

- I. Motivation: what hangs on this question?
- II. How Primary?
- III. Kvanvig's argument that truth isn't the primary epistemic goal
- IV. David's argument that truth is the primary epistemic goal
- V. More arguments against epistemic truth monism

I. What hangs on questions about epistemic values or goals:

- 1. Some arguments in normative epistemology depend on questions about value.
e.g. the 'swamping problem' for reliabilism proceeds from monism about truth
- 2. The significance of epistemic evaluations for non-epistemological humans.
e.g. if it turned out that we didn't value the things of epistemic value.
- 3. Some arguments in metaphysics about value in general.
e.g. if epistemology involves only some hypothetical imperative about truth.

II. What way of being primary is important to each of these motivations?

- 1. If there are *any* other epistemic values, then the reliabilist has a response to the swamping problem.
- 2. If there are *any* other epistemic values, then we can't just check whether we care about the primary one,
in order to decide whether we care about epistemic evaluations
- 3. If there are *any* other epistemic values, that may cause trouble for epistemological naturalism.

So it seems to me that the way of being primary which matters is well captured by monism: there's really only one *intrinsic* epistemic value. And anything else which has epistemic value has it only *because* of some relationship it has to whatever is of intrinsic epistemic value. This will be important.

III. Kvanvig:

The strategy: come up with a permissive criterion for which evaluations are epistemic, then:

- i. *prima facie* "each independent kind of cognitive success within the purview of epistemology identifies a cognitive goal in its own right." *There's something importantly right about this.*
- ii. some of these kinds of cognitive success "can be explained without recourse to the goal of truth", as:
 - a. Having an empirically adequate theory "that will never be refuted by the course of experience"
What's it mean to not be refuted? This doesn't count as a counterexample on my understanding.
 - b. Making sense of the course of experience, since "one makes sense of the course of experience by developing a classification for experiences together with a theory of explanation of how the various categories are explanatorily related."
Won't those explanations, if correct, involve truth both in the explanans and explanandum?
 - c. Responsibly inquiring, on a 'real deontologist' account. *Wouldn't such an account beg the Q?*
c.' intellectually blameless inquiry
 - d. Foley Rationality, on which a belief is justified iff one would hold it after a Cartesian Meditation.

The demarcational issue: What is epistemology?

Kvanvig: epistemology is the investigation of *successful* cognitive processes, events & states; & of their success
-when investigated *philosophically* (so it's not e.g., psychology)
-considered irrespective of causal consequences

How about a different criterion: an evaluation is epistemic if people care about it in the same way they care about paradigm epistemic evaluations (e.g. knowledge, justification)

Perhaps the different demarcations are motivated by a desire to capture different things:

The narrow conception, on which epistemology is just the theory of knowledge, is motivated by a desire to capture the environment in which recent disputes in epistemology came about; so it might be relevant to I.1, above.

A broader conception, though not necessarily Kvanvig's, would capture what's clearly relevant to I.3 and I.2. I.1, too?

On the narrow conception:

Even on the narrow conception of epistemology, the truth-goal isn't obvious:

- i. it's not clear that justification can be explained in terms of truth
- ii. it's not clear that the Gettier thing can be explained in terms of truth (+justification)
- iii. it's not clear that the supervenience base of epistemic evaluations will be true beliefs
- iv. nor would the supervenience base of epistemic evaluations be a *goal*
- v. reliabilism isn't an argument for a metaepistemological thesis
- vi. even if there has to be *some* goal, why truth rather than knowledge? (& why is either primary?)
the circularity worry here (p. 291) seems confused; even if it would be "bad epistemology to invoke the knowledge-goal as part of the theory of knowledge," how is that what one would be doing?

IV. David

How could truth be a goal?

Truth as a goal means possessing truth by believing or knowing true propositions

-so the goal of having knowledge is a truth-goal

This seems wrong; one can have X but not Y as a goal even when X entails Y

How is having something as a goal different from just desiring it, for David? As an end?

How to formulate truth goals?

- (1) $G(p)(Tp \rightarrow Bp \ \& \ Bp \rightarrow Tp)$ "collective true belief goal"
First conjunct has to be restricted to "important and interesting" props. Same for 3.1 & 3.2.
- (2) $(p) \ G(Tp \rightarrow Bp \ \& \ Bp \rightarrow Tp)$ "distributive true belief goal"
This can't be it, since "we can't have all these goals." Is that true?
But we can restrict the domain to propositions p "such that we are seriously asking whether p"
- (3.1) $G(p)(Tp \rightarrow Kp \ \& \ Bp \rightarrow Tp)$ "weak collective knowledge goal"
- (3.2) $G(p)(Tp \rightarrow Kp \ \& \ Bp \rightarrow Kp)$ "strong collective knowledge goal"
- (4.1) $(p) \ G(Tp \rightarrow Kp \ \& \ Bp \rightarrow Tp)$ "weak distributive knowledge goal"
- (4.2) $(p) \ G(Tp \rightarrow Kp \ \& \ Bp \rightarrow Kp)$ "strong distributive knowledge goal"

Which goals are epistemic?

"Epistemology is the theory of knowledge"

What is this doing, for David? Does it entail that, e.g., evaluations of Foley rationality are not epistemic?

So, in addition to the knowledge-goal and the truth-goal: the justified-belief-goal is epistemic.

Which goals are primary?

The primary epistemic goal will be the one we want the others for the sake of.

qualification: "within the domain of epistemology"

What does it mean to want something within a domain?

qualification: "we *ought* to have [non-primary goals] because we have the" primary one

What's the force of that "ought"? Just to prevent empirical falsification?

Bigger question: why does primacy, in this sense, matter? It's just an ordering of our desires, isn't it?

Or an ordering of how our desires "ought" to be? How "ought" our desires, epistemically, be?

The true-belief goal is prior to the justified belief goal.

A1 If you want to have TBs you ought to have JB

A2 We want to have JB because we want to have TB

B1 If you want to have JB you ought to have TB

B2 We want to have TB because we want to have JB

I think we should grant that A1 and A2 are far more plausible than B1 and B2. But so what? Nothing follows.

What explains the plausibility of A1? A3 does:

A3 For any p: if you want to <believe p iff p is true> then you ought to <believe p iff you have justification for believing p>

And, what explains the plausibility of A3, A2, and A1? A4 does:

A4 You ought to have justified beliefs rather than unjustified beliefs, given that you want to have true beliefs rather than false ones, because justified beliefs are likely to be true, at least considerably more likely to be true than unjustified ones.

Objection to the claim that A4 explains A1/2/3: it might be that justified beliefs are just beliefs made sufficiently *more* likely to be true by their justifiers - which wouldn't entail that they're likely "in any absolute sense."

The true-belief goal and the knowledge-goal.

C1 If you want to have TBs you ought to have K.

Taken as a claim about the class 'knowledge,' plausible; about individual props, 'deviant'

C2 We want to have K because we want to have TB.

D1 If you want to have K you ought to have TB.

D2 We want to have TB because we want to have K.

D1 is made plausible by D3:

D3 for any p, if you want to <know p it is true, and believe p only if you know it> then you ought to <believe p if it is true, and believe p only if it is true>

D3 gives a reason to think that the knowledge-goal is prior to the true-belief goal.

Flawed reply: true belief is more basic, and a goal, therefore a more basic goal.

Second reply: to want knowledge is not to want anything more than justified true beliefs

Problem: Gettier cases

Third reply: to want knowledge is not to want anything more than justified non-accidentally true belief

So the goal of having non-accidentally true belief is prior to the goal of having knowledge.

Meno Problems

If (non-accidentally) true belief is the primary epistemic goal, this seems to entail epistemic value monism:

(TM) The sole epistemic good is true belief (& the sole epistemic bad is false belief)

(NATM) The sole epistemic good is non-accidentally true belief (& the sole epistemic bad is...?)

What does TM mean? Does it entail that (is this an epistemic sense of ought?):

"We ought to want knowledge and justification only because, and insofar as, we want true beliefs."

This is importantly different from my formulation of epistemic value monism - this is talking about an ordering of desires - desiring X for the sake of Y. That's compatible with X not being explicable in terms of Y.

Is (TM) or (NATM) true? Does the primary-goal stuff entail it? Why?

If (TM) is right, then although otherwise plausible, these seem wrong (for (NATM), too, except (a)):

- (a) Knowledge seems better than mere true belief
- (b) Justified true belief seems better than unjustified true belief
- (c) Unjustified false belief seems worse than justified false belief
- (d) Unjustified true belief versus justified false belief? Intuition hesitates.

This is false; intuition doesn't hesitate - justified false belief is epistemically better; TM gets it wrong. NATM?

On the other hand, (KM) seems to get (a)-(c) right & maybe (d); (TJP) even more clearly does.

(KM) The sole epistemic good is knowledge (& the sole epistemic bad is?)

David doesn't have a real response to this.

(TJP) Both justified belief and true belief are basic epistemic goods

If (TJP) were right, why does A1 seem right?

David: A1 is plausible because you epistemically ought to have justified beliefs.

But "absolute oughts" belong only in ethics. *Surely not; pragmatic oughts?*

And, if this were so, why would justification involve producing evidence of truth?

But being justified isn't a matter of justifying! Nor is it obviously a matter of just having evidence!

A better response: A1 seems right as a claim not about epistemic oughts, but about our all-things-considered desires, because true beliefs are pragmatically better than justified beliefs; but that pragmatic claim shows nothing about epistemic value.

How else might TM or NATM account for (a)-(d)?

In terms of desires:

- i. We have a basic desire for true beliefs
- ii. We have a derived desire (from our desire for true beliefs) for justified beliefs
- iii. Things seem epistemically better which satisfy more of our desires

But it's clearly false that: iii. 'Things are epistemically better which satisfy more of our desires

And i-iii, rather than i-iii', would at most explain why we think (a)-(d).

But if the claim is that (a)-(d) are literally false; then I have no handle whatsoever on epistemic value.

V. More against Truth Monism

What seems right about Kvanvig's objection that, *prima facie*, we should expect that there will be as many epistemic values as there are kinds of cognitive success, is that if monism is true, then all epistemic evaluations will be explained by reference to some relation they bear to that one intrinsic value. So, e.g., justification would be a certain relation to truth. The exact nature of the relation is a matter of great controversy, of course, but doesn't matter for epistemic value monism. What's important for us is that the relation to truth is *explanatory* - truth monism doesn't depend on any ordering of our desires.

More on the Meno problem:

The 'swamping problem' for reliabilism, and the 'Meno problem' above, both rely on some supposed consequences of truth monism, either that (i) true belief is epistemically unimprovable or that (ii) any true belief is epistemically better than any false belief. (a) and (b) trade on (i); (d) trades on (ii).

But why think that either (i) or (ii) is right? One argument: they're right because the relationship between derived and intrinsic values is explanatory; and no relation R to truth could *explain* (i)' why a true belief, which also stands in R to truth, is better than a true belief which doesn't stand in R to truth, nor (ii)' why any false belief which stands in R to truth is better than any true belief which doesn't stand in R to truth. Another argument: if *any* relationship to truth is important, then being true is the most important. In general, what principled way would point to certain relationships to truth, rather than others?

A non-Meno problem, for explanation:

If TM is right, then there is some set of relations to truth which all and only things of derived epistemic value share.

It's hard enough to see how this could be the case for justification. But what about:

- (a) Foley Rationality
- (b) Believing that beliefs are justified
- (c) Coherence
- (d) Having beliefs which conform to the probability axioms
- (e) Whatever rationalizing ability (i) goes along with justification but (ii) is not truth-conducive
- (f) Whatever explanatory ability (i) is part of knowing why but (ii) is not factive
- (g) Whatever makes believing Moore's paradoxical propositions worse than believing "I have at least one other false belief"