to name or describe such supposed motivation indicates that there isn't such a thing. People can be motivated to perform acts of courage by any number of things—love, hate, fear, anger, patriotism, concern for justice, the desire for gain, the desire for knowledge and understanding, the desire that others should have knowledge and understanding. These last two motivations make it possible for courage to be an intellectual virtue, but we think that it is better to think of these motivations as coming from another virtue, which we call the love of knowledge. A person can act with intellectual courage because he loves the intellectual goods, but that love does not distinguish intellectual

courage from intellectual tenacity, humility, fairness, generosity, or any other intellectual virtue. Zagzebski sometimes seems to identify the motivation component of a virtue with the motivation *to have* the virtue in question (see, for example, pp. 246–7). But one might desire to be courageous without being courageous, and one might be courageous without desiring to be courageous (except, perhaps, in a purely dispositional and counterfactual sense). And certainly, many acts of courage have primary motives other than the desire
p. 77 to be courageous. It ↳ seems to us that the motive characteristic of a virtue is in no case, or almost no case, the desire to have the virtue.

What about the aptitude component? What is courage an aptitude to do? We began by saying that courage is an ability to perform intellectual tasks well despite what one takes to be significant threats. Thus it is an aptitude to do a wide variety of things, such as we mentioned before, but none of these is distinctive of courage. What seems distinctive is that these things are done in spite of what one takes to be a significant threat. So maybe courage is an aptitude for doing *whatever* one does, *well* by some standards for that kind of doing, *despite* a sense of being significantly threatened, *if* one does that thing. That is, the courageous person is one who, knowing that doing X has a significantly high probability of bringing some kind of adversity on himself or something he cares about, can manage to do X well anyway. "Doing X well" here does not mean doing X successfully. If a newspaper publisher courageously undertakes to publish an article so as to expose some fraud in the city government, his act can count as courageous even if he fails to expose the fraud (say, the fraudulent city fathers have concocted a seamless defense), and even if he fails to publish the article (say, the newspaper offices are dynamited just as the type is being set, and all who know the truth die in the explosion). All that is necessary for the action to count as courageous is that the agent have undertaken the action, or at any rate genuinely decided to do so.

Consider next the virtue of intellectual *humility*. In the analysis that we will present in Chapter 9, humility is marked by an absence of a range of vices that you might call the vices of pride: vanity, arrogance, domination, superciliousness, conceit, and others. Several of those vices are structures of motivation: a desire to be highly regarded for purposes of social status, a desire to dominate others, etc. Arrogance is a motivated disposition to infer illicitly some entitlement from one's superiority to others, though the motivation can vary (it can be vanity or sensuousness or perhaps other things). Where humility marks the absence of a vicious motive, it is characterized neither by a particular kind of motive (as charity is) nor by a circumvention of a kind of motivation (as courage is). Humility presupposes an overriding interest in something, and in the case of intellectual humility, that will be an interest in the epistemic goods. But that interest seems to be auxiliary to humility rather than part of the virtue. Christ's humility is shown by his
p. 78 willingness to forfeit or set aside his divine standing (Phil. 2: 6–8). ↳ It presupposes his charity towards sinners, which is what motivates him to undertake the task in which he exhibits his humility. But it seems to make sense to say that he is motivated, not by his humility, but by his charity. Similarly, in the intellectual life, the humble person is motivated by his enthusiasm for intellectual goods, not by his humility. The function of the enthusiasm, in humility, is to overwhelm motives like vanity. And similarly, it seems odd to talk about the aptitude aspect of humility, since humility does not set a task in which one can be successful or not, the way courage, charity, and perseverance do. The goal of the actions in which Jesus Christ expresses his humility is not the goal *of his humility*. One might, of course, say that *humility* has a goal—the goal of ruling out the vices of pride—but this goal is not one that the humble person characteristically has in view. And then the aptitude aspect of humility would be its power actually to elbow out these vices. But thinking of it in this way, the "success" of intellectual humility *as humility* will not be the achievement of some intellectual good, but the ruling out of those vices that in fact frees up the agent in her pursuit of intellectual goods. But in the most perfectly humble person, this will not be a success at which he aims, but a success that comes so naturally to him that he neither intends the success nor notices it. If anyone "uses" humility to aim at the goal of humility, it is the designer of humility, not its subject.

Finally, let's take a brief look at intellectual *conscientiousness*, because it exemplifies yet another structure of motivation and aptitude. We have intellectual duties—to examine some of our beliefs, to question our motives in arguing for one position or another, to collect evidence for our beliefs, to deepen our understanding of important things when we have opportunity, and so forth. We are not in all circumstances obligated to act on all of these duties; but obligations do arise in contexts, and it is part of practical wisdom as it applies to the intellectual life to discern our duties as they become applicable. Many if not all of our epistemic duties are discharged in the course of exemplifying the intellectual virtues, but to exemplify conscientiousness is not just to exemplify the other virtues. Immanuel Kant famously distinguishes acting *in accordance* with duty from acting *from* duty. Presumably a person with the epistemic virtues will often, in acting from such virtues as intellectual honesty and charity and love of knowledge, act in accordance with his epistemic duties. But he does not thereby act *from* duty—that is, moved by the consideration that such-
p. 79 and-such is his duty. ↳ One exemplifies the virtue of intellectual conscientiousness only in acting from intellectual duty.

At our best, we are motivated "directly" by the intellectual goods, and by other goods connected with them, to do what it takes to acquire, maintain, communicate, and apply the intellectual goods. Understanding, propositional knowledge, and acquaintance with various things *attract* us; we love knowledge and cherish its possession by others and want these goods; we are spontaneously disposed to respect others as sources of purported intellectual goods, etc.; and thus we act. Sometimes, however, this more direct, and more directly virtuous, kind of motivation fails us. In a circumstance where the transparent love of knowledge would, ideally, impel us to check the data one more time, we just don't feel like checking the data one more time. Or we just don't feel like adding that extra scruple about our argument that we know is needed, or reading one more book before we finalize a paper to send off to a journal. Perhaps we're impatient, or tired, or beginning to get bored with a project. At this point, where the mature, spontaneous attraction to the intellectual goods fails or partially fails us, we may still be virtuously motivated to do what we ought to do, if we have a sense of intellectual duty—a sense of "ought" about intellectual actions. Intellectual conscientiousness is the susceptibility to be motivated by the consideration that behaving well epistemically is *required* of us, is what we *ought* to do, is our *duty*. It is a character trait like the other intellectual virtues, with the difference that it supplies this indirect, substitute motivation.

This indirect desire, under the description of "what I ought to do", is the motivational component of conscientiousness. What, then, is the aptitude involved? It is not full epistemic success, in the sense of actually getting propositional knowledge, understanding, or acquaintance, or being justified, warranted, or rational, etc. As supplier of a supplemental motivation, the virtue of intellectual conscientiousness is aimed, from the designer's point of view, at getting required intellectual actions done. Thus, we would describe this aptitude in much the way we described that of courage: conscientiousness is an aptitude for getting certain actions performed, now not under conditions of fear, as in the case of courage, but under conditions of insufficient intrinsic motivation.

We have argued that different virtues are structured quite differently from one another. No one-size-fits-all
p. 80 analysis—no theory in the sense of ↳ a simple reductive or monolithic account—will describe the actual variety within the virtuous character.

Individuating virtues The preceding discussion is an attempt to illustrate the diversity of psychological structure among the virtues. We assigned a variety of functions to the virtues we discussed, this function to one virtue and that to another, and withheld other functions from the same virtues, assigning them instead to other items in the intellectual character, either to other virtues or in one case to skills. Thus courage, but not humility, provided for acting well in the face of perceived threat, and humility, but not charity, was constituted by the absence of motives of vanity and arrogance. We pointed out that a courageous act might be motivated by charity, and illustrated a certain kind of humility by an action of Jesus Christ that was motivated by charity. Thus, in illustrating the diversity of the virtues, we also began to illustrate their

interdependence—what has sometimes been called the unity of the virtues. The emerging picture is that of a character fitted, capacitated, attuned, and oriented in a variety of ways for a variety of life situations and activities in situations, such that the possessor of that character lives well.

We began our discussion of the nature of a virtue by pointing out that some activities and situations in which activities are pursued are generically human. The familiar virtue categories seem to track these areas, with variations. Situations of threat that tend to impede action are generic to human life, so courage is a virtue. Impulses of vanity and arrogance are generic to human life and destructive or degrading of it, so humility is a virtue. Gift giving (in the broad sense of gratuitous purveyance of goods from one person to another) is generic to human life, and promotes it if well done, so generosity and gratitude are virtues. Imperfection of intrinsic motivation in situations where good actions need to be performed is generic to human life, so conscientiousness is a virtue. Inquiry is generic to human life, and some situations of inquiry are characterized by threats that tend to impede inquiry, so intellectual courage is a virtue; inquiry can also be impeded by arrogance and vanity, so intellectual humility is a virtue; intellectual goods can be passed from one person to another, so intellectual generosity and gratitude are virtues; inquiry can be undermined by deficits of intrinsic motivation for the intellectual goods, so intellectual conscientiousness is a virtue. And so on.

p. 81 The question of the individuation of the virtues is the question about what principles govern the assignment of a function to a virtue. What are the criteria by which we decide that such-and-such a function belongs to the virtue of intellectual firmness but not to intellectual charity, while another belongs to autonomy but not to caution? The answer, it seems to us, is largely "ordinary language". We have a vocabulary of the virtues, of which the chapter titles in Part II are representative, which is made the more determinate the more we locate ourselves within a tradition that includes a particular understanding of human nature and the nature of the universe. This is not to say that virtue epistemology can be prosecuted by consulting a dictionary or even books of theology or some equivalent expression of the canons of a world view. Ordinary language has considerable potential depth and subtlety, and thinking hard about this part of ordinary language requires a kind of psychological reflection and insight that is not available in dictionaries or usual in books of theology. Exploring such conceptual connections and disconnections has always been a large part of the business of philosophy, whether or not it was acknowledged as such. The analyses of the particular virtues in Part II of this book are proposals of this sort.

Virtues and situations At the beginning of this chapter, we proposed that a virtue is an acquired base of excellent functioning in some generically human sphere of activity that is challenging and important. But the "functioning" in question always occurs in some situation or other, and there are limits of normality for such situations. Virtues do not fit us for functioning well in situations that are very abnormal for human beings. Distributive justice would not help us to live in a situation of sheer abundance of all transferable goods. Generosity does not fit us to function well in situations characterized by very efficient con-people; in a situation containing a very efficient con-person, generous people are liable to function less well than ungenerous ones. Similarly, a person with intellectual charity may be at an epistemic disadvantage in a situation dominated by hardened egoistic hyper-autonomous cut-throat intellectuals, and the same could be said about intellectual humility and generosity. We are more Aristotelian than Stoic on this issue, and so believe that the environment has to cooperate by being more or less "normal"—that is, the kind of
p. 82 environment for which the virtue in question was designed. ↳ This is a corollary of our point that virtues are always indexed to some conception of human nature: that love of knowledge would not be a virtue if truth were in principle inaccessible to human cognitive operations, that intellectual conscientiousness would not be a virtue if human beings had perfectly reliable intrinsic motivations, and faith would not be a virtue if God did not exist. Both points are about "context" or "situation" or "environment" or "sphere" in a broad sense of these words, and what they say is that in exemplifying virtues we are always at the mercy of our situation. The example of conscientiousness brings out the fact that part of the "situation" may be a fact

about human nature in a narrow sense—in this case, that high-quality intrinsic motivations are not always available, even to the best formed of human beings.

When we say that the sphere of activity of a virtue has to be challenging, we have in mind such things as that it is natural, in a way, not to stand one's ground in situations of threat, that it comes quite naturally to interpret one's intellectual opponent uncharitably, that it takes long discipline against the grain to become intellectually cautious, and so forth. Virtues involve concerted discipline, both self-imposed and imposed by others. Virtuous actions are extraordinary for human beings, especially worthy of admiration, and it is features of the situation in which the action is performed that make the action challenging. This point may seem somewhat in tension with the normalcy condition mentioned in the preceding paragraph; but in fact it is normal for life to be challenging, and so for excellence not to come easily. The point of the last paragraph is that the difficulty of performing excellently must be a limited difficulty. By virtues, people become more human, not superhuman. Virtues fit us for excellent functioning in *this* world, given *human* nature, not for any possible world, given any possible nature.

However, the situations of our lives present not only challenges for virtues to rise to, but supports for virtue. A human life is lived in the presence of other human beings, and is not just made difficult by them, but is also educated by them, supported by them, kept on the straight path by them. If we are doing science or scholarship, our colleagues keep us honest by challenging us, keeping an eye on us, threatening us unspokenly with embarrassment or even ostracism if we are too lax in our epistemic practices. Very few if
p. 83 any of us ever achieve sheer emotional and practical ↳ autonomy, a complete lack of need for encouragement from others.[10] Yet, if we are too much in need of this environmental regulation and support, we do not possess the virtues. The virtuous person is more than a child who "behaves" because he is being watched. He also has autonomy, an ability to stay honest for intrinsic reasons (see Chapter 10).

Thinking about the Virtues in Epistemology

We began this chapter by saying that the concept of a virtue is central to our book, but not its theoretical basis. As we noted in Chapter 1, most of the virtue epistemologies proposed in the past twenty years do attempt to make the concept of virtue in some sense the basis for a theory of knowledge. Thus the concept of a virtue is crucial to the definitions of knowledge offered by Sosa, Greco, and Zagzebski, and the similar concept of a properly functioning faculty serves this purpose in Plantinga's epistemology. We have called our virtue epistemology *regulative*, and have said that we are not interested in a definition of knowledge in the typical style, one that specifies the broadly logically necessary and sufficient conditions for anything's being a case of knowledge—though in Chapter 2 we did propose a concept of knowledge, and one that we think especially suits a regulative virtues epistemology. We think that that concept of knowledge is more interesting and truer to people's real epistemic aspirations than the concept of propositional knowledge that has dominated recent discussions.

In this chapter we have tried to clarify the concept of a virtue, and this effort will continue throughout the remaining chapters of the book. Earlier in this chapter we sketched the crucial faculty of the will, and in the next chapter we will look further at the human epistemic faculties, since these are the naturally "given" basis of the acquired aptitudes and attitudes that make up the intellectual virtues. Then, in the last chapter of Part I, we will look at the concept of an epistemic practice and some examples of practices, since these practices are the activities in which the virtues are exemplified, and thus shape the virtues and are shaped
p. 84 by them in turn. ↳ This analytic policy of relating a concept to connected concepts is evident in the present chapter, in which we have expounded the concept of an intellectual virtue by relating it to such other concepts as human nature, the human will, and the human environment. Instead of making the concept of a

virtue into a theoretical *basis* from which to derive other concepts, we have tried to *locate* the concept of an intellectual virtue with respect to the other concepts.

Another thing we did in this chapter was to look at some examples of virtues, with a special interest in showing the structural diversity among them. Virtues are not interestingly susceptible to a one-size-fits-all analysis in the style that is so popular among theoretical philosophers. But the very brief analyses that we have offered in this chapter are only the beginning of what we want to do. Our regulative purpose in writing this book is to bring analytic attention to the intellectual virtues so as to deepen our own and our readers' understanding of the life of the mind, from the inside, as it were. To accomplish this purpose, we must focus concerted attention on a range of particular virtues, in that process also showing the rich connections they bear to one another. That is the task of Part II.

Notes

1 Zagzebski considers four arguments for a distinction in kind between moral and intellectual virtues: (1) they belong to different parts of the soul; (2) the moral, but not the intellectual, virtues are dispositions to experience pleasure and pain; (3) moral, but not intellectual, virtues are dispositions to feelings; (4) a person can be intellectually virtuous but morally vicious, or vice versa. She convincingly refutes all four arguments. See Linda Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 137–58. In a moment we will consider yet another argument.

2 Ernest Sosa points out that the Greeks used *aretē* for excellences even of such things as knives (*Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 271). An analogous usage of "virtue" is natural to speakers of modern English. But when Aristotle speaks of *human* virtues, he says that they are not faculties. "We have the faculties by nature, but are not made good or bad by nature" (*Nicomachean Ethics* II. 5). But maybe the "virtues" of inference, coherence, etc. are not to be regarded as human virtues.

3 For a defense of this view of emotions, see Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 10.1017/CBO9780511610202 , ch. 2; for the analysis of anger, see pp. 202–21.

4 *Summa Theologiae*, translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981), 1a-2ae, question 57, article 1, p. 828.

5 For a collection of exceptions to the tendency, see Clifford Williams (ed.), *Personal Virtues* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

6 See Richard P. Feynman, *You Must Be Joking, Mr. Feynman*, as told to Ralph Leighton, ed. Edward Hutchings (New York : W.W. Norton, 1985).

7 See Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error* (New York: Avon Books, 1994), and the discussion of the Elliott case in Roberts, *Emotions*, pp. 148–51.

8 Alvin Plantinga reaches a similar conclusion when considering the question, Which is prior, intellect or will in seeing the glory and beauty of the Lord? His answer is Neither, or There's no saying. "The structure of will and intellect here is perhaps a spiral, dialectical process: heightened affections enable us to see more of God's beauty and glory; being able to see more of God's beauty and glory and majesty in turn leads to heightened affections. There are certain things you won't know unless you love, have the right affections; there are certain affections you won't have without perceiving some of God's moral qualities; neither perceiving nor affection can be said to be prior to the other" (*Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 303).

9 Zagzebski seems to admit the possibility that some acts of virtue do not aim at any end, inasmuch as her definition of *act of virtue* includes the phrase "bringing about the end (*if any*) of virtue A" (*Virtues of the Mind*, p. 248, italics added).

10 We thank Robert Merrihew Adams for stimulating this comment.

9

Humility

Introduction

Our practice in recent chapters has been to describe virtues in connection with their vice counterparts. Doing so is especially important with humility, which has a negative character. Humility is opposite to a number of vices, including arrogance, vanity, conceit, egotism, hyper-autonomy, grandiosity, pretentiousness, snobbishness, impertinence (presumption), haughtiness, self-righteousness, domination, selfish ambition, and self-complacency. These vices differ from one another in various ways, but all are opposites of humility, and are negatively definitive of it. So a perfectly rich account of humility would explore many of them together. But we think that a fair approximation of the virtue can be achieved by looking primarily at two of its vice counterparts: vanity and arrogance. In this chapter we will explore humility chiefly as the opposite of these two vices, and comment briefly on one other. We will then clarify why humility is an intellectual virtue by tracing the ways in which some epistemic goods accrue to the humble person and his or her associates.

Before we start, however, to get a broader orientation in this field, we'll sketch very briefly some of the other important vices that help to define humility. Conceit is the set of dispositions of thought, action, and emotion that stem from an unwarrantedly high opinion of oneself. Egotism is a disposition to exaggerate the importance of, and focus attention on, oneself and one's own interests, to the neglect of others and their interests. Hyper-autonomy is a disinclination to acknowledge one's dependence on others and to accept help from them. Grandiosity is a disposition, in thought and self-presentation, to exaggerate one's greatness. Pretentiousness is a disposition to claim, in action and demeanor, higher dignity or merit than one possesses. Snobbishness is a disposition to associate oneself, in thought

and practice, with persons of high social rank, intellect, or taste, and to shun or contemn persons of lower rank. Impertinence or presumption is a disposition to act without proper respect for the limits of one's powers, competence, or social station. Haughtiness is a disposition to treat others as hardly worthy of one's attention or respect. Self-righteousness is a disposition to ascribe to oneself a greater moral excellence than one possesses, especially in comparison with others. Domination is a disposition to excessive exertion and enjoyment of control over others. Selfish ambition is a disposition to advance one's own long-term interests to the exclusion or detriment of others' interests. Self-complacency is a disposition to approve uncritically of one's own abilities and accomplishments. Many of these vices have intellectual variants.

Humility as Opposed to Vanity

Vanity is an excessive concern to be well regarded by other people, for the social importance their regard confers on oneself. It is thus a hypersensitivity to the view that others take of oneself. Its emotional marks are anxiety about how one appears, joy at making a good appearance, embarrassment or shame at making a bad appearance, resentment of those who criticize or withhold the prescribed admiration, etc. Since part of making a good appearance may be to give the appearance of not caring what sort of appearance one makes, the vain person may cover up these emotions, for others or himself or both. Or he may be so well mannered, and so well situated for his vanity's satisfaction that he hardly shows it, like the Bertram sisters, whose "vanity was in such good order, that they seemed to be quite free from it" (Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ch. 4).

Not just any concern to make a good appearance is vanity. It is no sign of vanity if you are embarrassed upon discovering that you have lectured for an hour with a gaping fly. You are painfully affected by others' viewing you in an unflattering light, but the concern on which your emotion is based is only to meet a minimum standard of propriety of appearance, not to glitter. It seems that, to be vanity, your concern must be to appear in some respect excellent, for only excellence confers social importance; but there is nothing excellent about having your fly closed. Again, you may desire to make a good appearance so as to make money or get promoted,

or receive an academic grant or access to a library, or as evidence of some progress in skill that you are interested in monitoring in yourself. Only if you are concerned to make a good appearance for the social importance it seems to entail is the concern vanity.

Thus vanity is typically selective of audience: the vain person may not care to make a good appearance in the eyes of people whose good opinion does not seem to him to confer social importance. A vain philosopher might not mind appearing stupid before an audience of sugar-beet farmers; a woman vain of her beauty might not mind appearing ugly to her children. These vain ones do not mind making a bad appearance before these audiences, because approval by such audiences does not seem to them to confer any social importance on themselves.

Some vanity may seem to want attention for attention's sake, since abusive attention satisfies it. But the vain individual may see even strongly disapproving attention as showing a kind of perverse or reverse excellence, and thus as conferring social importance, in particular as showing at least that the subject is important enough to pay this attention to. Also, a vain person may have other motives than vanity for seeking attention, such as boredom; and such other motives might not be for approval in any sense. But such motives are not the ones that justify the attribution of vanity.

It is hard to say exactly what constitutes an *excessive* concern to put in a good appearance for the sake of social importance. But it is clear that people are not vain simply for having *some* such concern. Just about everyone will feel embarrassed or ashamed upon perceiving that others are shocked by their behavior, and will regret the loss of status if that occurs, and enjoy the status conferred by others' approval. Robustly healthy and virtuous people are a little bothered by others' slighting them in society, not taking them seriously, thinking they are not worth much. But the vain person is very bothered by such things and is hurt by smaller misappearances and elated about successful appearances that the humbler person hardly pauses to note. The vain person is preoccupied with his status-relevant appearances. We are inclined to say that he is enslaved to others' approval of him, or at any rate unduly beholden to it. He demands to be very well thought of, wishes to be adulated, adored, and honored; and feels nervous and unfulfilled unless he is getting this extraordinary sort of attention. Of course the demand may meet frustration and disappointment as well as satisfaction.

Perhaps we have said enough about vanity to start on the humility that is its opposite. The humble person is unvain, but does not merely lack vanity; he veers in the other direction. We have said that vanity is an excessive concern to be well regarded by other people for the sake of social importance, and thus a hypersensitivity to the view that others take of oneself. Humility, as vanity's opposite, is a striking or unusual unconcern for social importance, and thus a kind of emotional *in*sensitivity to the issues of status. Julia Driver takes a line like this, but she talks not about concerns and emotions, but about beliefs. Thus, she says that the virtue of modesty is "a dogmatic disposition" to underestimate one's worth.[1] It is not mere ignorance of one's worth; if the excellent but modest person is presented with all the evidence of her excellences, she refuses to believe it. Thus the moral virtue of modesty is an intellectual vice.

This unhappy conclusion can be avoided while doing justice to the intuition behind Driver's formula. On our analysis, the humble person is not ignorant of her value or status, but in a certain way *unconcerned* about it and therefore *inattentive* to it. She may appear to be ignorant of her excellence or importance, but if she needs to assess herself, she can give as accurate an account as the next person. She is just not very interested in such an assessment, so she is not much inclined to inquire about it, and the evidence for it is not generally salient for her; it does not come easily or automatically to her attention.

We think that in the cases in which humility is clearly a virtue, and not merely the absence of a vice, a certain kind of story can be told about the basis of the unconcern and inattentiveness. We propose that in the best cases the concern for status is swamped or displaced or put on hold by some overriding virtuous concern. In the Christian moral tradition Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the paradigm of humility. The apostle Paul commends humility to the church at Philippi:

> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. (Phil. 2: 5–7)

The Son of God has a very high "social" status, which we might, a priori, expect him to insist on and be preoccupied with. But his love for

[1] Julia Driver, "The Virtues of Ignorance", *Journal of Philosophy* 86 (1989): 373–84, p. 378.

humankind and his concern to accomplish his Father's will overrides the concern for his social importance and moves him to make himself vulnerable to some very unlordly humiliation: "And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (Phil. 2: 8). In his status-ignoring love Jesus Christ is at the opposite extreme from the vain person who grasps after recognition and status as though it is the breath of life. So is the Christian disciple who imitates the Lord. As Paul says, "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2: 3). Following our analysis of humility, when the humble person "counts" others as better than herself, she does nothing so foolish as to *believe* that they are better than she—say, better cellists, or of higher social status, or more intelligent or more beautiful—if they are not. Instead, whatever status she possesses or does not possess impresses her little, matters little to her, in comparison with the value of these persons as ones for whom Christ died, whom she therefore honors and respects highly, "forgetting" herself.

Consider now a case of intellectual humility in the same pattern. Alice Ambrose describes G. E. Moore as a teacher:

> Moore in his lectures was self-effacing. Criticisms he put forward of claims he himself had made, say in a previous lecture, could as well have been directed to an anonymous philosopher whose mistakes called for correction. For example, in discussing truth, Moore had examined the two propositional forms, "it is true that *p*" and "*p*," maintaining that they meant the same and therefore that "it is true that" has no meaning because "it is true that" is redundant. His comment in the next lecture: "My present view is that so far from its being the case that from the fact that it is redundant it follows that it has no meaning, it follows that if it is redundant *it has got meaning*. No phrase can be redundant in an expression without having a meaning." Some lectures later he notified his class: "I am going to make a jump now because I do not know how to go on."[2]

Is "self-effacing" the right word? Moore does not seem to efface himself, but just to pay little attention to himself because he has more important things to attend to. Self-effacement is a step removed from the kind of humility Moore evinces, in that it involves self-preoccupation, a self that

[2] Alice Ambrose, "Moore and Wittgenstein as Teachers", *Teaching Philosophy* 12 (1989): 107–113, pp. 107–8.

invites effacement because it obtrudes. The self-effacing person says, ''I am no good,'' ''I am unworthy,'' ''How stupid I am!'', thus showing preoccupation with himself. (Wittgenstein often did this.) By contrast, status is not an issue for Moore; to its exclusion, the truth about truth preoccupies him. He has not literally lost track of who he is; nor have we any reason to think that he regards himself as undeserving of his position: without apology he goes to the front of the class and lectures, showing that he knows and accepts that he is the professor. But his lack of concern with status is evinced by the fact that his criticisms ''could as well have been directed to an anonymous philosopher whose mistakes called for correction''.

So we see in Jesus of Nazareth and Moore of Cambridge a common motivational pattern of humility: an unusually low concern for status coordinated with an intense concern for some apparent[3] good. This pattern may be regarded as virtuous for at least two reasons. First, the concern for status often weakens and confuses more important concerns, with bad behavioral and epistemic consequences; humility as a motivational configuration leaves the more important concern pure and free of such interference. Second, in some moral outlooks—in particular, highly egalitarian ones like Christianity—the concern for status is regarded with moral suspicion. Hierarchical human relations may be necessary to social order, but high status does not motivate the best sort of person.

Another vice opposed to humility, one that involves a strong concern for personal importance but is less oriented than vanity to others' *view* of oneself, is domination. The domineering person is concerned to have power or influence over others. The intellectual variant of this vice is an inordinate concern to be the determiner of other people's opinions, to take special pleasure in shaping others' minds, to be the author of such-and-such an idea that is all the rage, to be the one who convinced so-and-so of such-and-such. Most of us teachers probably have some degree of this concern, but some are very competitive for disciples and feel desolate when disciples defect.

[3] We say ''apparent'' because a person might be unmindful of status, and thus in this sense humble, in the pursuit of some horrendous evil, such as the extermination of a racial group. Thus humility, like courage, is a virtue that can be possessed by otherwise vicious persons. If a humble person is to be fully virtuous, his concern for status must be swamped by virtuous concerns. Humility must stand in a kind of interlocking unity with other virtues (see the final section of this chapter).

Richard Rorty, following Harold Bloom, discusses a particularly grandiose form of intellectual domination (though he does not bill it as a vice) under the title of "the anxiety of influence", which he attributes to "strong poets". Philosophers and scientists may be strongly motivated by the desire to be discussed by future generations, but their claim to fame, if they have one, will be that they somehow got reality right. The strong poet's goal is even more ambitious: to *create* reality for himself and personally to dominate past and future generations by authoring their realities as well. Rorty comments:

> ... although strong poets are, like all other animals, causal products of natural forces, they are products capable of telling the story of their own production in words never used before. The line between weakness and strength is thus the line between using language which is familiar and universal and producing language which, though initially unfamiliar and idiosyncratic, somehow makes tangible the blind impress all one's behavings bear. With luck—the sort of luck which makes the difference between genius and eccentricity—that language will also strike the next generation as inevitable. *Their* behavings will bear that impress.[4]

In other words, the domineering strong poet wants so to impress his individuality on others that their "individuality" will be not really theirs, but his. His anxiety is that he will be unable to make his attempted self-imposition stick, that he will fail in his role of creator of other persons' worlds. The anxiety of influence stands in the greatest possible contrast to the self-ignoring humility of Moore and to a whole truth-seeking tradition of the ethics of intellect. Rorty continues,

> The wonder in which Aristotle believed philosophy to begin was wonder at finding oneself in a world larger, stronger, nobler than oneself. The fear in which Bloom's poets begin is the fear that one might end one's days in such a world, a world one never made, an inherited world. The hope of such a poet is that what the past tried to do to her she will succeed in doing to the past: to make the past itself, including those very causal processes which blindly impressed all her own behavings, bear *her* impress. (p. 29)

The domination that would appear to Moore and Aristotle as an intellectual vice appears to Rorty and his forebear Nietzsche as an inevitable trait of the most developed human beings.

[4] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 28–9.

Intellectual humility as the opposite of intellectual domination would perhaps be exemplified most radically by Socrates, who was contented to regard himself as only a facilitator of his pupils' relation to the truth. The doctrine of recollection (*Meno* 80e–86b) implies that the whole idea of discipleship, in the sense of intellectual dependence, is a big mistake. Intellectual humility, in this connection, would be a disposition to rejoice in the progress of one's students, especially, perhaps, when they advance beyond oneself; and it would be an emotional indifference to the question of the extent of one's *own* influence on them. As the unvain is unconcerned about, and thus inattentive to whether he is making a good impression on others, the undominating is unconcerned, and thus inattentive to his influence on others.

Humility as the Virtue Opposed to Arrogance

Arrogance is a disposition to "infer" some illicit entitlement from a supposition of one's superiority, and to think, act, and feel on the basis of that claim. Examples: the Hollywood star who enters a restaurant unannounced expecting to be given the best table in the house in priority over people who have been waiting for forty-five minutes; the supposed *ius primæ noctis*, the "right" of a feudal nobleman to sleep with the women of his realm on the first night of their marriage; the college president with two doctorates who thinks himself competent to speak with correcting authority in all the fields of his faculty. Typical response to arrogant behavior: Who does he think he is?

Albert Schweitzer was superior to nearly all the people in his social world with respect to his moral character, his learning, and his musicianship, and the detail in his autobiography suggests that he was aware of this (a failure to believe it, given his social world, would evince some weird epistemic defect).[5] This belief concerning his superiority does not by itself make him arrogant. Some "inference" from it, to the effect that it entitles him to treat his inferiors with disrespect (say, neglect, condescension, disdain, or undue suspicion and distrust), or to the effect that he is entitled to special

[5] Albert Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought*, trans. C. T. Campion (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1933).

treatment or exempted from ordinary responsibilities, seems required to qualify him as arrogant.

The inferred entitlement needs to be illicit. Schweitzer might, without exhibiting arrogance, infer from his medical superiority that he is entitled to the best surgical equipment available in Africa and that he is exempt from the tasks ordinarily assigned to men in the village, because this claim to entitlement is justified by his medical superiority, conjoined with the medical needs of the community. (Presumably the supposed inference from *I am superior in X way* to *I am entitled to treat others with disrespect*[6] is always invalid.) Sometimes arrogance is thought to involve by definition an exaggerated self-estimate. But if Schweitzer did infer from his superiority that he was entitled to treat others with disrespect, he would be arrogant even if he did not exaggerate his qualities—say, his musical and medical superiority to others. Thus arrogance does not require a false superiority claim. It is true that one might want to include in the notion of self-estimate the "inference" to the false entitlement claim; the inference shows what the self-estimate "means" to the subject. But we think it is clearer, for purposes of analysis, to keep the premise and the conclusion distinct. The feudal lord who insists on his *ius primæ noctis* is not wrong about being a lord, but he is wrong about what being a lord entitles him to.

One motive for running premise and conclusion together is the fact that no explicit inference is necessary. To indicate this, we have been writing "inference" in scare-quotes from time to time. If asked why he makes the entitlement claims he does, an articulate and self-aware arrogant person would be able to trace the claims to his sense of superiority, but the arrogant person need not be self-aware or articulate; nor does even the articulate arrogant person need to say or think "I am superior, therefore I am entitled…." It may also seem contrary to our analysis that arrogant behavior and attitudes are sometimes strategies to bolster a low self-estimate. In this case, the entitlement claim is not based on a high self-estimate, but a falsely high self-estimate is "based" on the entitlement claim. Yes, but even here, the logic of arrogance goes in the other direction. The arrogant

[6] Notice that "treat others with disrespect" is an essentially attitudinal description. Imagine that because of cultural conventions where Schweitzer labors, he will get the community to cooperate with his work only if he treats its members with what in Europe would count as disrespectful (say, condescending, authoritarian) behavior. He may produce this behavior without arrogance, in case *he* does not thereby express disrespect, and therewith a false entitlement claim.

person who bolsters low self-esteem by acting and thinking arrogantly is trading on the supposition that high self-value warrants the behavior in question. The self-estimate (which may not rise to the level of belief) is *psychologically* "based" on the arrogant *behavior*. This is artificial or derivative arrogance (however common it may be as a form of arrogance).

Like us, Valery Tiberius and John Walker analyze arrogance as involving an inference:

> ... the arrogant person has a high opinion of himself. He differs from the self-confident person [by concluding] ... that he is a better person according to the general standards governing what counts as a successful human specimen.[7]

Thus the inference they detect is not from superiority to entitlement, but from superiority in some respect to superiority as a human being. They point out the kind of overreaching behavior and attitude characteristic of arrogance, but seem to think this automatically included in taking oneself to be superior as a human specimen. We hold that a person can be arrogant without thinking himself superior as a human specimen (the arrogant person's claim to superiority may be more limited), and that one can think oneself a superior human specimen (as presumably Schweitzer and many other virtuous and intelligent people have done) without being arrogant.

Might Schweitzer infer a false entitlement claim from his superiority, without thus showing arrogance? Imagine that, ignorant of a medical missionary compound on the edge of the Gaboon, Schweitzer falsely believes himself to be the best doctor in the region, and so falsely claims entitlement to the best of some scarce medical equipment. Here we want to ask how he is disposed to respond when his premise is corrected. If he gives up his entitlement claim easily when corrected, we are inclined to say that the claim does not show arrogance; but if he insists on it, despite the correction, he gives evidence of being arrogant. This seems to fit our formula: arrogance is a *disposition* to "infer" illicit entitlement claims from a judgment of one's own superiority. If Schweitzer gives up the false entitlement claim easily as soon as the premise on which he bases it is falsified, he does not show the disposition that we have identified as arrogance. This kind of case calls for refinement of our notion of disposition. Arrogance is a disposition of the *heart*; a "disposition" that consists just

[7] Valery Tiberius and John Walker, "Arrogance", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 35 (1998): 379–90, p. 382.

in the falsity of one's premise, plus an ability to make valid inferences to entitlement claims, is not arrogance. Arrogance includes a certain resistance to correction. In the most characteristic cases it is a *motivated* disposition to infer false entitlements. What might the motive be?

It might be sensuality. We can well imagine a feudal lord who is reluctant to give up his *ius* claim even after seeing pretty clearly that being lord does not entitle him to deflower every virgin in his domain. Another motive for drawing the illicit conclusion might be vanity—the preoccupation with the personal importance that is conferred (supposedly) by the special entitlement. Claiming entitlement, especially but not only if one gets away with it, satisfies vanity. The humble person might want the same things that the arrogant person arrogates to himself by entitlement, but does not think of himself as entitled to them; or if he does, entitlement does not have the same ego-expanding meaning for him. Preoccupation with one's entitlements tends to give one a sense of personal importance, but the humble person is not much disposed to that kind of thinking. If his humility is of the most virtuous kind, entangled with other virtues, this inattention is in favor of some noble concern—typically for something outside himself like the health of the community, the excellence of the music, the truth of philosophical claims. Arrogance seldom goes it alone as an anti-humility trait. In the most characteristic cases it is abetted by (and abets?) such other traits as vanity, conceit, snobbery, grandiosity, and pretentiousness, as well as others that are not intrinsically anti-humility, such as sensuality and acquisitiveness. There is something like a unity of the vices, as there is of the virtues.

We said that the humility that is opposed to vanity is not merely the absence of vanity, but goes in the other direction. Shall we say something analogous about the humility that corresponds to arrogance? Is such humility not merely the disposition not to exaggerate one's entitlements based on one's superiorities, but the disposition to *under*rate them? Something about the suggestion seems right, but if we think of humility as a disposition to be *generally* inattentive to entitlements, it would be easy for the opposite of arrogance to become a disabling trait and thus a vice. If, for example, Schweitzer did not notice his entitlements to medical equipment, his work as a doctor might be harmed. But it is not quite right to describe this kind of humility as inattentiveness to one's entitlements. Someone with the humility of unarrogance may be as attentive to particular entitlements

as any other alert, rational person. The difference between him and persons who are less humble is that he is relatively inattentive to the ego-exalting potency of his entitlements. Schweitzer may, in humility, insist on his entitlements as an excellent doctor, or as a first-class Bach scholar or theologian, if his interest in those entitlements is "pure", which is to say to the point of medicine, Bach scholarship, or theology, and not to the point of making *him* important.

But it would not be right to make self-exaltation a necessary condition of arrogance. We have allowed that non-anti-humility motives like sensuality and acquisitiveness may be enough to make an overreaching entitlement claim arrogant. The feudal lord who insists on his *ius primæ noctis* is arrogant even if his motivation does not include considering that the exercise of this entitlement shows his personal importance; sheer sensuality is enough. And in a moment we will come to a case in which we may want to ascribe intellectual arrogance to Aristotle where he makes an overreaching entitlement claim in the absence of any vicious motive whatsoever. These considerations lead us to propose a three-tiered analysis of arrogance: (1) in the most characteristic cases, arrogant thought and behavior are motivated by self-exaltation; (2) less characteristic cases have a vicious, but not viciously self-exalting motive; (3) in some cases which are on the outer edges of the class, the "arrogant" behavior is not motivated viciously. So when we say that the difference between a Schweitzer who insists on his entitlements and more arrogant people who insist on their entitlements is his relative inattentiveness to the self-exalting potency of his entitlements, we are assuming that (a) he has no other vicious motive and (b) he is in fact entitled to what he claims to be entitled to.

Let us turn now to an example that will bring us closer to *intellectual* arrogance. Oscar Wilde had undoubtedly an impressive intellect, superior to that of most of his contemporaries, though less so than he claims in *De Profundis*. Wilde details his greatness:

> I had genius, a distinguished name, high social position, brilliancy, intellectual daring: I made art a philosophy, and philosophy an art: I altered the minds of men and the colours of things: there was nothing I said or did that did not make people wonder: I took the drama, the most objective form known to art, and made it as personal a mode of expression as the lyric or the sonnet, at the same time that I widened its range and enriched its characterisation: drama, novel, poem in rhyme, poem in prose, subtle or fantastic dialogue, whatever I touched I made beautiful in

a new mode of beauty: to truth itself I gave what is false no less than what is true as its rightful province, and showed that the false and the true are merely forms of intellectual existence. I treated Art as the supreme reality, and life as a mere mode of fiction: I awoke the imagination of my century so that it created myth and legend around me: I summed up all systems in a phrase, and all existence in an epigram.[8]

This is not by itself arrogance, though it may be rampant conceit, and we detect not a little of the Nietzschean "virtue" of domination and its auxiliary anxiety of influence. However, Wilde does also exhibit arrogance, ironically in connection with his claim to have learned humility in prison. A biographer comments that the climax of *De Profundis*,

doubtless premeditated from the start, was a section dealing with Wilde's discovery in prison of Christ. This … is less humble than it seems, since Wilde not only describes Christ without recognizing his divinity, but blends Christianity with aestheticism, as long before he told André Gide he would do. Christ appears here as the supreme individualist, uniting personality and perfection, saying beautiful things, making of his life the most wonderful of poems by creating himself out of his own imagination. He sympathizes with sinners as Wilde in "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" sympathizes with criminals, and recognizes no morality but that of sympathy. Christ is a precursor of the romantic movement, a supreme artist, a master of paradox, a type of Wilde in the ancient world.[9]

It is not simple exaggeration of his importance that signals Wilde's arrogance, but his implicit claim of entitlement to remake Jesus Christ in his own image. And the act of doing so signals arrogance, because Wilde's talents and accomplishments fail to justify his entitlement, because in remaking Jesus he shows colossal disrespect and thus the outrageous extent of his entitlement claim, and because the subsumption of Christ under the categories of his own invention is self-exalting for Wilde. This arrogance is intellectual because the "premise" of the entitlement claim concerns Wilde's intellect (its powers, its achievement, his standing in an intellectual community) and because the entitlement claim is to an intellectual activity (or exemption from some intellectual disciplines that would ordinarily be required of

[8] Oscer Wilde, *De Profundis* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1996), pp. 44–5.

[9] Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), pp. 514–15. Arrogance and vanity are often comic, as here. The raillery that Kierkegaard directs at Hegelian philosophers' pretensions to "pure thought", to "starting with nothing", to "making an advance on faith", etc. is a response to these philosophers' pretentiousness.

anyone who undertook to rewrite Jesus Christ);[10] and its viciousness resides in part in the blindness to Christ's nature that Wilde's arrogance works in him.

The Wilde case illustrates the relativity of concepts of arrogance and humility to moral outlooks. We read Wilde as arrogant in his treatment of Jesus as an ancient (albeit somewhat less amusing and artistic) forerunner of Oscar Wilde. But this judgment is morally located. It is a Christian or quasi-Christian judgment. What Christians regard as arrogant, an "aesthete" or a Nietzschean may not, because we have different ideas about what entitlement inferences are sound. A Nietzschean or aesthete believes that a creative genius like Wilde is perfectly entitled to remake Jesus in his own image, because making is what human life is about, and genius carries with it this kind of entitlement. Christians don't think so. Thus what we take to be arrogant behavior, intellectual or otherwise, depends on other contestable beliefs. To take another example, in Aristotle's framework it would not be arrogant for citizens to regard themselves, on the basis of their superiority to natural slaves, as entitled to treat the slaves merely as means to ends and not as beings who have their own ends that must be considered. This entitlement claim would not be arrogant in Aristotle's framework because the inference would be valid; while in Kant's framework the inference would necessarily be false, and would thus qualify as (at least) third-tier arrogance.

Consider, finally, Alasdair MacIntyre's comments on Aristotle's self-limitation of informants for his political dialectic. Unlike Descartes, Aristotle is not an epistemic Lone Ranger. His approach to knowledge is highly collegial, and to this extent humble. As part of his investigation he is careful to consult the opinions of those who are most likely to know about a subject-matter. But some of his beliefs about human nature lead him to limit his informants and discussion partners in a way that we would be a little less likely to do.

For while Aristotle understood very well the importance of the relevant kinds of experience for rational practice—"we see," he wrote, "that the experienced

[10] It seems that both premise and conclusion must be "intellectual" for the arrogance to be so. It does not seem to be *intellectual* arrogance when the president of Mensa presumes that his position entitles him to be given the best table in priority over guests who have been waiting for forty-five minutes; or when Madonna regards herself as entitled by her status as popular entertainer to make public pronouncements about the meaning of life.

are more effective than those who have reason, but lack experience'' (*Metaphysics* A $981^a14–15$)—in neither ethics nor politics did he give any weight to the experience of those for whom the facts of affliction and dependence are most likely to be undeniable: women, slaves, and servants, those engaged in the productive labor of farmers, fishing crews, and manufacture.[11]

Aristotle's intellectual conduct assumes that slaves and women need not be consulted when asking ethical and political questions, because they have no important insight or information to contribute. For someone who occupies a Christian or other non-elitist perspective, this intellectual policy involves a false ''inference'' along the following lines: slaves and workers are inferior human beings, compared to us investigators, so we are entitled to ignore their testimony as a source of ethical and political information. MacIntyre's point is that this policy is a blinding or information-impeding one. And our point is that the policy expresses something like the vice of intellectual arrogance. Here the conclusion is not obviously self-exalting, or motivated by sensuality, greed, or any other vice; so it is only third-tier arrogance.

Humility and Epistemic Goods

What, then, is intellectual humility? The foregoing analysis suggests that it is an unusually low dispositional concern for the kind of self-importance that accrues to persons who are viewed by their intellectual communities as talented, accomplished, and skilled, especially where such concern is muted or sidelined by intrinsic intellectual concerns—in particular, the concern for knowledge with its various attributes of truth, justification, warrant, coherence, precision, load-bearing significance, and worthiness. Intellectual humility is also a very low concern for intellectual domination in the form of leaving the stamp of one's mind on disciples, one's field, and future intellectual generations. As the opposite of intellectual arrogance, humility is a disposition not to make unwarranted intellectual entitlement claims on the basis of one's (supposed) superiority or excellence, out of

[11] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals* (Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1999), p. 6.

either a concern for self-exaltation, or some other vicious concern, or no vicious concern at all.

Our thesis is that intellectual humility fosters certain intellectual ends when it is conjoined, in a personality, with other epistemic virtues. Our claim is not that all people who lack humility will be in all respects epistemic failures; we even think that vanity, arrogance, and other anti-humility vices can on occasion contribute to the acquisition, refinement, and communication of knowledge. Rather, we claim that in the long run, just about everybody will be epistemically better off for having, and having associates who have, epistemic humility. We have been doing conceptual analysis, but now our thesis is empirical. One can imagine a study in which investigators of various sorts are tested for their intellectual humility and this trait measure is correlated with accomplishments such as discoveries of new knowledge and purveyance of knowledge to others. If it turned out that epistemic humility was predictive of more of these epistemic goods than intellectual vices like vanity and arrogance, our hypothesis would be confirmed.

If not, it would be disconfirmed. But the disconfirmation of that hypothesis would not, on our account, imply that intellectual humility was not a virtue, and that intellectual vanity and arrogance were virtues. The reason is that epistemic humility does not get all of its claim to virtue status from the narrowly intellectual advantages that we believe it affords. It is a virtue because the acquisition, maintenance, transmission, and application of knowledge are integral generic parts of human life, and a life characterized by humility with respect to these activities, as well as many other activities, is a more excellent life than one that lacks it. It is an intellectual virtue because it is exemplified in the context of intellectual practices. If the empirical study showed that humility led to a slightly lower output of epistemic goods, other traits being equal, than vanity and arrogance, we would be less than elated, but would not give up our claim that humility is an intellectual virtue and arrogance an intellectual vice. ''Reliability'' is not the only intellectual desideratum. Moore's humility about his ideas would be intellectual humility even if it did not afford him any more epistemic payoff than the professor down the hall gets from his vanity and arrogance. Intellectual virtues, like their moral counterparts, are dispositions to proper human functioning, and what counts as proper

human functioning is determined by basic human nature. Virtues are traits of the person who is functioning as persons are supposed to function.

If it did turn out that intellectual vanity and arrogance delivered, on average, more of the epistemic goods than intellectual humility, we would try to explain this disturbing result by reference to some other fault in the individual or some corruption in the epistemic environment. Perhaps individuals need vanity as a motivation, because their upbringing does not instill in them an enthusiasm for knowledge as such. Or we might locate the pathology socially—say, in the fact that the whole intellectual community is warped by vanity and arrogance, hyper-autonomy and unhealthy competitiveness, so that in that fallen community some vices actually become more "functional" than their counterpart virtues.

Let us now try to make plausible the thesis that humility is intellectually advantageous to most of us in most of our actual intellectual environments. The humility that is the opposite of intellectual vanity and arrogance has the primarily negative role of preventing or circumventing certain obstacles to acquiring, refining, and transmitting knowledge. Vanity and arrogance are epistemic liabilities that beset many people, so the intellectually humble person stands out in his or her freedom from these impediments.

Much acquisition, refinement, and communication of knowledge occurs in a live social setting whose mood and interpersonal dynamics strongly affect these intellectual processes. Research is often pursued by collaborative teams, and even scholars who spend most of their working days alone consult from time to time with colleagues and come together in professional meetings to share and test their findings. Classrooms are obviously social settings. Humility promotes these processes in two dimensions: in the functioning of the individual who possesses the virtue, and in the functioning of the social context with which he or she is interacting—colleagues, teachers, and pupils.

The intellectually vain person is overly concerned with how she "looks" to the people who count; she wants to impress, and is very concerned not to look silly at conferences and in front of her bright students. She may be genuinely concerned to accomplish intrinsic epistemic ends: to figure out what's what and to give her students a good education. But she *also* has the extrinsic concern to look good intellectually, and this is often a liability. By contrast, the lack of concern to look good frees the intellectually humble person to pursue intellectual goods simply and undistractedly (think of

G. E. Moore). He has one obstacle less to the correction of his views, especially in public and "competitive" contexts like philosophy colloquia. The humble person will be free to test his ideas against the strongest objections. His humility may also make for intellectual adventure: he will not be afraid to try out ideas that others may ridicule (here if one lacks humility, courage may be a substitute).

The intellectually arrogant person is inclined to act on a supposed entitlement to dismiss without consideration the views of persons he regards as his intellectual inferiors. Young "analytic" philosophers sometimes exemplify this vice vis-à-vis Continental or informal philosophy, just as young Continental philosophers sometimes suppose the profundity of their school to warrant dismissing the work of their analytic counterparts as superficial technical gamesmanship. Highly reputed older scientists may dismiss out of hand the unorthodox proposals of their graduate students or younger colleagues. Subramanyan Chandrasekhar was once asked why he was able to do innovative work in physics well past the age at which most people retire, while most physicists do their innovative work only when young. He said:

> For a lack of a better word, there seems to be a certain arrogance toward nature that people develop. These people have had great insights and made profound discoveries. They imagine afterwards that the fact that they succeeded so triumphantly in one area means they have a special way of looking at science which must be right. But science doesn't permit that. Nature has shown over and over again that the kinds of truth which underlie nature transcend the most powerful minds.[12]

In face of reality's capacity to surprise even the smartest of us, a certain skepticism about one's entitlement to disregard the views of minorities, of the unorthodox, and of the young may be a significant asset. As MacIntyre's comments on Aristotle suggest, the humble inquirer has more potential teachers than his less humble counterparts. And this is due not just to numbers, but also to permeability of noetic structure: in interacting with persons whose minds are somewhat alien to his own, the strongly unarrogant person is better able, in the words of James Sterba, "to achieve the sympathetic understanding of [their] views necessary for recognizing

[12] Quoted in Allan L. Hammond (ed.), *A Passion to Know: Twenty Profiles in Science* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984), p. 5.

what is valuable in those views and what, therefore, needs to be incorporated into [his] own views''.[13]

As brilliant and productive a scientist as Galileo Galilei was, his work was impeded by his arrogance. He was in many ways an admirable man, and no doubt the social conditions of the dissemination of his views were horrific enough to elicit a bad reaction from many a person of pretty good character. Still, more humility would have been a boon to him. His sense of intellectual superiority led him to disregard the work of other scientists who disagreed with him, and the incorporation of which could have improved his own work. He overestimated the probative force of his arguments for heliocentrism, and thus underestimated the justification of those who hesitated to accept the hypothesis.[14] In fact, his favorite argument—that the earth's motion accounts for the tides—was unsound (p. 78).

> To the end of his life, Galileo held to a simplified version of the Copernican system in which all the planets move in perfect circles. Although he preached open-mindedness, he never lent an ear to Kepler's arguments about elliptical paths. (ibid., p. 26)

This despite the fact that, only by allowing the orbits to be elliptical could one make sense of the planets' orbiting around the sun. Galileo's superiority also gave him a sense of entitlement to treat others with contempt and a disposition to underestimate those others' ability to detect the contempt, thus making the social conditions of his scientific work more problematic than they needed to be. In 1611, Galileo enjoyed an affectionate friendship with Maffeo Barberini (elected Pope as Urban VIII in 1623), but in his *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems* he put the Pope's favorite argument for a stationary earth—that God can do anything that is not self-contradictory—in the mouth of Simplicius, a simpleton character, on the assumption that his critics in the Vatican would not be smart enough to notice (pp. 141–2). They did notice, and their resentment worked ill for Galileo at his trial in 1633. As one contemporary commented, ''Galileo caused his own ruin by thinking too highly of himself and despising others. You should not be surprised if everybody plots against him'' (Orazio Grassi, as quoted on p. 172). Even a great scientist like Galileo can learn

[13] James Sterba, *Justice for Here and Now* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 4.

[14] William R. Shea and Mariano Artigas, *Galileo in Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 73–4.

from fellow scientists, and needs to make some kind of social life with his contemporaries, especially ones who can affect his opportunities to do his work and disseminate its results; for both of these reasons, more humility would have served Galileo well.

Conclusion

We have construed humility negatively—as a relative lack of concern to appear excellent to others, as a disposition not to make illegitimate entitlement claims on the basis of one's superiority, as a relative weakness of desire to be the author of other people's minds, as a disposition not to ascribe to oneself a greater moral excellence than one possesses, especially in acts of comparing oneself with others. And so forth. But by itself, none of these lacks and negations amounts to a virtue. A person with a certain kind of damage to the frontal lobes of his brain lacks completely both the concern to appear excellent to others and the desire to be the author of other people's minds,[15] but this does not give him any kind of virtuous humility. In describing the humility of Jesus and that of G. E. Moore, we said that the lack of concern for status is coordinated with another virtue, in Jesus *agapē* for humanity, in Moore a passion for philosophical insight. And we think this fact represents a general feature of humility—that it is internally connected, in the personality of the virtuous person, with other virtues. We cannot induce virtue by damaging frontal lobes, because such damage undermines concern across the board, while virtue consists in *selective differentiation* of concern: intense concern for what is worthy of it and relatively little concern for what is less worthy.

The virtues most likely to come to mind on reading our litany of intellectual humility's probable epistemic advantages are intellectual daring and self-confidence. People can be debilitated not only by intellectual vanity and arrogance, but also by timidity and diffidence. To be the most advancing of knowers, people need to be willing to think outside the presuppositions of their communities, to doubt authorities, and to imagine unheard-of possibilities. And it seems intuitively clear that intellectual timidity and diffidence hinder such activities. We might worry that an inquirer who

[15] See Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error* (New York: Avon Books, 1994), ch. 3.

markedly lacks vanity, arrogance, domination, and grandiosity is not very likely to be daring and self-confident.

These vices can sometimes substitute for virtues. The terror of appearing foolish before members of her profession may prompt a scholar to extreme care and thoroughness. Brash claiming of intellectual entitlement by bright graduate students is sometimes a crucial stage on the road to epistemic success. Given the pervasiveness of human vice, such biographies of knowledge may even be the norm, in a statistical sense. But intellectual daring and self-confidence are not tied by any necessity to these vices. Moore was an unusually energetic and venturesome epistemic agent who seems not to have depended on vanity and arrogance. To stand up before an audience of Cambridge intellectuals and prove the existence of the external world by reference to one's own two hands takes intellectual pluck. It is true that the same act might be motivated by vanity and arrogance, but in this case it wasn't. Other notable individuals in whom these traits combined were Barbara McClintock, the Nobel prize-winning geneticist, and Rosalind Franklin, both of whom we will look at in Chapter 11. Galileo, like many prominent scientists, was arrogant, but it seems that the love of knowledge was a still more prominent motive for him; and he would have been a more effective scientist had he been more humble. In all these people, the love of knowledge was a more important explanation of their intellectual success than arrogance or vanity.

10

Autonomy

Introduction

A number of the intellectual virtues reflect the social nature of intellectual practices. These practices are prey to social dysfunctions typical of human beings and may be promoted by salutary patterns of interaction for which we have the potential. The virtue of intellectual autonomy reflects certain facts about the social nature of human *agency*—in particular, that to be effective (or to exist at all) human actions must be prepared for by an education at the hands of the human community; that actions are often concerted and coordinated; that people depend on their contemporaries for information, stimulation, and critical correction; that the intelligence with which an action is performed belongs to a tradition of practical intelligence that may be centuries or millennia old but that intelligent action is never determined algorithmically by such an education or tradition; that ultimately, actions are always performed by individuals; that human beings often disagree about what should be done, and that disagreements can often be settled by discussion in which each party shows an independent spirit. These and other facts about human agency all bear on the analysis of autonomy, and they are evident no less in intellectual than in other practices. Indeed, the notion of practices ''other than intellectual'' is fishy; any activity that warrants the name of ''practice'' will perforce be shot through with knowledge. To be autonomous in those contexts that we call political or moral, or in pursuit of productions of various kinds, is to *think* autonomously.

In this chapter we will develop a concept of intellectual autonomy according to which one becomes an integrated, independent thinker by fittingly appropriating one's vast intellectual debts and dependencies. The resources of an intellectual tradition—the propositional knowledge it embodies, its understandings of things, its logic, its great creative thinkers,

the world views it contains, its controversies, its ways of testing claims and understandings, etc.—far from limiting the autonomy of the tradition's heirs, are the heirs' resources for developing their own autonomy. Autonomy is a cultural achievement passed from generation to generation. This autonomy is exemplified in the student or researcher who is able to work on his own, where working on his own involves a wise dependence, a willingness and ability to tap the intelligence and knowledge of others as needed; but it also means an intelligent ability to stand one's own ground against bullying, as well as gentler forms of pressure to conform.

The word "autonomy" will be associated, in some readers' minds, with the philosophical controversy over the metaphysics of freedom—the issue of freedom versus determinism. That is not the topic of this chapter. We will treat autonomy here somewhat as we treated self-knowledge in Chapter 4. There we noted that philosophers like David Hume and Derek Parfit present arguments to the conclusion that *no one* has *any* knowledge of himself as a continuing center of consciousness. Our brief account of self-knowledge assumed, with common sense, that we do have such knowledge, and then moved on to discuss the richer kind of knowledge that mature and virtuous people have of themselves. Similarly here, we will assume that people have varying degrees of freedom of choice—perhaps this can be conceived in either a libertarian or a compatibilist way—and will spend the chapter exploring the virtue that may or may not be built on this basic feature of human nature.

Regulation by Self and Others

In the period of the Enlightenment, intellectual autonomy was highly touted, and Immanuel Kant virtually identified it with enlightenment:

> Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. *Saper aude*! "Have courage to use your own reason!"—that is the motto of enlightenment.[1]

[1] Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question, What is Enlightenment?", in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 17.

The autonomy in question would be a disposition to use one's reason "without direction from another". Which other? *Any* others? Under what conditions? What is "direction"? And what is the disposition made of (so to speak)? We must answer these questions if we are to understand the virtue of autonomy, and they were not answered clearly either by Kant or by those who more recently have thought autonomy to be a vice—of arrogant and extravagant claims to self-sufficiency or self-creation, of solipsism, ingratitude, and a sense of entitlement to make texts mean whatever one fancies. However the virtue of autonomy was interpreted, it was conceived of as some *proper* ability to think for oneself and not to be *improperly* dependent on or influenced by others; and however the vice of autonomy was interpreted, it was some denial or underrating of one's real and legitimate and salutary intellectual dependencies. Here we are looking for the virtue of autonomy and will need to keep one eye on the vice that sometimes goes by the same name.

Autonomy may be defined, very abstractly, as "self-regulation" ("autonomy" comes from Greek words for "self" and "rule"). Its lexical contrary is heteronomy, or "regulation by others". So intellectual autonomy is the virtue of proper self-regulation, but always with regard to other-regulation or the possibility thereof. (Autonomy is, after all, a *social* virtue.) If we try to imagine the extremes of self-regulation and regulation by others, the absurdity of both is manifest. The virtue in this area of life must partake of both self- and other-regulation, and the task of the virtue epistemologist is to delineate the interactions of these in the trait.

Imagine first the person who is self-ruled "all the way down". He is the single unaided author (or at any rate original discoverer) of all the logical rules he uses, all the experimental standards, all the vocabulary of inquiry, all the guiding questions he addresses—that is, of everything that regulates his intellectual practices. No such standard is an inheritance. He has discovered for himself all the factual background that regulates any present inquiry, and has by himself contrived all the explanations that any present inquiry presupposes. He is the complete autodidact, never having had a teacher other than himself, with literally no one to thank for his intellectual powers and accomplishments. He has never darkened the door of a university or any other school. He works entirely alone, never consulting colleagues, never listening to criticism from others, never reading what others have written. This is not the autonomy that Kant calls

enlightenment; it cannot be what it means for an individual to "make use of his understanding without direction from another". The prospects of such an "autonomous" individual having any light on anything are dim indeed.

Next imagine the heteronomous extreme. He is a "thinker" who cannot regulate himself in any way whatever. When he follows a rule of inference, he must not only have the rule dictated to him by some authority (a teacher or a logic textbook), but he must have guidance in how to apply the rule to the present case (that is, the teacher must tell him that he got it right, or somehow the book must show this, perhaps by an example). When he does an experiment, he must be guided at every step by his research director. He never "plays" with vocabulary, but must be able to find exactly the required meaning in a dictionary, and regularly needs confirmation by a teacher that the meaning he thinks he has found is indeed the required meaning. He writes down nothing that has not been warranted by some authority, either a teacher or an authoritative book. He takes course after course in the university, collecting notebooks full of lecture dictation that he duly memorizes, but never ventures to put any of the ideas together in his own way. He does not even rearrange the ideas he finds in these notes, but tries to reproduce strictly the order in which they were delivered by the authoritative lecturer. This character does not represent the ideal that the critics of autonomy have in mind.

Clearly, an intellectual agent is wanted who has been, and continues to be, *properly* regulated by others, but has at the same time a mind of his own, being an independent and creative thinker and inquirer. If autonomy is to be a virtue, it must incorporate elements of intellectual heteronomy—not the vice, of course, but the phenomenon of being regulated by others. Perhaps we can get a bit clearer about this trait by putting before our minds some of the chief ways in which people regulate one another's intellectual practices. Such an exercise will enable us get a more perspicuous view of the proprieties and improprieties in this connection. We will see that some kinds of hetero-regulation, at the appropriate moment and as accepted in the appropriate way, are intellectually beneficial and even indispensable, while the same hetero-regulation, at a different moment or as accepted in a different way, would be unvirtuous; while other kinds of hetero-regulation are always or almost always inappropriate, and others are always or almost always appropriate. Consider then the following possible ways of being

intellectually regulated by one or more other persons. Such persons may supply us with knowledge (information, training, understanding); guide us with their questions, critical and otherwise; model intellectual discipline for us, providing us intellectual "ideals" or "heroes" (inspiring us); reward or punish us for doing well or badly; create a social ethos of expectations, proprieties, and proscriptions; encourage us (support us emotionally in our more difficult epistemic efforts) or, as it may be, discourage us; compete with us, intimidate us, "threaten" us; and they may function as authorities. In each case some ways of receiving direction from another are compatible with, or even essential to, autonomy, and some ways are unvirtuous. The virtue of autonomy is largely a disposition actively to exhibit the former and shun the latter kinds of dependence. Accordingly, it is enhanced by a dispositional awareness of the extent to which one's epistemic life is regulated by others, and a disposition to orient one's epistemic practices intelligently to the facts of this dependence. In all the intentional undertakings of the intellectual life—the expressions of full and mature intellectual agency—one or several of the hetero-regulators are operating, and fully intelligent intellectual agency takes them into account. People become *less* autonomous, not more so, by refusing to acknowledge and understand hetero-regulation, and as a consequence fail to be at their epistemic best.

The other as imparting knowledge Knowledge builds on knowledge; information and deeper understanding raise more questions, the pursuit of which uncovers more information and deepens our understanding. All the knowledge we have has been mediated to us by others, since acquisition of knowledge is always regulated by knowledge already acquired, and a significant portion of the knowledge we already have is inherited. For even the most creative person, then, the intellectual life is a network of deep dependencies.

Consider the potential for seeds of autonomy in a case that looks like extreme intellectual heteronomy. We hear of schools in the Islamic world where the education consists almost exclusively of memorizing the Qu'ran in Arabic. This transmission process tends in the direction of the sheerest heteronomy; but still, if the child is an Arabic speaker, it would be extreme to say that this education gives the child merely the intellectual status of a tape-recorder or a filing cabinet, because the child very likely understands

a bit of what he has memorized, and understanding is a seed of autonomy. Having understood something, he has a way to distinguish the sentences he understands from the ones he doesn't, and this allows him to ask his teacher about the meaning of the ones he doesn't understand. The asking and listening for an answer is an act of his own, an act of incipient autonomy, and if the teacher answers him intelligently, he gets more understanding and thus more intellectual agency. And so he is put in a position to ask more questions. As he does so, he sees more connections between Qu'ranic passages and begins to have more questions, and so gains more intellectual control in his study of the Qu'ran. So sparks of autonomy are possible in even a very oppressive education. In similar schools in countries like Pakistan, where the language is not Arabic, children who spend their days memorizing the Qu'ran do seem to be reduced to the status of tape-recorder.

Autonomy is fostered more by insight and understanding than by propositional knowledge, though, as we have pointed out (Chapter 2), even the simplest kinds of propositional knowledge presuppose a bit of understanding, and so harbor at least a tiny seed of autonomy. Since the teacher may or may not encourage such questioning, it is in his power to stifle or promote the autonomy of the pupil. He could promote it by encouraging the questioning and rewarding proffered insights with approval; he might even give special approval to the more "independent" judgments of the pupil. Thus the child may owe his self-regulation to regulation by the teacher.

To turn to a rather different kind of education, a good Ph.D. program aims to turn out scholars who are independent thinkers, and as a way of achieving this end, students are given lectures, reading courses, and supervision, though ideally less and less as they progress through the program. And, at the end of a forty-year career in the academy, a properly autonomous scholar will still be able to detect in her work and orientation the fingerprints of her mentors. Indeed, the best education always aims at stage-appropriate autonomy; as a child moves through grade school and high school to college, the idea is to make her, in certain ways, independent of supervision. Many colleges advertise their curriculum with mottos like "creating life-long learners", suggesting both a determining influence and that that influence promotes intellectual independence. At every level, we praise the student who is a self-starter, who can work on her own, who

does not require to be instructed in every little detail, yet this outcome is supposed to result from instruction.

We want to emphasize how autonomy, like most of the virtues we discuss in this book, is a modification of the individual's will. But this is the place to note the importance of sheer content-specific learning to the exercise of this virtue. One reason why people gain in autonomy as their education proceeds is that they increasingly know their way about the ''field'', and naturally enough are able to navigate with less present and explicit guidance. They understand things that are said, they know what they need to find out, and they know how to find it out. The more expert they are, the rarer and more specialized will be the occasions when they need to call in the consultants. But note that even where an expert's knowledge is most extensive, she will often call on help (provided she does not have a character defect that makes her unwilling), and that autonomy involves knowing when to call on help, what kind of help to call on, and being humble enough to do so. Autonomy here is part expertise and part character trait.

John Benson has pointed out that whether the need for information is a sign of immature heteronomy can depend on what kind of knowledge the agent needs help with.

> The belief that whales are viviparous is none the worse for being taken from a reliable textbook. I may not know what the reasons are for this proposition; but it is enough that I know that there are some. But it is doubtful whether I know what I am saying if I say that torture is wicked, if my only reason is that I am confident that someone else has good reasons, though I do not know what they are.[2]

In effect, Benson is suggesting that understanding is a kind of autonomy; to ''know what I am saying'' when I say that whales are viviparous, despite having learned it from a reliable textbook, is just to understand it adequately; and not to know what I am saying when I say that torture is wicked, in case I take it on somebody else's authority, is just *not* to understand *that* adequately. To understand is to stand, to that extent, on one's own intellectual feet. But Benson also points out, in effect, that ''adequately'' always has an implicit index to some context or purpose, and so, thus, does autonomy. He says:

[2] John Benson, ''Who Is the Autonomous Man?'', *Philosophy* 58 (1983): 5–17, p. 13.

It may be consistent with the role of critical enquirer to ask a competent authority whether smoking will damage my health, but it is not consistent with the role of critical moral agent to ask anyone whether I ought to be a conscientious objector, practice contraceptive intercourse, or approve of abortion. ... To be autonomous in morality involves a greater degree of self-sufficiency than to be intellectually autonomous. (ibid., p. 211)

I can take it on authority that smoking is unhealthy or that whales are viviparous without prejudice to my intellectual autonomy, because it is not my business to understand such things deeply; but I can't take it on authority that torture is wicked and still be thought an autonomous moral thinker, because it is everybody's business to understand this much. But Benson seems to err in thinking that it is essentially morality that makes the difference in these cases. If I am a marine zoologist and I take it on authority that whales are viviparous, then I *am* short of intellectual autonomy; and in some areas of moral reasoning (say, where the issues are too technical for the layperson), it may be acceptable to base a moral judgment on authority. Intellectual and moral autonomy are not different in kind, because moral autonomy is a kind of intellectual autonomy—that is, it is autonomy as a moral *thinker*. The difference is that, generally speaking, moral understanding is required of everybody, but zoological understanding isn't. Once we specify narrowly enough the context or role, we see that just as much self-sufficiency is required in the "intellectual" sphere as in the "moral".

What makes, then, for autonomy with respect to knowledge gained from another? First, we would note that in one sense, the autonomy of the individual will vary from area to area of knowledge. No one is equally autonomous across all fields of knowledge. I may be rather autonomous within my specialty, but as soon as I get out of my depth, whether with respect to plumbing or microbiology, I become much more dependent on testimony and advice that I have only a rough ability to assess. So in this respect, autonomy is a matter of area-specific knowledge—certainly of propositional knowledge and of acquaintance, but above all of understanding as mediated by these and by reflection. Such understanding gives one a vantage point from which to assess evidence, organize and make use of new information, and thus have a certain ownership of the contents of one's mind. It makes one less likely either to be swayed by contrary opinions, new information, intellectual fads, and

social pressures to conform intellectually; or to dismiss such inputs out of hand—that is, without giving oneself adequate opportunity to see what merit they may harbor. Instead, one is in a position to process such inputs actively from one's own point of view, to think for oneself.

But autonomy vis-à-vis knowledge that comes from others is not *just* a matter of area-specific learning. Even in this limited (though very important) area, autonomy is more like a character trait than area-specific learning. It is a kind of wisdom about knowledge, a large-perspectival self-understanding with respect to the fields of learning. It is a practical wisdom such that the agent knows what she knows and knows the limits thereof, but also has enough general grasp of what is on the outer edge of her knowledge that she can figure out how to assess proposals there as an intelligent layperson. Such assessment will often involve consulting people who have more information and deeper understanding than herself, as well as books. Autonomy here is provided by having a feel for who these people and books are, enough humility not to mind seeking help from others, a bit of skill in putting the questions, enough understanding to grasp and assess what they say, and the self-confidence to venture judgments on the basis of these sources. So here autonomy is proper heteronomy. Specialized knowledge is no doubt an *entrée* to this more generalized ability to size up and assimilate knowledge on the periphery of one's expertise. It gives one insight into what it is *really* to know something, an insight that may beget both proper humility and a kind of generalized competence, both of which are aspects of intellectual autonomy.

A person will not have developed this understanding, skill, self-confidence, and humility without loving the epistemic goods. And she will love them in two ways. First, she will love them in the way that seeks confirmation and resolution and the holding of an understanding. Her will will have a teleology, and its aim will be knowledge; and this concern will tend to make her an independent thinker. But autonomy is also served by a sheer love of ideas, of reasoning, of thinking up schemata, of trying on ways of thinking. The dialectical versatility nurtured by such playfulness will serve the thinker well in thinking for herself, in making her own the knowledge that she gets from others—provided that her will is oriented by the more serious epistemic goal of truth. The individual who *just* enjoys being "creative" may seem even more autonomous than the one whose creativity is subordinated to a concern for truth; but this is an illusory and

fantastic sort of autonomy, not the autonomy of the intellectually most virtuous agent.

The other as critic Criticism is another way in which one person may guide another's intellectual practice. A teacher comments on a student's paper, pointing up faults and offering suggestions for the next draft. A professional literature colloquium consists, in part, in the members' offering criticisms of one another's comments and suggestions on how to extend an argument. In contexts of receiving criticism, autonomy sometimes involves resisting the criticism, sometimes accepting it; but in either case the agent may owe his increase of knowledge to the critic—and this happens at *every* level of sophistication and expertise, from the kindergarten to the professional physics or philosophy colloquium. The autonomous person has the presence of mind to judge evenly and rationally here. He is ready to assert himself, rather than accept criticism obsequiously; he is tenacious enough in his intellectual commitments to make the critic work hard, if that is warranted. But he is not defensive or proud to the point of rejecting criticism when he shouldn't; he is open to criticism, and this is as much a mark of autonomy as proper tenacity is.

Thus again we see that autonomy is not a matter of sheer independence, but of what one *does* with one's dependence. Recently a student of one of us declined an honors project on a topic in which the professor was doing research, out of fear that his own ''originality'' would be swamped or stifled by the teacher's greater expertise. He chose to do his project, instead, in an area where the professor had little expertise or interest. This choice, by an undergraduate (even a very bright one, as in the present case), is not an expression of intellectual autonomy, though the student may have thought of it in that way. Instead, the choice was made out of the undergraduate equivalent of what Harold Bloom calls ''the anxiety of influence'', an intellectual pathology that belongs in the general area of intellectual heteronomy (see Chapter 9 for more discussion). Practical wisdom, motivated by love of knowledge and freed by humility or supported by a bit of courage in the face of criticism, would more likely enjoin intellectual symbiosis with the professor and self-subordination to the professor's interests and direction; and this would be an impressive age-appropriate autonomy in the undergraduate's case. Autonomy for the student may involve more acquiescence in what the teacher says than

autonomy in the professional philosopher involves acquiescence in what his critics say. But in both cases, autonomy involves a reasonable, active use of guidance from another.

The other as model Modeling occurs at all levels of sophistication and character development. The child models himself on his parents, teachers, and peers; the doctoral student models herself on her mentors and peers; colleagues model themselves on one another; scholars model themselves on respected figures in their field. Modeling often has an unconscious aspect. I may just "find" myself speaking, writing, or behaving like someone I admire. I may not even realize I admire somebody until I notice myself imitating him. This is a kind of heteronomy. To the extent that we are unaware of somebody's control over our epistemic life, we are less in a position to conduct ourselves autonomously toward that other's influence. Consciousness and self-knowledge are important elements of autonomy.

Modeling is a natural part of human development and interaction, and is crucial for our epistemic performance. But for optimal development, we need to control it and channel it rationally. In colleges, we hire faculty with a view to whether they will be salutary models for the students. And in deciding which job offer to take, a young professor who is wise will factor into his decision the potential of his new colleagues to provide him with good models. ("Good model" here does not necessarily mean "razzle-dazzle intellectual superstar". It means someone with intellectual virtues.) So in this dimension autonomy implies a conception of what a good model is like and an active practical wisdom about human development and about one's own development. It implies being self-aware enough to notice, pretty reliably, if one is being led down the wrong path. The autonomous individual is constantly alert to intellectual deficits in herself and her associates, but without cynicism or despair. She is reflective about the intellectual life—does not just pursue it, but thinks about what it is to pursue it and what kind of persons best pursue it; and this makes her a constant evaluator of herself and others. Clearly, the reflectiveness described in this paragraph is not characteristic of all autonomy, but of its higher degrees.

The model can be incorporated authentically or inauthentically. The authentic incorporation of an excellent model will be an incorporation of

the virtues of that model, rather than of incidental traits and peculiarities—catch phrases, facial expressions, and other mannerisms, or even vices such as the disposition to mistreat students and selfish, defensive hording of data. The model may encourage worshipful discipleship rather than critical modeling. The most authentic incorporation will itself be characterized by autonomy, by intelligent, conscious assessment of the model. The best relationship is one in which both model and modeler are autonomous, neither having a pathological need for the other, and both committed to an intellectual ideal beyond the relationship.

Another permutation of the anxiety of influence is the fear of modeling, a fear of compromising one's autonomy by being like one's elders or one's peers—or worse, one's juniors. We spoke of courage as an aspect of autonomy in facing one's critics, but it seems odd to speak of courageously modeling oneself on another. Often modeling, even when quite conscious, is less an act and more a letting-happen, with the actions of autonomy being more a matter of checking the happening. But if so, then it may be possible to express autonomy here in a courageous letting-happen of modeling, against the anxiety of influence. Envy is another emotional impediment to modeling. Envy is unhappy admiration, as Kierkegaard says, and it can motivate a rebellion against the envied one—a desire to be as little like her as possible. But envy is a kind of bondage, a disposition not to see the good in the envied one, or to see it through a filter of invidious qualifications. The more autonomous the individual, the less will he have this envy; he will be glad to model himself on aspects of these others, grateful to have associates worthy to be modeled on, and confident of his independence. Or if he has the envy, he will have an inclination and ability to dominate it in the interest of the truth.

The other as sanctioner The critic and model, as well as others, often mete out rewards and penalties for epistemic behavior. Parents and mentors express approval and disapproval, teachers give grades and class rankings, honorary societies invite membership, readers pay money for books, students write evaluations of their professors, colleagues give or withhold tenure, review boards accept and reject manuscripts, and Nobel prizes reward the highest levels of scientific research. Such sanctions powerfully guide our intellectual feet along the paths of conformity; they would not exist in such abundance or so pervade the world of learning if they didn't.

Nor is it obvious that the world of the intellect would be better off without such sanctions. One can guess that without the rewards and penalties, a lot less excellent intellectual work would get done. Some very virtuous epistemic agents might never have become such had they not been molded early by extrinsic rewards and penalties.

But the sanctions are not an unmixed blessing. In the best case, good behavior is rewarded and bad penalized; but sometimes people are rewarded for compromising, or they compromise to get the reward; and are penalized for good behavior or compromise excellence to avoid penalty.[3] In the best case, sanctions rule epistemic behavior primarily at the earlier stages of development or provide a minor extra stimulus to excellent performance; but in reality often the sanctions determine epistemic behavior in a major way both early and late. Intellectual autonomy involves a dispositional orientation of the will to the parameters of reward and penalty in all their forms. In general, autonomy is a freedom from domination by sanctions, but this freedom is no more absolute than that from informers, critics, and models. This last claim might be doubted. Are not sanctions more capable, in principle, of being shunned altogether than informers, critics, and models, these last three being more nearly essential to the intellectual life of human beings than sanctions? We are of two minds about this. Sanctions are ingredients in the very business of critics and models. Critics, by their nature as critics, are approvers and disapprovers; and models, by their nature, function as indirect critics. If so, then sanctions are as natural to human epistemic enterprises as are critics and models. Yet we do think that in the most mature intellectual characters the hope of reward and fear of penalties can subside to something quite negligible; whereas one never outgrows one's need for critics, and one's most important models live on in one's mind and will.

Autonomy is the ability to keep money and fame in perspective when these are tied to epistemic performance. But what is the required perspective? Rare individuals may be completely indifferent to some of the kinds of sanctions, and this will certainly count as autonomy (assuming

[3] Brian C. Martinson, Melissa S. Anderson, and Raymond de Vries, "Scientists Behaving Badly", *Nature* 435 (9 June 2005): 737–8) document the disturbingly high number of scientists funded by the National Institutes of Health who engage in behaviors that conform to the US Office of Science and Technology Policy definition of research misconduct as "fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism". For example, 6 percent admitted failing to present data that contradict their research, and 15.5 percent admitted changing the design, methodology, or results of a study due to pressure from a funding source.

the individual is not indifferent to the epistemic goods). But we think it very rare indeed that anyone be indifferent to all and sundry intellectual sanctions, and we do not make indifference to them a requirement for autonomy. Rather, autonomy is the ability to enjoy rewards or suffer penalties for one's ideas without the sanction affecting one's assessment of the value of the ideas; it is the ability to keep the value of the sanction in a different category from the value of the goods. And it is more than this. It is also the ability and inclination to let the value of the epistemic goods appropriately dominate that of the sanctions, so that when one must choose between, on the one hand, the enjoyment or avoidance of the sanction and, on the other, the acquisition, maintenance, application, or transmission of the good, the agent can give the latter their full due. Intellectual autonomy's dependence on the love of knowledge should be obvious.

As we have indicated, the freedom of autonomy has a historical and developmental character as well. Autonomy is freedom from the push and pull of sanctions in the same way in which Wittgenstein's Tractarian philosopher is free from the ladder of referential language—not absolutely free, because had the philosopher not climbed up on reference, he would not be where he is today, floating on his wise nonsense. But *now* he does not need the ladder.

The other as authority Authority is the kind of hetero-regulator that people first think of in connection with the virtue of autonomy. It is certainly prominent in Kant's mind. To be gullible or credulous is to be disposed to accept others' testimony "on authority", and in the more extreme versions of modern thought, autonomy is never accepting testimony without independently verifying it. In earlier chapters we have agreed with Thomas Reid's general point that the tendency to believe testimony without testing it for oneself is not intellectually substandard as such (though it is of course also not autonomy as such). Throughout the preceding discussion we have construed autonomy not as an immunity from hetero-regulation, but as a disposition to respond virtuously to hetero-regulation—variously and appropriately and actively. Not all circumstances call equally or in the same way for caution about testimony, and the autonomous individual is disposed to be cautious about testimony in whatever way is right for the circumstances—sometimes very cautious, sometimes implicitly trusting. In

this discussion of autonomy in relation to authority we will consider not just credulity and gullibility (lack of autonomy with respect to testimony) but also servility (lack of autonomy with respect to directives). Both involve a deficit of independent critical thinking, and in that way are intellectual deficits.

An authority is a source of testimony or command such that, in virtue of its status relative to its subjects and within its domain, its testimony or command is *prima facie* to be accepted or obeyed.[4] Authorities gain their status in a variety of ways. Some authorities have this status by virtue of *knowledge*—for example, the expert and the eyewitness. Some have their authority by *office*—for example, presidents and police officers. Some have their authority by virtue of their relationship to subjects—for example, parents to their children and God to his creatures. Subjects of such authorities can express autonomy vis-à-vis the authority if they accept the authority's testimony or command intelligently—that is, with an understanding of the authority's status as authority. To understand an authority's status is to understand the authority's limits. An authority can be limited in two ways: in its domain and in its competence.

To accept the authority of an eyewitness is to credit the witness with a competence, the competence to report what he saw. It is thus to understand how eyewitnesses get to occupy their position of authority. But it is to understand also that the domain of the eyewitness's authority is just what he saw, and to be ready, thus, to withdraw one's trust in case the eyewitness exceeds the bounds of his authority by claiming things he didn't witness. It is also to understand that eyewitnesses are fallible (subject to faulty seeing, imperfect understanding of what they saw, and possibly even lying about what they saw) and thus to recognize the propriety of cross-examining them as a way of upgrading the evidential status of what they report. Analogous things can be said about autonomy vis-à-vis experts such as scientists, lawyers, and historians. To accept the authority of a police officer is to accept intelligently the officer's authority to command certain things—say, to see your driver's license—and it is no compromise of your autonomy, but rather an expression of it, that you obey such a command with this understanding. Out of such understanding it is part of your autonomy that you ascertain (if at all in doubt) that the officer is a legitimate member of the

[4] See Mark Murphy, *An Essay on Divine Authority* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

police force, and that you know and insist that while he has the authority to see your driver's license, he does not have the authority to set your standards of theological orthodoxy or strip-search you by the side of the road or command you to shoot out the tires of the next car that drives by. A child is autonomous in accepting her parents' authority to the extent that she understands their authority to be ordained for her good and the proper order of society. Of course she is not autonomous in her acceptance of their authority when she is very young, but if they exercise it benevolently and wisely, she grows in her autonomy as she grows in understanding of their authority. This will also be an understanding of the limits of their authority—that, say, they do not have the authority to command her to act immorally—and of their fallibility in the exercise of it (that what they do justifiably and benevolently command may not always be for the best). We propose, then, that an important element of autonomy vis-à-vis an authority is the subject's understanding of the authority and its limitations: the authority's fallibility and the limits of its domain. The entire tradition of civil disobedience depends on this conception of authority.

Perhaps we can gain some insight into autonomy as a virtue by considering the disturbing results of Stanley Milgram's experiments concerning obedience to authority.[5] Three fictional characters make up the scene: the ''experimenter'', the ''teacher'', and the ''learner''. The ''experimenter'' is dressed as a technician and gives instructions. The ''teacher'' is the unsuspecting subject of the experiment. He is told that the experiment is to test the effects of punishment on learning, and that he will be dispensing electric shocks of increasing severity to the learner. The ''learner'' is strapped into a chair with electrodes on his wrists. The experimenter and learner are party to the deception; the learner will not be shocked as the teacher believes. The learner's task is to pair words: he reads the first word of a pair and four terms, one of which is the correctly paired word, and chooses a word by working one of four switches. The experimenter tells the teacher to administer shocks of gradually increasing intensity each time the learner gives a wrong answer; the first level is 15 volts, and the levels increase in 15-volt increments up to a maximum of 450 volts. The teacher administers the ''shock'' by moving a lever on a control panel with the

[5] Reported in Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

voltages marked, together with descriptive phrases "slight shock" up to 60 volts, "danger: severe shock" up to 420 volts, and then "XXX" for 435 and 450 volts. By pre-arrangement, the learner gives incorrect answers about three out of every four times. If the teacher expresses unwillingness to keep shocking the learner, the experimenter gives him pre-arranged prods starting with "Please continue" up to "You have no other choice, you *must* go on." If the teacher protests that the learner does not want to go on, the experimenter says to the teacher: "Whether he likes it or not, you must go on until he has learned all the word pairs correctly. So please go on."

Of the forty subjects in Milgram's original 1963 study, none stopped before reaching 300 volts, and twenty-six subjects, 65 percent of the total, went all the way to 450. The experiment seems to show that in certain circumstances, of which the experiment is one, otherwise autonomous people are prone to be inappropriately compliant—to do, in response to authoritative orders, things they oughtn't to do. In particular, in this circumstance the vast majority of normally autonomous people make bad judgments about the domain of an authority's authority. What can we learn from this about the nature of virtues, and of autonomy in particular?

Virtues in general have two "contrary" properties: circumstance indexicality and circumstance independence. We have seen, especially in Chapter 4, that some virtue epistemologists think of virtues as properly functioning faculties. We have not adopted their concept of a virtue, but circumstance indexicality is a property that faculties share with virtues as we understand them. Faculties are adapted to a special range of circumstances, beyond which even the healthiest faculty cannot be expected to function as it should. Human eyesight, for example, is adapted to work in a certain range of lighting, on objects of a certain range of size, at a certain range of distance, in a body that is neither too stationary nor too rapidly moving relative to the objects of sight. If the lighting is too intense or too dim, or the objects too small or too far away or too close up, or if the eye is absolutely stationary or whirling rapidly around, even the person with 20–20 vision cannot be expected to see much.

Similarly, circumstance indexicality is virtues' adaptation to circumstance types. For example, anybody's courage will be somewhat specialized. It fits him to perform well in situations whose threatening features are of certain determinate physical and social types that fall within a certain

range of degrees of severity. A person might be quite courageous in most social situations but easily overwhelmed by physical heights or a storm at sea, where another courageous person might have the opposite "specialization". Or someone might have courage fitting him for situations of a certain degree of social threat, but be undone by ones exceeding this. Similarly, a person's autonomy fits him to behave well in situations of actual or potential regulation by others as knowledge-imparters, critics, models, sanctioners, and authorities, where these hetero-regulators fall within a certain normal range and belong to recognizable subspecies. But it seems that the situation of the Milgram experiments was such that almost nobody's virtue of autonomy was up to coping with it. Certainly it was not an everyday situation for any of the unsuspecting subjects; nor is it likely that many of the subjects had ever been burned in a situation in which a mad experimenter was asking people to do such outrageous things under the cloak of science in a respectable university (Yale). And Peter Goldie is certainly right to point to "the insidious incremental nature of the required shock levels to be administered"[6] as part of the explanation of why these normally mature people performed so abysmally. If situations calling for autonomy more typically had this incremental feature, normally autonomous people would, presumably, be better prepared for the experimental situation.

The complement of circumstance indexicality is circumstance independence. While no one can be expected to exhibit a virtue if the circumstances calling for it are sufficiently eccentric, still it is a mark of greater virtue to be more adaptable, to have a wider range of circumstances to which one's virtue is adequate. Few compassionate people are inclined to exhibit compassion in as wide a range of difficult circumstances as Mother Teresa; few forgiving people exhibit forgiveness in as wide a range of circumstances as Nelson Mandela; few persons of integrity maintain their integrity as consistently in tempting circumstances as Billy Graham has done.[7] These people are exemplars of extraordinary virtue at least in part because they are somewhat independent of the narrower, more typical range of circumstances for which the virtue fits most of the people who exhibit it.

[6] Peter Goldie, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 174.

[7] See the stories of these and other "great souls" in David Aikman, *Great Souls: Six Who Changed the Century* (Nashville: W. Publishing Group, 1998).

So it is not beyond possibility that a person of extraordinary autonomy should come along, and be a subject in Milgram's experiment, and because of the independence of his intellect and heart see pretty quickly that he is under no obligation to continue shocking his "learner" and have the presence of mind to exit the procedure—perhaps even to challenge the "experimenter" to stop his cruel experimenting. We will examine such a case—one of Milgram's—in Chapter 12. Milgram's experiment seems to show that people who have this kind of circumstance independence will be rare. Perhaps they are almost as rare as Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, and Billy Graham. (Given some of the stories of Mother Teresa standing up to US presidents and other authority figures to plead compassion for the unborn, one can imagine that she would have passed Milgram's autonomy test with flying colors.)

Some of the "teachers" who were found so disturbingly compliant in the Milgram experiments were presumably, at each stage of "torturing" the victim, making judgments about the propriety of following the orders. According to Milgram, indications of nervousness and tension "were characteristic rather than exceptional responses to the experiment".[8] One of the subjects, Morris Braverman (a pseudonym), who administered "shocks" all the way to 450 volts, showed signs of conflict and emotional stress while doing so, and in a follow-up interview he expressed regret and dismay at his behavior. "There was I. I'm a nice person, I think, hurting someone, and caught up in what seemed a mad situation … and in the interest of science, one goes through with it." He giggled during the ordeal and tried to stifle laughter. He said, "This isn't the way I usually am. This was a sheer reaction to a totally impossible situation. And my reaction was to the situation of having to hurt somebody. And being totally helpless and caught up in a set of circumstances where I just couldn't deviate and I couldn't try to help. That is what got me" (Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*, p. 71). Braverman feels himself to be in bondage because it doesn't occur to him that he is in control. The situation imposes such limits on what he can seriously imagine himself doing that it does not occur to him that he could just refuse to go on; *in situ*, his realistic imagination of options of resisting putative authority doesn't extend to this kind of situation. The

[8] Stanley Milgram, "Behavioural Study of Obedience", *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67: (1963): 371–8, p. 375; see pp. 376–7.

more autonomous individual will be one whose repertoire of imaginable responsible actions transcends the impositions engineered by Milgram. The more autonomous a person is, the greater the repertoire of rational actions that can occur to him as genuine options—things he genuinely *could do*—in the face of authority.

But also, the more autonomous a person is, the more discriminating he will be among his options in the face of authority. Braverman has (let us say) generally good discrimination about which authorities to obey when, but he is caught unprepared for the scenario in the psychology laboratory at Yale. He hasn't thought through this type of situation; he certainly has not previously thought out what to do if a Yale experimenter with whom he has agreed to cooperate asks him to send 450 volts through a person's body for incorrectly pairing one word with another. Autonomy, we said earlier, is a kind of understanding of authorities, in particular of the rationale for their authority and thus of their fallibility and the limits of their domain. It looks as though Braverman's deficit of autonomy in the special circumstances of Milgram's experiment is an unclarity about the domain of the experimenter's authority. He rightly attributes to the experimenter a kind of intellectual authority, assuming justifiably that a Yale psychologist will know what he's doing and can be trusted not to be doing stupid or cruel things to subjects. When this experimenter then commands him to send high-voltage electricity through the body of a violently protesting subject for having paired words wrongly, he does not see (clearly enough) that the experimenter has vastly exceeded the boundaries of his authority or (alternatively) doubt with sufficient confidence the authority's competence. Perhaps he does see it, in a way, as indicated by his emotional reaction to the situation; but if so, he does not have enough confidence in his own perception to act on the disparity between the experimenter's authority and the experimenter's implicit authority claim. Autonomy is not a merely "intellectual" knowledge of the domains and fallibilities of authorities, but one that is integrated into more or less spontaneous perception and thus action.

An intellectual authority is a source of regulation to which we accord *prima facie* exemption from criticism. Thus Christians accord such an exemption to the Bible or the teachings of the Church; some Freudians accord one to the writings and doctrines of Freud; good children treat their parents as having such an exemption; and this is how Mr Braverman treated

the experimenter (he would presumably not have obeyed just anybody who ordered him to behave so shockingly). In the case of legitimate authorities the exemption will not be without rationale. As Gadamer comments,

> But the authority of persons is ultimately based not on the subjection and abdication of reason but on an act of acknowledgment and knowledge—the knowledge, namely, that the other is superior to oneself in judgment and insight and that for this reason his judgment takes precedence—i.e., it has priority over one's own. [9]

People are sometimes quite reflective about their commitment to an intellectual authority. A child who thinks through the authority of his parents might support the exemption by the consideration that they are older and wiser than he. Christians treat the Bible or the Church as authoritative because they believe these to be divinely inspired and appointed. Such rationales can be part of the proper use of the hetero-regulator that we associated with autonomy in the preceding discussion. Thus it would be part of the autonomy of a Christian who treats the Bible or the Church as an intellectual authority that he can articulate well why the authority is a legitimate authority for him.

Christian autonomy, like any intellectual autonomy, is an inclination and ability to think for oneself, and thus to resist conflicting hetero-regulators. But, as we have argued generally for autonomy, it cannot be the inclination or ability to resist all possible hetero-regulators. So it is a disposition and ability to resist *some* hetero-regulators by virtue of obedience to *another* hetero-regulator. For example, a Catholic layman might exhibit intellectual autonomy in resisting the teachings about sexuality or material consumption that are patent in the secular culture in which she lives. The firmer and more articulate and nuanced she is in her resistance to the secular teachings, the more intellectual autonomy she displays, but of course she gets her "position" from a hetero-regulator, the Roman Catholic Church. The secularist's resistance to the Catholic teachings on the same issues may also exhibit autonomy. Both parties will have greater intellectual autonomy the more the behavior is a matter of standing on one's own two feet with respect to the issues. Thus if the pressure of the secular culture is very great, so that secularism is the default position, so to speak, the position into which most people unthinkingly fall, it will take more autonomy on

[9] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. edn, trans. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum: 1989), p. 279.

the part of the Catholic to resist the secularist doctrines than it takes the secularist to resist the Catholic doctrines. But if the culture is predominantly Catholic, then it may take more autonomy to be secular in one's thinking. In both cases, autonomy is a matter of resisting one hetero-regulator by virtue of adherence to another.

But how can adherence to a *hetero*-regulator be *auto*nomy? The answer that we have been developing in this chapter is that the hetero-regulator must be assimilated or appropriated to some extent by the epistemic agent; it must become part of the *autos* (self) of the agent. How does the agent appropriate the hetero-regulator? Three modes or features of appropriation can be distinguished.

First, he does so by *understanding* in terms of the hetero-regulator. A person who has mere propositional knowledge of the regulator—say, a list of believed catechetical propositions, warranted in some externalist way—cannot be said to have appropriated the regulator in the way required for autonomy. If these propositions regulate the individual's intellectual life at all, it will be in some way that could hardly be called autonomy. Understanding is the ability to "go on" (on one's own), to make creative or at least intelligent use of, say, an inherited scientific or scholarly procedure, the doctrines of Marxism, the testimonies of scientists, or Scripture. Special indicators of autonomy are invention, improvisation on the basis of the hetero-regulator, wisdom in its terms, and application to new cases; and the more of this an agent has, the greater will be his autonomy with respect to the hetero-regulator. It is important to autonomy that the agent not only understand his own hetero-regulator and understand the matter at hand in terms of it, but also understand the hetero-regulator he is resisting. Otherwise, his resistance can hardly be intelligent, and without intelligence it cannot be autonomous. He will understand the resisted hetero-regulator both on its own terms and in terms of his own hetero-regulator. The former will be a case of having an understanding; the latter of holding one as well. For example, our autonomous adherent to a Catholic view of sexuality will have an articulate understanding of that view, but also a deep enough understanding of the secular viewpoint to make her resistance to the latter intelligent.

We are saying only that a fairly articulate understanding of the resisted view is *characteristic* of autonomous resistance, and characteristically represents an *increase* in autonomy. To make such understanding a necessary

condition of autonomous rejection would be too strong. For example, Mother Teresa might pass the Milgram autonomy test with flying colors without being at all clear where Milgram is "coming from", other than understanding that he is asking her to torture another human being without a good enough reason. But Mother Teresa could not be an autonomous adherent of the Christian moral tradition without understanding *it*. Not that she must understand it as well as God understands it; autonomy must be compatible with accepting particular things the rationale for which one does not grasp. One scientist can, without prejudice to her autonomy, accept the testimony of another scientist in an area where the first scientist is not an expert. And the Catholic can autonomously accept the teachings of the Church on sexuality without understanding the rationale for everything in those teachings; but she will be heteronomous with respect to those teachings if she can say nothing about why the Church is authoritative or about how the teachings work and are good; and the more she can say, other things being equal (see the next two points), the more autonomous she will be.

A second aspect of appropriation of a hetero-regulator is the habitual or spontaneous character of its use by the intellectual agent—for example, thinking without need for prompting in terms of the Catholic understanding of sexuality and material acquisitions. The thinking pattern of the hetero-regulator is more deeply appropriated the more it occupies the cross-situational default position with regard to an agent's ways of thinking, the more it is ingrained in the agent, not just something she can muster. A person who thinks well in terms of the Catholic understanding of sexuality and material acquisitions during discussions in church, but who has to remind herself to think in its terms when on a date or walking through the mall, is for that reason less autonomous with respect to that hetero-regulator.

A third mode of appropriation is incorporation by the will. The human self is formed according to the saying of Jesus, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6: 21). The heart, here, is the inmost self, the *autos* itself. To think autonomously in terms of a hetero-regulator is to love in terms of the hetero-regulator, to care, to be concerned, to be emotionally involved in those terms; it is to be intrinsically motivated to think in those terms. For example, when the autonomous Catholic thinker thinks through the issue of homosexual "marriage" in terms of the

Catholic tradition, she not only understands the tradition and understands the issues in terms of it, and thinks spontaneously in these terms; she also cares about the institution of marriage, and cares about God as the source of the tradition. Were the issue merely "academic" for her, her thinking would be less autonomously *in terms of the tradition*, since her own (*autos*) self would be less involved in the thinking. Sometimes autonomy has been thought of as disinterested, and here the threatening hetero-regulator is not another human being or tradition, but the non-rational part of the self, its emotions and desires, which are thought to impede the autonomous functioning of the intellect. But on the present analysis, autonomy is not a property of the intellect as a faculty or part of a person, but a property of the thinker, the epistemic agent. The importance of the emotions and desires as an integrating factor in the intellectual life is perhaps more obvious in the case of the moral knowledge that has illustrated much of the present subsection, but the same is true in such "objective" areas as scholarship, history, philosophy, and science. A scientist will not have thoroughly appropriated a way of thinking or proceeding scientifically until he has become attached to it, committed to it, self-involved in it.

The Autonomous Will

Near the beginning of this chapter we said that one of the questions that epistemologists need to ask about intellectual autonomy is *What is the disposition made of?* We have said that it is made of knowledge (competence in a field) and especially the kind or aspect of knowledge that we call understanding, and we have stressed the inherited or derived character of most of that knowledge. We have touched again and again on structures of motivation in connection with autonomy. Let us finish this chapter with further reflections on motivation. We can distinguish two questions here. First, what is the value of autonomy? That is, what properly motivates a person to seek the trait of autonomy in himself and others? Second, what are the motives characteristic of autonomy as a virtue? What moves the intellectually autonomous person, insofar as he is autonomous? We begin with the first question.

In his *Discourse on Method*, Part 2, René Descartes likens knowledge to a city. It is a structure with many interrelated parts, and the more elegantly that

structure can be set up, the more beautiful and functional it will be. A city that is haphazardly put together, with crooked streets, dead-ends, redundant functions, poorly organized neighborhoods, and so forth, is confusing and hard to get around in. The same is true of a structure of knowledge. The greater its elegant systematicity, the more it fosters clarity of understanding. Descartes concludes that the best structure of knowledge is achieved not through the pooled contributions of numerous investigators, but by a single individual such as himself. Thus the desire for clarity of understanding is his motive for seeking something like intellectual autonomy. The motive is laudable, but the idea that a single person could be the architect of all knowledge is spectacularly unrealistic, and does not consider the ways in which a community of investigators gradually evolves something like the more elegant structure that Descartes envisions. Furthermore, the idea of intellectual autonomy operative in this argument—the idea of a single investigator working alone to create a structure of knowledge—bears little resemblance to the concept of autonomy that we have developed in this chapter.

Virtues are fulfillments (completions, mature states) of human nature, and as such may be aimed at, as a more or less blurry target, by a more or less specific natural desire. Autonomy belongs to this case. It is mature competence, an ability to perform well without the kind of regulation or direction that is needed in early stages of development. We see the desire for independent action even in small children, who want to tie their *own* shoes, put on their clothes *themselves*, find out various things for themselves, and so forth, and we can all remember the satisfaction of finally being able to do something well without our parents' or teacher's guidance. At the beginning of Chapter 6 we quoted Aristotle on the natural human desire to know. Perhaps the natural desire to know autonomously is a variant of that desire, and also of the general desire to be a competent independent agent. This fact about natural human motivation would entail that the value of intellectual autonomy is not entirely instrumental, not merely a matter of improved epistemic output. It is also a basic satisfaction of life, as the acquisition of knowledge is. As such, intellectual autonomy will be rationally desired or valued by a normal human being.

However, when teachers desire to foster intellectual autonomy in their students, they also desire them to have the virtue for the more instrumental kinds of reasons. Dialectical exchange is more likely to produce

understanding, propositional knowledge, and insights if the interlocutors are autonomous thinkers—because autonomous people are often better listeners, freer to accept correction and advice from colleagues, and more likely to give credit to their intellectual opponents. Scientists and other scholars seem more likely to make discoveries and achieve deep understanding if they have assimilated the traditions of science and the regulations of their teachers, predecessors, and colleagues in a mature, autonomous way. It is perfectly legitimate, then, to desire autonomy as likely to foster the delivery of epistemic goods. Our answer to the first question, then, is that autonomy is properly desired both as an intrinsic good of human life and as tending to increase the harvest of intellectual goods for the individual and the community. Our second question is, What are the motives characteristic of autonomy as a virtue?

Autonomy is an ability to resist improper hetero-regulators. This formulation leaves open the question as to which hetero-regulators are improper and, correlatively, which ones properly regulate thought. So maybe we should see the motivational structure of autonomy on the model that we have suggested for courage: as having no characteristic motivation of its own, but as deriving whatever motivation it has, in a given person, from other virtues or other motivations (maybe even vices). Just as courage is an ability to act with aplomb in the face of perceived threats, intellectual autonomy is (in part) the ability to think with aplomb under pressure from alien hetero-regulators. And just as a nasty Nazi or thief might have the ability to act with aplomb in the face of perceived threats, so someone with less than virtuous motives might think autonomously.

Richard Feynman offers some rules/examples of what a person must do to display what he calls "a kind of scientific integrity, a principle of scientific thought that corresponds to a kind of utter honesty—a kind of leaning over backwards".[10] On Feynman's description, integrity is very similar to autonomy, as involving resistance to intellectual hetero-regulators. He is thinking especially about influences from the worlds of commerce and politics that often threaten to regulate the practices of scientists. He says that, regardless of such pressures, the scientist should report all the results of his experiment, not just the ones that support

[10] Richard Feynman, *You Must Be Joking, Mr. Feynman*, as told to Ralph Leighton, ed. Edward Hutchings (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), p. 341.

a commercially or politically favored outcome. He mentions an ad for Wesson Oil that claims, correctly, that Wesson Oil does not soak into food (at a certain temperature). But scientific integrity requires that the company point out also that *no* oil soaks into food (at that temperature), and that all oils, including Wesson, soak into food at higher temperatures. A Wesson staff research scientist or company executive who insisted on disclosing all this information would exemplify scientific autonomy; that is, his assertions would not be driven by truth-irrelevant concerns about how his results are taken by others. Feynman disapproves of a friend who goes on the radio to explain the "applications" of his cosmological research, when in fact he knows there aren't any, but also knows that laypeople will be less interested in funding research that has no applications. "If you're representing yourself as a scientist, then you should explain to the laymen what you're doing—and if they don't want to support you under those circumstances, then that's their decision" (p. 343). When a scientist is hired by a politician to determine whether an expensive hole should be drilled in his state, and the scientist determines that the hole should be drilled in somebody else's state, she should publish the results anyway; otherwise, science is simply being used as a way of getting political advantage. Truthfulness is thus autonomy, independence, integrity. It is autonomy from the rule of pressures from persons who want a certain result, regardless of truth.

Feynman says that he is not giving advice about full disclosure to your wife or girlfriend about "cheating": "I'm talking about a specific, extra type of integrity that … you ought to have *when acting as a scientist*" (ibid., p. 343; italics added). But why limit this bending-over-backwards truthfulness to matters of science? Is it less important for your wife to know that you've been messing around with the secretary than for laymen to know that so-and-so's research has no applications? Isn't the reason why you wouldn't bend over backwards to let your wife know what you've been doing with the secretary just that it would inconvenience you for her to know this? Is this relevantly different from the inconvenience it will cause the politician to pay all that money to the scientist only to have him go blabbing that the expensive hole really needs to be drilled in another senator's state? Clearly, Feynman thinks that intellectual honesty bears on communication with others; why does the wife or girlfriend get excluded from the strictures of honesty?

For that matter, why bring in honesty at all? If the business executive is fundamentally committed to making money for the company, surely that motive can be the basis of his intellectual autonomy. He is to be pure in heart in intellectual matters—that is, to make only those claims that are in the interest of making money. For him, honesty is an alien hetero-regulator, something he has no commitment to, something extraneous to his purposes; and when it conflicts with what he is committed to, it is a matter of *his* integrity that he resist *that* hetero-regulator, stopping his ears to the siren beckonings of truth. If autonomy is simply a reliable disposition of resistance to alien hetero-regulators, then *which* hetero-regulators are alien is a matter of outlook, and *which* motivation orients a person in this resistance is indifferent to this virtue as such.

Of course, such a character as we have just described has *intellectual* autonomy only in a very attenuated sense of "intellectual". The word here ranges only over claims, whereas for most people it ranges also, all-importantly, over truth. And that is how we construe it in this book, for we have placed the chapter on the love of knowledge (truth) at the very head of Part II, to signal its encompassing and fundamental relation to the other virtues. Still, if we are to distinguish the virtues at all, we need to assign them particular roles in the psychological economy of the intellectual life, and the role of autonomy as such is not to desire truth but to resist alien hetero-regulators. And so we want to affirm, in our somewhat abstract way, that autonomy does not as such contain a motivation; it derives its motivation from other parts of the array of virtues. The lover of knowledge, you will remember, is a lover of all important kinds of knowledge. If so, there is something deeply wrong, intellectually, with the person whose intellectual autonomy applies when he is doing science but not when he is talking to his wife.

Conclusion

Finally, let us mention gratitude as one more aspect of the motivational disposition of the autonomous person. For us, autonomy is a genuinely intellectual virtue only when it is supported by the love of knowledge, because knowledge is the chief and central intellectual good. Against the current of interpreting autonomy as some kind of hyper-individualism

or quasi-solipsism, we have analyzed the virtue as incorporating proper hetero-regulators. The autonomous intellectual is such, not because he is an intellectually self-made man, but because he has actively and intelligently appropriated the regulators in his noetic structure. The reflective lover of knowledge incorporates proper hetero-regulators in the interest of knowledge. Autonomy is not only a negatively social virtue (sheer *in*dependence of others) but a positively social virtue (a dependent independence). In the ideal case, then, there should be some motivational indicator of the positivity of autonomy, and it seems to us to be gratitude. The autonomous individual's positive relationship to his proper hetero-regulators—his intellectual tradition, his teachers, his peers and colleagues, his critics, his models, his sanctioners, and his authorities—is one of happy acknowledgment. Thus he has not only integrated these hetero-regulators, but has done so with some awareness of his debt, and willingly. He sees his indebtedness as a good and fitting thing, not at all second-rate or to be regretted. This too is a way in which he has made the hetero-regulators his "own", and is thus an enhancement of his autonomy.

Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology

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CHAPTER

12 Practical Wisdom

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Abstract

Practical wisdom is presupposed by each other virtue, because the virtuous person needs to be able to act intelligently in accordance with the virtue, in particular, unpredictably variable situations, as they arise. It is a kind of flexibility and insight, an ability to improvise. Intellectual practical wisdom is good judgment in intellectual practices, and the judgments the wise person makes are those characteristic of the love of knowledge, firmness in one's commitments to beliefs, understandings, and research programmes, courage and caution, autonomy, and generosity, among other virtues. They are not just characteristic of *each* of these virtues, but characteristic of the *set* of virtues in proper balance. This chapter concludes the book by reviewing the previously examined virtues from the perspective of the powers of judgment in intellectual practice that they involve.

Keywords: cleverness, deliberation, epistemology, motivation, perception

Subject: Epistemology, Moral Philosophy, Meta-Ethics

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Introduction

We end our book with a discussion of a virtue that the nature of our topic has forced us to mention in just about every previous chapter. Practical wisdom has a privileged place in the array of intellectual virtues, one that corresponds to the special place occupied by the love of knowledge, with which we began Part II. Both of these virtues pervade the intellectually excellent life, showing up as a presupposition or necessary background of all the other virtues. The love of knowledge provides the intellectual motive for exemplifications of such virtues as humility and courage which don't have a motive of their own, and it provides the distinctively intellectual part of the motive for intellectual generosity. Practical wisdom, too, is involved in every virtue, as constituting the good judgment without which no human virtue could be exemplified in action, emotion, or judgment. Insofar as virtues are human, they are infused with and qualified by reason, as the ancients would say; they are dispositions of intelligence.

Elements of Practical Wisdom

Aristotle includes practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) among the intellectual virtues, but conceives it as a hybrid, the only intellectual virtue that is also a moral virtue. It is the intellectual dimension of the moral virtues. It is "practical", as its name implies. Practice or action (*praxis*) belongs where we humans can make a difference—where things do not have to be as they are, where we can change the world by our actions.
p. 306 Aristotle thinks that the fully intellectual virtues, by contrast, take objects that cannot be otherwise than ↳ they are (think of mathematics and physics), aspects of the world that we cannot change but can only contemplate.

As practical, practical wisdom is an "aiming" virtue: it posits ends or an end to be achieved through the actions that it guides. It is akin to cleverness, but unlike cleverness, which can be used with bad aims as well as good, practical wisdom implies good aims. In Aristotle's construction it aims at real human well-being, or eudaimonia, not what merely appears to somebody to be good. Thus if an observer of an agent were mistaken about the good, he might attribute practical wisdom falsely to someone who was merely clever and using his cleverness to achieve goals that were only apparently good.

Since actions are always particulars, performed in particular situations with particular features that distinguish them from similar situations, practical wisdom is a power to judge of particulars. Rules of practice are always general, and thus never tailored perfectly to any particular situation. The particularity of actions and the situations that call for them implies an element of improvisation in the exercise of practical wisdom. Because of the great variability of situations in their details, even the best rule formulas do not by themselves determine what is to be done. Instead, the determiner is the person of practical wisdom, the agent who interprets and applies the formulas (if such there be) and judges what is particularly to be done in these situations.

Aristotle allows at least two different kinds of "cognition" as exemplifying practical wisdom. It is a power of *deliberation* (*bouleusis*; see *Nicomachean Ethics* $1139^{a}12–15$), but also a power of *perception* (*aisthēsis*; see $1142^{a}25–30$). Deliberation is an activity, but perception involves an element of passivity. This mixture of activity and passivity is typical of virtue exemplifications. For example, the compassionate person deliberates how best to help somebody in trouble, and then acts intentionally on the result of his deliberation; but also, spontaneously and involuntarily, he notices people's troubles where less compassionate people do not notice, and spontaneously and involuntarily wants to help. Both kinds of processes are intelligent and require judgment or quasi-judgment, and thus display practical wisdom. A perception exemplifying practical wisdom can always be converted into a proposition, and the virtuous person will assent to the proposition if it is put to him; so a perception in this sense is an incipient judgment.
p. 307 (This formula is approximate. In the less than perfect constitution, it may happen ↳ that a wise perception is not recognized as such, in which case it is possible that when the perception is put in propositional form, the subject would not assent to it; obviously, such a case will occur only where practical wisdom is imperfect.)

In our account of intellectual virtues, we have taken over part of this classical conception of practical wisdom. We have stressed that the intellectual life is characterized through and through by practices, and that the intellectual virtues fit us well to pursue these. We are not claiming, *contra* Aristotle, that we always affect the objects of our investigations, as constructivists in the sociology of knowledge do. We assume something like a realist view of mathematics, for example, according to which mathematicians do not create, but discover, mathematical truths. Often we must take special care to *minimize* the influence our investigations have on what we are investigating (for example, subjects of psychological experiments and populations of animals). But investigations are obviously practices, richly various voluntary activities in which we make a difference, by our actions, in what we and others know.

Furthermore, intellectual practices aim at goods, just as Aristotle's moral practices do, in this case the goods that constitute knowledge: propositional knowledge, understanding, and acquaintance. The love of knowledge is the trait in which the agent personally aims at genuine intellectual goods. If a person cannot be practically wise, in Aristotle's conception, without pursuing genuine eudaimonia, so a person cannot be intellectually practically wise, in our conception, without the love of knowledge. So intellectual practical wisdom is oriented on action and presupposes a love for genuine intellectual goods.

The last clause needs to be qualified in two ways. First, the notion of *genuine* needs to be relativized to outlook. Within limits we want to be able to attribute intellectual virtue to a person with a systematically distorted conception of the intellectual goods. Consider our attitude to an orthodox Marxist—one who treats Marx's writings as authoritative with regard to economic and political questions. Perhaps we regard Marx's writings as not worthy to be attributed such a status because we think the conception of human nature in them is seriously flawed. Yet we might attribute to such a Marxist the virtue of love of knowledge, if she cares deeply and seriously about understanding the social world ever better through the interpretation
p. 308 and application of Marx's writings. In the central teleology ↳ of her investigations she is not in fact pursuing genuine knowledge, but because she thinks she is, and shows the requisite seriousness about knowledge as she conceives it, we are willing, with these provisos, to attribute to her the virtue of love of knowledge, and thus the kind of goal orientation required for intellectual practical wisdom. Similarly, the Christian with the love of knowledge will care deeply about knowing God ever better, but if God does not exist or is very different from what Christians conceive him to be, then what the Christian loves in loving knowledge virtuously is not really knowledge, but only knowledge as it is conceived in the Christian outlook. The second qualification of the statement that practical wisdom involves a pursuit of knowledge correctly conceived is that the conception need be only roughly correct, inasmuch as the very notion of *pursuing* knowledge implies not yet possessing it, and thus being not entirely clear what it is like.

Aristotle thinks that while everybody naturally loves the end of practical wisdom, very few people love it as it *is*. We all seek eudaimonia, but he thinks that it takes a great deal of reflection and education to get a clear enough conception of it really to aim at it in our practice. Many foolish things people are motivated to do—say, pursue self-destructive riotous living, or devote themselves headlong to money making—aim at eudaimonia, but with a misconception of what is aimed at. It is a business of philosophers to help people get a clearer view of it, but deft conceptual analysis can help only those who have been brought up in a way that predisposes them to make proper use of such analysis. We are claiming that what is true of eudaimonia is true also of knowledge—that everybody already and automatically desires it, but most people don't know very well how to conceive this object of their desires. We aim at it in less than virtuous ways, through lack of reflection about it, as well as through lack of proper education and epistemic maturity. If *Nicomachean Ethics* is a book of practical wisdom—a book designed to help people aim more precisely at what they already aim at—it is such largely by offering a conception of eudaimonia, which for Aristotle is the life of virtue lived in a well constituted city-state. In Chapter 6 we offered a conception of knowledge as a genuine good; we intend this too as an exercise in helping ourselves aim better at what we already aim at, since everyone has a natural urge to know, but the urge does not always constitute the virtue of loving knowledge. Throughout
p. 309 our book we have offered a conception of the ↳ good intellectual life, just as Aristotle offers a conception of the good civic life. As an exercise in regulative epistemology, our whole book has been intended as a guide to the virtue of intellectual practical wisdom.

Some of the virtues we have treated in this book do not carry with them their own motivation, so to speak. Notable here are courage and humility, in their different ways. Other virtues do have their own motive: we attribute the love of knowledge to a person only if he is routinely moved by the good of knowledge; we attribute generosity to a person only if he cares about the well-being of other persons for their sake. But if a person acts with aplomb in a situation of significant perceived threat, we may attribute courage to him even if we find out that he was motivated by hatred, desire for unjust gain, or a theological delusion. Thus we may

attribute courage to the terrorists of September 11, 2001. If a person controls his anger in an impressive way but out of a desire to escape detection in a crime he has committed, we still attribute self-control to him, and may regard this as a virtue. But we think that the *action* performed with courage or self-control is *fully* virtuous only if it is virtuously motivated. So the actions we have described here are both virtuous (exemplifying courage and self-control) and vicious (exemplifying cruelty or injustice).

What about practical wisdom? Is it a motivational virtue, like generosity, or does it, like courage, borrow any virtuous motivation it may utilize from other virtues? How does practical wisdom differ from courage? One test is this: Does it make sense to say that practical wisdom motivates one to seek something genuinely good? Yes. Does it make sense to say that courage motivates one to seek something good? No. However, if instead of speaking of courage *simpliciter* we speak of *intellectual* courage, then we have specified the motive; one cannot have intellectual courage without loving the intellectual goods. So intellectual courage does supply a motive.[1] Aristotle distinguishes practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) from cleverness (*deinotēs*).

> Cleverness is an ability to succeed in accomplishing one's goals. This ability is praiseworthy if the goal is good, but if the goal is bad it is knavery. Thus we say that both practically wise people and
> p. 310 knaves are clever. Practical wisdom is not ↳ identical with this ability, but presupposes it. (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1144^{a}23–9, trans Roberts)

So our vocabulary (like Aristotle's) differentiates the trait that lacks the virtuous motive from the one that entails it. Had we lacked the lexical distinction, as we do in the case of courage, we might have called practical wisdom "moral cleverness" on the model of "intellectual courage". Intellectual practical wisdom is just practical wisdom narrowed toward the intellectual goods.

Practical wisdom, however, has special claim to be an intrinsically motivating virtue because of its status as a general virtue, like love of knowledge and unlike courage, generosity, and humility. Intellectual practical wisdom is in a sense the whole of intellectual virtue—not a specialized part, like courage. As ranging over all the practices of the intellectual life, it is strictly symbiotic with the love of knowledge, which ranges similarly. Without the motivation to seek, distribute, maintain, and apply intellectual goods, intellectual practices cannot go on, and without excellent motivation they cannot go on excellently. Conversely, without good concrete judgment, exercised throughout the intellectual practices, the love of knowledge could not be brought to fruition in those practices. We map the terrain of intellectual excellence by an articulated and diversified vocabulary, but the most exemplary cases approximate a unity of the virtues, of the intellectual personality of which the various virtues are really aspects rather than separable units. It stands to reason that the two general virtues of the intellectual life should depend so strictly on one another that they might as well be just two sides of a single virtue. But because of the enormous importance of the two elements—proper orientation of the will and correct practical thinking—it is helpful to distinguish these virtues.

The intrinsically motivational character of practical wisdom is also secured by the fact that aiming is essential to it in a way that it is not to courage. It is true that all actions, including courageous ones, have aims; but because wisdom is a power of deliberation—of figuring out how to accomplish what is good—the aiming belongs to the virtue itself and not just to the actions in which it is exemplified.

Let us now think about how practical wisdom relates to the special virtues that we discussed in Chapters 7–
p. 311 11. We will assume these virtues to be unified by the love of knowledge: that is, to be genuinely intellectual ↳ virtues. On this assumption each of the virtues has its own department of practical wisdom: firmness, courage, humility, autonomy, and generosity each has its own patterns of deliberation (non-deliberation) and perception (non-perception)—terms in which the agent thinks about and sees the situations of his epistemic life, and all this cognition is aimed at the epistemic goods. The intellectually firm agent thinks in terms of the new and the old in his own intellectual life, making judgments about, and seeing, how to adjust to the new by adjusting the old. The intellectually courageous or cautious agent thinks in terms of risks and

potential harms, with an eye to the goods that risky acts may garner and the harms that cautious acts may avoid. The humble individual is such by *failing* to think in terms of status, prestige, and domination over others, and by *not* thinking about entitlements in the ways characteristic of arrogance; and is thus freed in various ways to think more clearly in terms intrinsic to the intellectual practices. The autonomous individual thinks about and sees epistemic situations in terms of actual and potential hetero-regulators of his thought and practice. The generous agent thinks in terms of the intellectual well-being of others and ways in which he can contribute to that well-being. Each of these departments of practical intellectual thought picks up on aspects of the situations—psychological, social, and epistemic—that confront, nearly daily, anyone who is intellectually active.

Many epistemic situations lend themselves to thinking in patterns deriving from more than one of these departments. It is not hard to see that full excellence of intellectual practice over a long stretch of one's life requires excellent practical thought in all these areas. Practical wisdom consists in both the patterns of thought and perception characteristic of the specific virtues (each of these having its own brand of practical wisdom) and also the unification of all these patterns, a facility for switching from one to another as occasion requires, for blending the considerations characteristic of one virtue with those of others, and for adjudicating between the different appeals of virtues when they seem to conflict. While the special virtues are keyed to kinds of situations or aspects of epistemic situations, practical wisdom and love of knowledge are general virtues, having situational universality. In Chapter 6 we stressed that the virtuous lover of knowledge discriminates in favor of worthy knowledge and discriminates the worthiness of knowledge, in part, by its connection to human well-being more broadly conceived. An analogous thought with respect to
p. 312 our current topic ↳ is that completely general practical wisdom is a disposition to adjudicate well, in the concrete circumstances of life, between the concerns characteristic of intellectual practices and more broadly human concerns. For example, the practically wise person would judge excellently of situations in which the demands of research compete with those of family life.

Because of practical wisdom's participation in all the virtues, the following discussion will serve as a review of Part II, in a somewhat new key.

Practical Wisdom in the Virtues

Let us now look at some examples from earlier chapters, freely improvising on the examples to consider how practical wisdom figures in and among the virtues.

Philip Rightmire is a palaeoanthropologist working on the site in Dmanisi, the Republic of Georgia, where a recently discovered hominid skull about 1.75 million years old has invited deep revisions in the current account of human origins. Scientists like Rightmire previously thought that a large brain and symmetrically shaped, standardized stone tools were necessary for hominid migration out of Africa into Eurasia. They also thought that such migration did not occur until about 500,000 years later than the age of the Dmanisi skull. The hominid discovered there had a brain smaller (600 cc as compared with about 1,200 cc for modern humans) than was thought needed to sustain exploration, and was surrounded by simple stone tools characteristic of more primitive hominids previously found only in Africa. So it looks as though stupider, smaller, and less well equipped people accomplished the feat of migration and did so earlier than scientists previously thought, calling into question several of the earlier scientific explanations of migration. This epistemic situation calls on the resources of firmness, that is, on wise response in terms of holding fast or loose to established beliefs, understandings, and perceptual dispositions.

The reader may remember that in Chapter 7 we compared Rightmire, who seemed "almost gleeful" about his theoretical world's having been turned upside down, with another scientist, who commented, with
p. 313 anything but glee, that "They ought to put [the skull] back in the ground." ↳ And we noted that the spirit of

intellectual adventure suggested by Rightmire's glee is intellectually healthy and an aspect of the virtue that we call firmness. But it would not reflect practical epistemic wisdom if Rightmire had no conservative streak at all in his scientific thinking—if he *simply* sought and took delight in the destruction of his own latest constructs. And Rightmire has been quoted as saying, "It's nice that everything's been shaken up, but frustrating that some of the ideas that seemed so promising eight to 10 years ago don't hold up anymore."[2] So Rightmire's love of knowledge moves him not only to be excited about new possibilities of knowledge, but to want to settle some questions, and to feel disappointment when promising avenues dead-end. This motivation will lead him to deliberate ways to revise his construction of the early history of human beings so as rightly to preserve what was excellent in it while taking full account of the new, anomalous information. If he has good powers of deliberation between these complementary poles of the old and the new, then he has, with respect to the domain of firmness, the virtue that we call intellectual practical wisdom. Generally good judgment about hold will not be enough to make an excellent palaeoanthropologist. Intellectual skill specific to his field and subfield—its standards of error and accuracy, of sufficiency of evidence, etc., as well as a great deal of information assimilated into a scheme of understanding—will need to be incorporated; the virtue emerges only in the context of discipline-specific skills. Rightmire's practical wisdom will also have a perceptual dimension, which we judge to be very important where the work involves looking at what are often very degraded pieces of things so as to picture them filled out with their other parts. The perceptual wisdom characteristic of firmness will be a flexible capacity of vision enabling the clear perception of anomalies but also an imaginative and intelligent integration of the anomalous feature into the older construct when possible, and good sense for when such integration is not really working. Firmness is a kind of strategy for getting and keeping intellectual goods, and its own wisdom is the rationality or rule of that strategy as embodied in the character of an individual.

Now consider the university president imagined by Glenn Loury, discussed in Chapter 5. This president
p. 314 wants to know, and wants his ↳ community to know, whether withdrawing investments from South African businesses is a good way for the university to advance the struggle against apartheid, and he thinks that understanding the issues requires open public debate. This judgment is a deliverance of intellectual practical wisdom, expressing the virtue of epistemic caution. From long experience in intellectual practices, this president knows that unanticipated insights can emerge from intense, learned debate of issues, insights that are very unlikely to be gained in any other way; and because he loves knowledge, he wants debate. But he also wants to stay on the good side of the students (both for personal reasons and to keep the lines of pedagogic communication open), and he knows that the strictures of political correctness among the students make it probable that his reputation as a good liberal will be compromised if he invites to campus strong and intelligent dissenters from divestiture to join the debate. This judgment too expresses wisdom, a practical acquaintance with the spirit of the campus and an understanding of the immature student mind, as well as an intuitive or explicit understanding of the principles governing what Loury calls "meaning-in-effect". (We commented in Chapter 5 that Loury's essay can serve as a primer in this area of intellectual practical wisdom.)

This president also knows himself: namely, that he has too strong a repugnance to being in disfavor with the students, and one that has led him to judge poorly and act weakly in the past. Another factor in his practical wisdom is that he cares about the students and believes them to be not foes or masters but young persons in process of formation and need of guidance. He knows how to act with gentleness regarding their foibles and excesses, and knows too that such behavior tends to keep communication with them open, though sometimes his defensiveness submerges this gentleness and he sees them as foes. He knows this and struggles to keep the gentle attitude in his thought and action, and to control his defensiveness. He has learned some strategies of self-management that enable him to do this, and his knowledge of these strategies is also part of his practical wisdom in the interest of epistemic goods. This president's practical wisdom, as applied to intellectual contexts, trades on, balances, and blends the considerations characteristic of a diversity of particular virtues—courage, caution, self-control, gentleness, friendliness,

love of truth and understanding, generous concern for the students—making for nuanced judgments and perceptions in the developing circumstances of the day's work.

p. 315 Think next about G. E. Moore, whom we discussed as exemplifying a certain kind of intellectual humility in Chapter 9. We said that Moore's humility consisted in his being quite a bit less concerned than most people are about the social standing that philosophical competence, brilliance, or success brings to a person when others recognize it. Moore cared so little about standing, accumulated in this way, that he employed none of the usual strategies for securing recognition: parading successes, enhancing the impression of competence, camouflaging weaknesses, failures, and changes of mind, and so forth. This selective insouciance freed him to focus his attention on pursuing the epistemic goods, made him more receptive to correction, and widened the population of his potential teachers. Humility would not be recognized as a virtue (or any kind of trait at all) if human beings were not so widely susceptible to vanity, arrogance, domination, and other anti-humility vices. It is a quite "negative" virtue, consisting in the absence of certain dysfunctional patterns of concern, thought, and action. So we might be inclined to think that it does not, like the other virtues we have been examining, have its own department of practical wisdom, its own patterns of judgment, deliberation, and perception. But by the same token that we think of humility as a virtue, despite its negativity, we can think of it as having its department of wisdom. In the context of the general run of philosophers and professors, Moore is striking for his *not* deliberating on how to enhance his standing, and for his *not* seeing retracting a statement he made yesterday as a cause for embarrassment. This not-deliberating and not-seeing surely is a cognitive pattern, and an excellent one. It is true that this pattern was not hard-won in Moore's case, if his contemporaries are to be believed,[3] and so does not have the voluntariness that some people regard as a necessary condition for a trait's being a virtue. But this pattern might be voluntary. A person might, on seeing vanity and arrogance in himself, undertake certain disciplines not to think and act in those patterns, and thus come, by degrees, not to think in them. (There is a paradox about willing not-to-think and not-to-see in specified ways, if we think of the context as temporally short, but if we stretch it out over a developmental period, the paradox disappears.) If such a person's lack of vain and arrogant
p. 316 deliberation and perception is wisdom, ↳ then Moore's more naïve exemplification of this lack may also count as a kind of practical wisdom. This is all the more a genuine practical wisdom because Moore's humble "thinking" is in the service of his explicit and concerted thought and perceptions involved in the pursuit of intellectual goods such as the truth about truth.

In Chapter 10 we met Morris Braverman, one of the numerous "normally" autonomous individuals who miserably failed to show the practical wisdom characteristic of autonomy in the context of Stanley Milgram's obedience experiments. A few of Milgram's subjects performed well, however. Particularly interesting is the one Milgram designates as "Professor of Old Testament". He was a subject in the Proximity condition—that is, with the "learner" present in the same room as the "teacher". This arrangement offered him a way to keep himself well informed of the state of the learner during the procedure, and the professor availed himself of this advantage: "he adjusted his seat to look at the learner while administering shocks."[4] This is in strong contrast with several other subjects, who seemed inattentive to the learner's state because they were so preoccupied with asking the questions and administering the shocks in accord with the experimenter's instructions. In his desire to keep relevantly informed, in his judgment about what information is relevant, and in his knowledge of how to keep so informed, the professor shows practical epistemic wisdom.

By pre-arrangement the "learner" shows signs of increasing discomfort at shock levels between 75 and 150 volts, but at 150 volts he cries out "Experimenter, get me out of here! I won't be in the experiment any more! I refuse to go on!" (ibid., p. 23). This is the point at which the Professor refused to go on. The experimenter then told him to disregard the learner's protests, and the following dialogue ensued:

> **Experimenter:** It's absolutely essential to the experiment that we continue.

> **Subject:** I understand that statement, but I don't understand why the experiment is placed above this person's life.
> **Experimenter:** There is no permanent tissue damage.
> **Subject:** Well, that's your opinion. If he doesn't want to continue, I'm taking orders from him.
p. 317 ↳ **Experimenter:** You have no other choice, sir, you must go on.
> **Subject:** If this were Russia maybe, but not in America. (ibid., p. 48)

In further discussion with the experimenter the Professor is emotionally agitated, but "seems in no way intimidated by the experimenter's status but rather treats him as a dull technician who does not see the full implications of what he is doing" (ibid.)

> **Subject (spontaneously):** Surely you've considered the ethics of this thing. (*extremely agitated*) Here he doesn't want to go on, and you think that the experiment is more important? Have you examined him? Do you know what his physical state is? Say this man had a weak heart (quivering voice).
> **Experimenter:** We know the machine, sir.
> **Subject:** But you don't know the man you're experimenting on. ... That's very risky (*gulping and tremulous*). What about the fear that man had? It's impossible for you to determine what effect that has on him. ...

The Professor's emotions are appropriate. They are mostly anxiety about the well-being of the learner, though we suspect that remorse and anxiety about his own complicity in the evil scenario are involved too. These emotions are all expressions of virtues, especially compassion and conscientiousness. They are strong evaluative perceptions of their respective objects: the learner as harmed and/or subject to harm, himself as having been complicit in evil and in danger of further and deeper involvement in it. As such, the emotions are themselves wise "cognitions", exemplifications of the practical wisdom characteristic of each of these virtues.

The reader will remember that Morris Braverman, who "shocked" the learner all the way to 450 volts, had similar emotions, which were expressed in giggling but had no other consequence in his behavior. The difference is that the Professor is less impressed with the experimenter's authority. If he is initially disposed to feel respect for the experimenter as a scientist in a great university, he pretty quickly puts this emotion in the perspective of the whole situation, so that it fades. He is aided in this by his critical disposition to subject ostensible authorities to evaluation. He asks, as it were, whether this person, who at first blush appears to be competent and operating within the bounds of his authority, is actually competent and authoritative in what he is demanding. Braverman, by contrast, remains confused by his conflicting emotions and is carried
p. 318 along "helplessly" by the inertia of the situation. He seems not to have a strong practical sense ↳ of the limits of authorities—or at least, of *this* authority. The difference between Braverman and the Professor may be, in part, that the Professor, being a colleague at Yale, is more aware of the fallibility of Yale professors than Braverman, who is a social worker.

Milgram appears to want to minimize the Professor's autonomy and practical wisdom. He describes him as "officious" and "fastidious" and makes him out, paradoxically enough, to be too concerned with obeying orders. He points out that "he initially justified his breaking off the experiment not by asserting disobedience but by asserting that he would then take orders from the victim" (ibid., p. 49). The Professor was asked what he thought to be the best way to strengthen a person's resistance to inhumane authority, and he answered that a person whose ultimate authority is God is less impressed with human authorities. And Milgram comments, "Again, the answer for this man lies not in the repudiation of authority but in the substitution of good—that is, divine—authority for bad" (ibid.). But on the analysis of autonomy that we offered in Chapter 10, the correction for servility is not a disposition to repudiate authority, but a disposition to respect authorities in and only in their proper domains—thus to make wise judgments, *in situ*,

concerning such domains. And the Professor's point is that a person who respects God as the final moral authority will be freer to see when human authorities have overstepped their domains, and freer also to act on that perception or judgment.[5] As we have pointed out repeatedly in this book, virtues must be indexed to world views. In a theistic world view it makes perfectly good sense to think that autonomy of judgment is compatible with taking God to be the ultimate moral authority.

What, then, are the ingredients in the Professor's practical wisdom, as shown in this exemplification of autonomy? First, he showed epistemic wisdom in positioning himself for maximal relevant information: he did this with skill, with good judgment about which information was important for him to have, and was motivated by the desire to know and to act on good information. Second, he showed good judgment about competing values. As soon as he saw that the experimental subject was in serious distress, he saw that the
p. 319 value of the experiment did not match the value of ↳ the subject's well-being, and disobeyed the authority who was expressing an opposing priority. Third, he showed a proper epistemic caution about the ostensible authority's claims to know what he was doing and offered arguments against them. Such arguments are often an epistemically wise course even if the one who proposes them is not convinced by them, since they elicit further information about how competent the alleged authority is. Fourth, the Professor's virtues of compassion and conscientiousness make him perceive clearly, via his emotions, features of the situation that he needs to perceive to make an all-things-considered judgment about the purported authority's legitimacy. And fifth, the Professor's respect for a moral authority that transcends all human authority appears to free him from being overly impressed with any human authority, and thus frees him to judge and perceive accurately the value of the human authority's pronouncements and directives. These, then, are the ingredients of the case, and give us some idea of the elements of the practical wisdom that goes with the virtue of intellectual autonomy.

Jane Goodall, the ethologist discussed briefly at the end of Chapter 5, provides our final case. She illustrates some features of practical wisdom as it connects with the virtue of intellectual generosity. Before we turn to generosity, however, we note that Goodall was from early on a sort of "philosopher", a person with an impulse to put the most important things she knew into an overall perspective. Yet the perspective that she gradually worked out was not merely theoretical, but action- and passion-guiding, designed to determine her conduct and make emotional sense of her experiences. In her book *Reason for Hope*,[6] she gives an account of the development and character of this outlook to which her scientific activities contributed and from which they made a kind of eudaimonistic sense to her. The "practicality" of this perspective is suggested by her account of its origins:

> Looking back, I see clearly that my own personal philosophy was gradually molded during those first two decades by my family, my schooling, my living through the war, my years of listening to extremely powerful sermons; also by the books I read, the hours I spent outside in the natural world, and by the animals who shared our house. Now the *Kenya Castle* [the ship she took to Africa
> p. 320 at age 26] was carrying ↳ me forward into a new world, where the lessons would be taught by life itself in all its wonderful, sometimes tragic, often harsh, inconsistencies and surprises. And I could move into this new era without fear, for I was equipped, by my family and by my education, with sound moral values and an independent, free-thinking mind. (p. 40)

As is typical of practical wisdom, this rich moral-intellectual-emotional formation oriented Goodall to action in ways that were often intuitive spontaneous situational expressions of her nature, rather than deliberations guided by formulas.

Louis Leakey was a palaeoanthropologist who seems also to have had a good deal of intellectual practical wisdom. Goodall so impressed him by her love of Africa and animals that he took her on as his private secretary and then surprised her by offering to make her—who had no formal training in ethology or in

science—to undertake long-term field research on chimpanzees that was to inform his understanding of human origins.

> I'm sure I stared at him open-mouthed. How could I possibly be considered suitable for such an important study? I had no training, no degree. But Louis didn't care about academic credentials. In fact, he told me, he preferred that his chosen researcher should go into the field with a mind unbiased by scientific theory. What he had been looking for was someone with an open mind, with a passion for knowledge, with a love of animals, and with monumental patience. Someone, moreover, who was hardworking and would be able to stay long periods away from civilization, for he believed the study would take several years. (ibid., p. 55)

Here is a case of intellectual autonomy—rational judgment concerning the value of credentials standards and intellectual tradition as hetero-regulators in the particular context of choosing a research captain. Leakey's judgment seems to be based on a discernment of just the personal qualities that Goodall mentions, plus an appreciation of their value in the pursuit of this particular research. Here was another person whose judgments concerning the practice of science were based in a broader set of intuitive and deliberative dispositions.

From early on in her life, Goodall felt an affection for animals that impelled her to close observational acquaintance with individual members of species. This judgment, at first intuitive and then ever more justified by accumulated acquaintance, of the complexity, intelligence, and beauty of animal behavior
p. 321 served her well in generating new knowledge ↳ of chimpanzees. In a period when ethologists tended stingily, human-chauvinistically, to exaggerate the intelligence gap between us and our fellow mammals, Goodall's liberality with the credit she gave other animals supported a patience in observation that yielded much propositional knowledge and understanding.

> As I got to know [the chimpanzees] as individuals I named them. I had no idea that this, according to the ethological discipline of the early 1960s, was inappropriate—I should have given them more objective numbers. I also described their vivid personalities—another sin: only humans had personalities. It was an even worse crime to attribute humanlike emotions to the chimpanzees. And in those days it was held (at least by many scientists, philosophers, and theologians) that only humans had minds, only humans were capable of rational thought. Fortunately I had not been to university, and I did not know these things. And when I did find out, I just thought it was silly and paid no attention. ... How right Louis had been to send someone to the field with a mind uncluttered by the theory of reductionist, oversimplistic, mechanistic science. (ibid., p. 74)

Her generosity of spirit towards the chimpanzees also supported an unorthodox but epistemically fruitful empathy.

> In order to collect good, scientific data, one is told, it is necessary to be coldly objective. You record accurately what you see and, above all, you do not permit yourself to have any empathy with your subjects. Fortunately I did not know that during the early months at Gombe. A great deal of my understanding of these intelligent beings was built up just *because* I felt such empathy with them. (ibid., p. 77; italics original)

This empathy, begotten of generosity, not only earned Goodall the trust of the animals she was studying, but brought still other virtues, such as humility and gratitude, with their constitutive practical wisdom, into play:

> A sudden shower of twigs and the thud of an overripe fig close to my head shattered the magic. David [David Greybeard, one of her favorites] was swinging down through the branches. Slowly I

> sat up, reluctant to return to the everyday world. David reached the ground, moved a few paces toward me, and sat. For a while he groomed himself, then lay back, one hand under his head, utterly relaxed, and gazed up toward the green ceiling above our heads. The gentle breeze rustled the leaves so that the shining stars of light gleamed and winked. And as I sat there, keeping vigil, I thought, as I have thought so often since, what an amazing privilege it was—to be utterly accepted
> p. 322 thus by a wild, free animal. It is ↳ a privilege I shall never take for granted. ... Most primates interpret a direct gaze as a threat; it is not so with chimpanzees. David had taught me that so long as I looked into his eyes without arrogance, without any request, he did not mind. And sometimes he gazed back at me as he did that afternoon. His eyes seemed almost like windows through which, if only I had the skill, I could look into his mind. How many times since that far-off day I have wished that I could, even if just for a few short moments, look out onto the world through the eyes, with the mind, of a chimpanzee. One such minute would be worth a lifetime of research. For we are human-bound, imprisoned within our human perspective, our human view of the world. Indeed, it is even hard for us to see the world from the perspective of cultures other than our own, or from the point of view of a member of the opposite sex. (ibid., pp. 79–81)

Goodall goes on to tell of the insights into the developmental psychology of mother–child attachment that she garnered from observing, comparing, and recording generations of chimpanzee mothering behavior and its differential consequences in the personalities of the offspring. She includes a chimpanzee in the list of her tutors in mothering: "In the end I raised my own son on a mixture of wisdom gleaned from Vanne [Goodall's mother], Flo [a particularly wise chimpanzee mother], Dr. Spock—and mother nature" (p. 89). And she talks about how having a child of her own gave her insights into the anger of a chimpanzee whose little one was threatened.

As we noted at the end of Chapter 5, Goodall saw that only if her research team freely pooled their data and insights could the enormous project of documenting and understanding the Gombe chimpanzees approximate completion. Thus the impulse to have these intellectual goods, along with the practical judgment that the task could not be accomplished by any single individual and that it would be accomplished only slowly and inefficiently if individuals took a stingy or greedy competitive attitude with one another, implied the practice of generosity that Goodall inspired in the young people on her research team, and the happy spirit of generous sharing that she describes in *Through a Window*. For Goodall, the students who worked for her were not just sources of information. She cultivated them as independent researchers. She trained Tanzanians so that they could carry on the work without her. Where a more dominating mentor would be anxious to nurture disciples, Goodall trained scholars to autonomy. Her goal
p. 323 was to bring the knowledge of the chimpanzees into the world, for all ↳ to have. And she saw that this end was best accomplished by making others intellectually independent.

Goodall wanted knowledge of the chimps not only to be created; she wanted it to be widely distributed. Another wise choice she made, expressive of her intellectual generosity, was to spend a portion of every year writing, lecturing, and making film and television presentations of her work whereby she shared it with the larger world. Towards these three parties, then—the chimpanzees, her fellow scientists, and the interested world at large—Jane Goodall directed her intellectual generosity, and in each case her choices were governed by practical intelligence.

Conclusion: Epistemology as Practical Wisdom

We began this book with reflections about the nature of epistemology. In the interest that some epistemologists have recently shown in the intellectual virtues, we saw an opportunity to think of and practice epistemology in a new way. Whereas the founders of the recent movement have used the concept of a virtue to answer the routine late twentieth-century questions about justification and warrant, we have made the virtue concepts themselves the focus of our study, digging down into their interior to see what we could find. Focusing on the nature of the traits that make a person an excellent epistemic agent, we have adopted a different teleology of epistemological reflection. We aim not to produce a theory of justification, warrant, knowledge, or rationality; nor are we trying to answer the skeptic. Instead, we have aimed to use the virtues as the focus of reflections to increase our practical understanding of the inner workings of the intellectual life. Like earlier epistemologists, we have analyzed concepts; but, unlike most of the recent ones, our purpose in this has been less to produce an epistemological theory than to generate understanding of the epistemic agent and thereby to guide practice. Clearly, such guidance is not a set of action rules: do this and that, and don't do that and this. It is more in the nature of a map of a personality ideal whereby one might come to see where one stands, relative to one or another set of coordinates of the ideal.

The guidance that this trait analysis provides is not of the sort that any particular science or course of study
p. 324 provides for its practitioners. If you are ↳ a chemist or an ethologist or an interpreter of Victorian literature, clearly our epistemology is no substitute for apprenticeship in your particular discipline. Yet we think that it is relevant to any discipline, and ought to be of interest to anyone who seriously seeks to acquire or transmit knowledge. Epistemology, as it has been done in a variety of ways across the ages, has almost always aspired to be meta-disciplinary, and ours is no exception. The virtues we have explored—love of knowledge, firmness, courage and caution, humility, autonomy, generosity, and practical wisdom—are excellences across the disciplines.

In the present chapter we have argued that intellectual practical wisdom is the power of good perception and judgment that an agent needs to exemplify the particular intellectual virtues in the contexts of intellectual practices. If this is correct, then one might see the function of this book as an attempt to *formulate* intellectual practical wisdom. As we saw in the second section of this chapter, the situational and improvisatory character of practical wisdom prevents its capture in any formula. So any formula will be at best imprecise and suggestive. Yet articulating formulas is what analysis consists in. The reader will also notice that the analyses of the virtues in Part II, as well as a sizable portion of Part I, supplement the more abstract formulas with narrative examples, often employing such examples as loci for the analyses themselves. And we think that this combination of abstract analysis and narrative fragments is exactly the kind of discourse that is best suited to formulate practical wisdom.

Notes

1 By the same token we could speak of just courage or compassionate courage, and these specifications of virtue would specify the motive. These will qualify, by the standard of Chapter 3, as distinct virtues, since situations of justice and compassion are generically human and important in a way that ice hockey situations are not.

2 Quoted in Kate Wong, “Stranger in a New Land”, *Scientific American*, Nov. 2003: 74–83, p. 82 10.1038/scientificamerican1103-74 .

3 See Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, with a biographical sketch by Georg Henrik von Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 80.

4 Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 47.

5 John Benson cites Bruno Bettelheim as reporting that, in the Nazi concentration camps, the Jehovah's Witnesses were one of the two groups best able to keep their integrity in the face of Nazi “authority”. See “Who Is the Autonomous Man?”,

Philosophy 58 (1983): 5–17, pp. 16–17 10.1017/S0031819100056217 .

6 Jane Goodall, with Phillip Berman, *Reason for Hope: A Spiritual Journey* (New York: Warner Books, 1999).