**A Dilemma for Driver on Virtues of Ignorance**

**Abstract** For Julia Driver, some virtues involve ignorance. Modesty, for example, is a disposition to *underestimate* self-worth, and blind charity is a disposition *not to see* others’ defects. Such “virtues of ignorance,” she argues, serve as counterexamples to the Aristotelian view that virtue requires intellectual excellence. But Driver seems to face a dilemma: if virtues of ignorance involve ignorance of *valuable* knowledge, then they do not merit virtue status; but if they involve ignorance of *trivial* knowledge, then they do not preclude intellectual excellence. So, either there are no *virtues* of ignorance, or there are no virtues of *ignorance* – at least not the sort of ignorance that precludes intellectual excellence. Virtues of ignorance therefore fail as counterexamples to Aristotelian virtue theory.

**Keywords** Aristotelian virtue theory, Julia Driver, Ignorance, Virtue, Virtues of ignorance

**1 Introduction**

Some virtue theorists hold that certain *internal* states make virtues valuable. For these theorists, intellectual, motivational, volitional, or affective excellence (or some combination) determines the value of virtues. Consider intellectual excellence. Aristotle, for instance, held that virtues require *phronesis*, or practical wisdom (NE 1107a1; 1105a31-32; 1144b14-18). Contemporary Aristotelians similarly hold that the virtuous person “knows what to do” and “sees situations in a certain distinctive way” (McDowell 1997, p. 162). Such intellectual excellence, on their view, partly makes virtues valuable, and is seen as constitutive of all virtues.

Julia Driver, by contrast, argues for a purely *externalist* view of the value of virtues. She argues that “the moral quality of a person’s action or character is determined by factors external to agency, such as actual (rather than expected) consequences” (2001, p. 68). The Aristotelian view is mixed; Aristotelians think that virtues are valuable on account of certain external factors (such as the production of human flourishing), as well as certain internal states. Driver rejects the Aristotelian internalist component – i.e., that intellectual, motivational, volitional, and affective excellence partly determine the value of virtues – for reasons I find suspect. I shall focus on Driver’s putative counterexamples to the Aristotelian view that virtues require *intellectual* excellence. Ignorance, she argues, is constitutive of some virtues. Modesty, for example, is a disposition to *underestimate* self-worth, blind charity is a disposition *not to see* others’ defects, and so forth. A theory of virtue must account for such “virtues of ignorance,” her argument goes, and since intellectualist theories of virtue such as Aristotle’s cannot account for virtues of ignorance, we should reject them.

Detractors of Driverian virtues of ignorance have criticized her analyses of these putative virtues, and they have offered alternative analyses that preclude ignorance (Flanagan 1990; Schueler 1997; Sandler 2005; Brennan 2007; Winter 2012). In this essay, I take a different tack, one which asks whether the knowledge that the “virtuously ignorant” person lacks is valuable or not. If it is, then virtues of ignorance do not merit virtue status. If it is not, then they do not preclude intellectual excellence. So, Driver seems caught in a dilemma: either there are no *virtues* of ignorance, or there are no virtues of *ignorance* – at least not the sort of ignorance that precludes intellectual excellence. Virtues of ignorance therefore fail as counterexamples to Aristotelian virtue theory.

**2 The Intellectualism of Aristotelian Virtue Theory**

Let us begin with a brief sketch of the pertinent features of Aristotelian virtue theory. On this theory, virtues are, among other things, dispositions to *act* in certain ways (NE 1090b30-32). The courageous person resists her fears, the open-handed person gives her own money, and so on. These activities are the virtuous person’s *intermediate* ends, and she pursues them partly for the sake of *ultimate* ends (though this need not suggest crude means-end reasoning). For Aristotle, the virtuous person acts “for the sake of achieving what is fine; for this is what [virtue] aims at” (NE 1115b12-14). Here “what is fine” includes goods such as beauty, justice, and knowledge, the pursuit of which we admire.

Consider a journalist who aims to unmask some tycoon, but fears its concomitant danger. If she is courageous, she will resist her fear (intermediate end) to gain knowledge of the tycoon’s true character (ultimate end). Linda Zagzebski makes a similar point. She says that “each intellectual virtue has an end that is unique to that virtue, but since every intellectual virtue arises out of the general motivation for knowledge, an intellectual virtue also includes knowledge as its ultimate end” (1996, pp. 269-270). Her point, shared by other Aristotelians, applies equally to straightforwardly moral concerns.

In what sense does an intermediate end “arise out of” an ultimate one, as Zagzebski says? Well, the virtuous person at least (reasonably) *believes* that she can achieve her ultimate ends via certain intermediate ends (Baehr 2013). The courageous journalist believes that her circumstances require her to resist her fear in order to gain knowledge. For Aristotelians, she *knows* the situation demands this of her (Zagzebski 1996, p. 134; Hursthouse 1999, pp. 123-125). Because she has *phronesis* – characterized by Aristotle as the ability to deliberate well about things conducive to one’s own and others’ good (NE 1140a25-28; 1140b7-10) – she can “see” the value of unmasking the tycoon’s true character, and she knows that she should resist her fear to achieve this. On an Aristotelian theory of virtue, virtuous activity requires such intellectual excellence (NE 1144b31-33). The virtuous person is a *phronimos*, not an ignoramus. She is sensitive to value, and she acts from knowledge, not a failure thereof.

**3 Virtues of Ignorance**

Aristotelian virtue theory is flawed, according to Driver, since it cannot account for virtues of ignorance such as modesty, blind charity, impulsive courage, and more besides (2001, pp. 16-36). Unlike Aristotelian virtues, virtues of ignorance can preclude intellectual excellence; they can manifest an epistemic defect, rendering their possessors ignorant to some extent. To get a better grip on the nature of these putative virtues, and on how they are meant to support Driver’s case against Aristotelian virtue theory, let us focus on modesty, her paradigm example.

Consider modesty as characterized by Sherlock Holmes in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Greek Interpreter”:

My dear Watson…I cannot agree with those who rank modesty among the virtues. To the logician all things should be seen exactly as they are, and to underestimate one’s self is as much a departure from truth as to exaggerate one’s own powers (quoted in Driver 1989, p. 374).

Here Holmes says that the modest person *underestimates* his self, and that modesty is thus *not* a virtue. Driver partly agrees. She thinks that “the modest person underestimates his self-worth to some limited degree,” and is therefore “ignorant, to a certain degree, with regard to self-worth” (2001, p. 18). And the modest person, on her view, underestimates his self-worth “in spite of the available evidence” (2001, p. 21). Such underestimation, we should emphasize, is limited; the modest person does not see his good qualities as utterly wicked. As Driver puts it, “if Albert Einstein viewed himself as a great physicist, just not the greatest physicist of the 20th century – that’s modesty” (2001, p. 19). Note, too, that here modesty requires a *disposition to disbelieve* the truth about one’s good qualities (2001, p. 21). Otherwise, Driver argues, we can be modest by lacking awareness of our good qualities *and* be disposed to *conceit* upon discovering them.

Although Driver agrees with Holmes that the modest person underestimates his self-worth, she disagrees that modesty is not a virtue. But why think that underestimating self-worth, and thereby becoming ignorant of it to some extent, is virtuous? Why find *that* valuable? Driver says two things about the value of virtues. The first is that virtues of ignorance in particular are valuable since they enhance their possessor’s good qualities. Like a chip in a diamond, Driver argues, virtues of ignorance involve a valuable flaw; they make their possessor’s good qualities shine more brightly. Ignorance of self-worth is *charming*, on her view – we value modesty much like we value unaffectedness: “ignorance of one’s own beauty is often said to enhance it” (2001, p. 28). Driver views this as a neutral claim about the value of the virtues of ignorance, a claim which does not assume an internalist nor externalist value-maker requirement on virtue.

Driver’s non-neutral claim about the value of virtues is that all character traits, whether they involve ignorance or not, are virtues if and only if they systematically produce more (actual) good (for others) than not (2001, p. 82). She argues that modesty and other putative virtues of ignorance are not valuable on account of their possessor’s internal states (e.g., intellectual excellence), and so we must locate their value externally, in the good consequences they produce. We can value modesty, for example, for the easing of tensions and jealousies that underestimating self-worth affords (2001, p. 26). The modest person, on this picture, tends to not spend time ranking and is thereby made ignorant of her own worth compared to the worth of others. Consequently, she will likely not provoke envy or undue competitiveness.

In short, Driver believes that although “[m]odesty is dependent upon the epistemic defect of not knowing one’s own worth,” since it is a virtue it “undermines the view that no virtue is crucially connected to ignorance” (2001, pp. 16-17). If correct, Aristotelian virtue theory *is* seriously flawed. Even if *some* cases of modesty so understood are instances of virtue, then, contra Aristotelians, virtue does not require intellectual excellence.

**4 Two Types of Ignorance**

As noted, one can reply to Driver by arguing that modesty is *not* a disposition to underestimate self-worth, but rather, for example, a disposition to refrain from voicing one’s accomplishments (Winter 2012). I agree that Driver is mistaken about what is characteristic of the modest person. But let us ignore that for now and instead focus on her views on ignorance. In doing so, we find a new reply.

Driver seems to draw upon two inconsistent types of ignorance. To explain, recall that she characterizes the ignorance of the modest person as “dependent upon the epistemic *defect* of not knowing one’s worth” (2001, p. 17, my emphasis). She also says that modesty is an intellectual *vice* – the ignorance of the modest person is the result of a vicious mistake, she says (2003, p. 372). So, modesty can involve vicious ignorance; it can be characterized as consistent with something bad, with something of negative value.

Now, note what Driver says about ignorance as she responds to an objection to her view that modesty may involve ignorance. Briefly, the objection she entertains says that ignorance is intrinsically bad and therefore unable to constitute any virtue manifestation. “I am ignorant of the names and addresses of most of the people walking by my office window,” she replies, “but I don’t view that as something bad” (2001, p. 27). Here Driver says that ignorance is not necessarily bad since lacking trivial knowledge, such as the address of a random stranger, is not bad.[[1]](#footnote-1) At this juncture she claims that the ignorance sometimes constitutive of modesty is not bad – it is “innocuous ignorance,” we might say.

On this picture, then, the ignorance of the modest person is vicious as well as innocuous. It is and is not bad. What is going on here? Well, to show that modesty may involve *ignorance*, Driver must ensure that when it does it speaks against the modest person’s intellectual excellence. Hence her argument that modesty can involve vicious ignorance. To show that modesty is a *virtue*, she must ensure that when it involves ignorance it is valuable enough to merit virtue status, that it has not-too-bad constituent features. Hence her argument that ignorance is not necessarily bad.

Perhaps Driver just needs to stick with one type of ignorance – vicious *or* innocuous – for this part of her case against Aristotelian virtue theory to succeed. But if she chooses the former, then she loses her response to the objection that virtues preclude ignorance of negative value. And if she chooses the latter, then virtues of ignorance do not provide clear cases of virtue *sans* intellectual excellence. Mere consistency does not suffice. A dilemma is materializing.

**5 A Dilemma for Driver**

Again, sometimes Driver argues that ignorance is not necessarily bad on the grounds that lacking trivial knowledge is not bad. Failing to know the address of a stranger, for example, is not bad. For Driver, then, some items of knowledge are valuable and others are not. Fair enough. But what shall we say about the modest person? Does she lack valuable items of knowledge as regards her self-worth, or does she lack trivial ones?

Suppose that what the modest person is ignorant of – i.e., knowledge of her self-worth – is *valuable* knowledge. Is it bad to be ignorant of that? All things being equal, it seems so. Knowing full well that I am in good health, for example, is a good thing.[[2]](#footnote-2) No one wants to think they are unhealthy when they are not. No good person would wish that ignorance on others, either. And full awareness of our good qualities helps us know whether or how we can help others. If, say, I want to adopt an orphan, then it would be good that I know full well whether the child is better off in my care than other prospective adopters. Underestimating these qualities seems bad indeed. Character traits that manifest insensitivity to the available evidence for valuable knowledge do not merit virtue status, it would seem.

Driver thinks that modesty isvaluable since ignorance of one’s good qualities enhances those qualities. Such ignorance adds charm, she says, which is why we should think it is virtuous to be ignorant in that way. So, on this picture, lacking valuable knowledge about one’s self-worth is charming. This seems doubtful, however. For one thing, if I am healthy, or if I can cure cancer, then believing against the relevant evidence is far from charming. For another, Driver gives no reason to think that being charmed by another’s trait reliably indicates virtue-conferring value. Some people find arrogance charming. Does that make it a virtue? Driver also thinks that modesty is valuable for its good consequences. But the claim that modesty is a virtue is a *starting assumption* here. That is, the claim that modesty is a virtue motivates Driver’s externalist view of the value of virtues, and so the claim that modesty is valuable on account of its good consequences cannot motivate the view that modesty is a virtue. Appealing to modesty’s charm or good consequences, then, does not help Driver. If modesty manifests in underestimating valuable knowledge about one’s self-worth, then we have no reason to think that modesty is a virtue, and if modesty is not a virtue, then it is not a counterexample to Aristotelian virtue theory.

That was the first horn. On to the second. Suppose the modest person lacks *trivial* knowledge of self-worth. How do we even get started here? If I underestimate my ability to endure mild itches slightly longer than others, am I thereby modest? Arguably, not – modesty involves a response to one’s own *significant* good qualities, and Driver agrees (2001, p. 20). But let us ignore that and consider whether lacking trivial knowledge of self-worth undermines intellectual excellence. I think it does not. Even if lacking knowledge of my ability to endure mild itches slightly longer than others manifests modesty, lacking such knowledge is not epistemically diminishing. Valueless bits of information are unworthy of attention, and we are no worse off without them.[[3]](#footnote-3)

True, Driver says modesty is underestimation of self-worth *in spite of available evidence*; that may seem hard to square with intellectual excellence.[[4]](#footnote-4) But the modest person, on her view, underestimates *unthinkingly*, that is, “she is simply insensitive to her own merit” (2001, p. 21), and she “does not recognize the belief as going against the evidence” (2001, p. 31). We should not pack anything approaching obstinate resistance to evidence into this picture, therefore. (Note that we refrained from doing so vis-à-vis the first horn, too). Moreover, we cannot assume that underestimating in this way is incompatible with intellectual excellence. Whether it is depends on the value of the relevant item of knowledge. There is nothing sub-excellent about underestimating self-worth despite available evidence when the relevant item of knowledge is trivial. Indeed, failing to track the evidence regarding trivial matters manifests epistemically *good* agency and at most renders one *innocuously* ignorant – if we are still tempted to call it ignorance.[[5]](#footnote-5) So, insensitivity to evidence and consequent ignorance of trivial items of self-knowledge is compatible with intellectual excellence. Modesty, so understood, can be an *Aristotelian* virtue.

Sound appraisals of epistemic standings and activities require an eye towards the value (or lack thereof) of the relevant items of knowledge. In light of this, Driver seems caught in a dilemma: either modesty involves vicious ignorance of valuable knowledge regarding self-worth, which is not virtuous and thus not a counterexample to Aristotelian virtue theory, or modesty involves innocuous ignorance of trivial self-knowledge, which does not preclude intellectual excellence, and which, we should add, deflates the motivation to look beyond the virtuous person’s internal states to locate the value-makers of virtue externally. To repeat, either there are no *virtues* of ignorance, or there are no virtues of (intellectual-excellence-precluding) *ignorance*.

**6 Objections**

How might one object to this dilemma? Let us start with the first horn. Above I argued that, all things being equal, there is significant disvalue in being ignorant of valuable self-knowledge. One may concede that point yet argue that sometimes not all things are equal. That is, it could be argued that knowing one’s good qualities, though valuable in some respect, can nevertheless be quite bad. Full knowledge of one’s own beauty, for example, may make one vain. So perhaps sometimes ignorance of one’s own good qualities that are valuable to know is valuable overall. Underestimating such qualities can be valuable enough to merit virtue status, then, when one is ignorant of only those good qualities that, if known, would somehow render one worse off. If so, then modesty still serves as a sufficient counterexample to Aristotelian virtue theory.

According to the view of modesty we are now considering, modesty is valuable enough to be a virtue only when underestimating one’s own good qualities that are valuable to know would somehow render the modest person worse off upon her full awareness of those qualities. That would mean that we should be careful *not to correct* the virtuously modest person, since showing her that she is mistaken would make her worse off. But we tend not to think of modesty in this way, even on an underestimation account of modesty. Modesty as underestimation of self-worth ought to elicit corrective encouragement or friendly criticism. If a modest person mistakenly believes that her beauty has diminished with age, then we will try to persuade her that she is wrong. Or if a modest student mistakenly believes that she is less smart than she is, then we will like her to think otherwise. So, even *if* we should ascribe virtue-conferring value to a trait that manifests in underestimating self-worth (that is otherwise valuable to know) and thereby keeps one from being somehow worse off overall, modesty is ill-suited for that role.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Still accepting the first horn, one may object differently. One could argue that I have conflated moral virtue with intellectual virtue, and that I have shown only that ignorance of valuable self-knowledge undermines modesty’s *intellectual* virtue status. One can still be *morally* virtuous on account of such ignorance, the objection goes, and that is all Driver must show. Not all Aristotelians worry about this distinction as Aristotle did (NE 1103a15-20).[[7]](#footnote-7) Still, Driver’s position on this issue merits consideration.

Driver proposes that moral virtues are essentially *others*-regarding whereas intellectual virtues are essentially *self*-regarding; the former are valued for producing *well-being* for others, and the latter are valued for producing *epistemic goods* for one’s self (Driver 2003, p. 381). Brady (2018, pp. 784-792) argues against several virtue theorists’ attempts to mark such a distinction, including Driver’s. Against Driver, he argues that there are straightforwardly moral virtues potentially valuable for producing epistemic goods for one’s self. Honesty, for example, can manifest in being truthful with one’s self and thereby produce an epistemic good for one’s self. There are also straightforwardly intellectual virtues potentially valuable for contributing to others’ well-being. Open-mindedness toward misguided students, for example, can help them mature as persons.[[8]](#footnote-8) The distinction Driver makes between moral and intellectual virtue does not clearly obtain, therefore. But this only shows that the self/other component does not clearly obtain. To fully overcome this objection, then, we may need to say more.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Note that this objection holds up only if intellectual virtue is not a subset of moral virtue. Intellectual virtue and moral virtue must be fundamentally distinct, in other words. How else are we to conceive of a virtue that is at the same time a vice? But then we have a problem. For Driver, moral virtues are valuable because they produce well-being for others. Arguably, though, well-being depends in part on *intellectual* flourishing, as Driver seems to concede (2003, p. 372).[[10]](#footnote-10) Does not a good education, for example, contribute to well-being (Baehr 2011, p. 211)? Valuable self-knowledge likewise contributes to well-being. Without such epistemic goods, we are worse off. And so, it would seem that intellectual virtue is not altogether independent of moral virtue. But, again, that must be the case for this objection to go through.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Finally, perhaps genuine modesty requires ignorance that one is modest. Asserting “I am modest” sounds odd, Driver thinks (2001, pp. 17-19), and a plausible account of modesty must explain why. On her view, asserting that you are modest is self-defeating; the very act of asserting that you are modest is immodest. The assertion is thus odd because genuine modesty involves ignorance that one is modest. Perhaps there is no disvalue in such ignorance. If so, then ignorance of valuable self-knowledge – namely, that one is modest – *can* be virtuous.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Note two points in reply. First, it is unclear that genuine modesty requires ignorance that one is modest. Whitcomb *et al* (2015) argue persuasively that one can assert that one is humble without self-defeat.[[13]](#footnote-13) In marriage counseling sessions, for example, the counselor may ask who is most humble, Spouse A or Spouse B. Suppose the answer is obvious to both parties that Spouse A is most humble. Spouse A need not defeat her humility by asserting so. That assertion need not manifest arrogance, that is. This point applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to modesty. Asserting that one is modest need not defeat one’s modesty. Second, when it *is* valuable to know that one is modest, as may be the case in such a counseling session, ignorance of one’s own modesty is *not* virtuous. Knowing one’s self well enough to help others help you and your relationships is highly valuable – too valuable to see character excellence in failing to grasp it.

The first horn seems to stick, objections above notwithstanding. Alternatively, one might latch onto the second horn. It could be argued that the modest person lacks *relatively* trivial knowledge about her self-worth, and that lacking such knowledge *does* undermine intellectual excellence. But it is difficult to conceive of such relativity in a way that does the job. For example, perhaps the lack of knowledge at issue is trivial relative to other items of knowledge one could focus on. Take Driver’s Einstein example. We might think that Einstein’s reputation as the greatest physicist of the 20th century is of little value compared to the scientific knowledge he pursued. But such a reputation is not utterly trivial, and so one can be modest about it. Now, imagine that, due to his focus on his research, Einstein unthinkingly failed to consider his reputation as a physicist. And imagine that he was thereby made ignorant (to some extent) of his greatness. Should this make us think he is to some extent epistemically defective?

Well, a disposition to *focus* on valuable knowledge to the neglect of relatively trivial self-knowledge manifests intellectual excellence, and failing to track the latter does *not* manifest intellectual deficiency. On the supposition that the modest person is focused in this way, it is plausible to think that he is ignorant of the aspects of his self-worth that are not so valuable to know precisely because he is *excellently* *insensitive* to phenomena of relatively little value. He tracks realities most valuable to know and is merely *innocuously* ignorant of the rest. This sort of focus and consequent ignorance does not seem epistemically defective.

One could argue that modesty involves underestimating self-worth that is trivial relative to what the modest person *luckily* focuses on. For my imaginary objector, this luck undermines intellectual excellence. Because she luckily has a certain cognitive makeup, the modest person focuses on matters that are more valuable to know than some good quality of hers. She at least deserves no credit for intellectual excellence, it might be thought.

To insist that modesty must always be a matter of luck would seem born out of a desperate attempt to save a counterexample to Aristotelian virtue theory. For modesty to succeed as such a counterexample, however, it need not always be a virtue, nor need it always manifest luckily as we are now supposing. For Aristotelians, virtue *requires* intellectual excellence, and so if modesty *can* manifest as a matter of such luck, and if when it does it has enough of the right sort of value to merit virtue status, then modesty does serve as a counterexample to Aristotelian virtue theory. Since luck is a vexed issue, I will not delve into the details of how, whether, or to what extent luck may undermine intellectual excellence. But I do have a few points in reply.

The sort of luck this objection assumes is a kind of *constitutive* luck, what Duncan Pritchard calls “capacity epistemic luck” (2005, pp. 134-136). Pritchard argues that such luck need not preclude knowledge. The thought is that though it may be a matter of luck that one is endowed with the right sort of capacities to gain some item of knowledge – i.e., though there is a wide class of nearby possible worlds in which one is not so constituted – grasping the relevant truth, given that one has the capacities that one has, need not be a matter of luck. So, grasping the truth with constitutive luck in play does not preclude knowledge. Similarly, though it may be a matter of luck that the modest person’s constitution is such that it keeps her focused on valuable knowledge to the neglect of observing relatively trivial items of self-knowledge, such luck need not undermine her intellectual excellence. We can still admire her cognitive capacity to focus on what matters to the neglect of what does not.

Assuming other forms of luck, this objection may still hold. Even so, if modesty is a disposition to underestimate the kind of self-worth that is trivial relative to what the modest person luckily focuses on, then modesty would manifest *whenever* one happens to focus on something more valuable than one’s own relatively trivial good qualities. But this is too broad. On this view, if I see that someone needs serious medical assistance and at the same time fail to notice how well my hair looks, then I have manifested modesty, which seems implausible.

**7 Conclusion: The Scope of the Dilemma**

I have tried to show that it is not enough to secure analyses of the characteristic activity of virtues of ignorance, such as modesty, from rival analyses (Driver 1999; 2001); nor is it enough, I think, to deflect arguments against the disvalue of ignorance by arguing that a mere lack of trivial knowledge is not necessarily bad (2001, p. 27). It seems that any account of the virtues of ignorance must also avoid the above dilemma. Until that has been articulated, perhaps we should not think that virtues of ignorance undermine Aristotelian virtue theory.

I focused only on modesty. Can other virtues of ignorance avoid the dilemma? Consider blind charity, which, for Driver, is “a disposition not to see the defects and to focus on the virtues of persons” (2001, p. 28). Blind charity may be a disposition not to see others’ defects that would be valuable to know. But then we will be disinclined to value a disposition to be blind about that (overlooking the defects of prospective babysitters is a case in point). Or, blind charity may be a disposition not to see others’ trivial defects. But then vicious ignorance is irrelevant and intellectual excellence is not. Take impulsive courage as another example. Driver maintains that the impulsively courageous person “possesses certain facts of his situation, yet fails to put these facts together in order to reach the conscious conclusion that he himself is in danger” (2001, p. 33). Blindness to grave danger, however, has much disvalue, and overlooking trivial harm to one’s self does not undermine one’s intellectual excellence.

Such putative virtues make up Driver’s cumulative case against Aristotelian intellectualist virtue theories. Full responses to each have been omitted. And yet, as I just argued, the above dilemma may pose a problem for *any* case of a putative virtue of ignorance.

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1. For a recent defense of the view that ignorance just *is* lacking knowledge, see Le Morvan (2011; 2012). For criticisms, see Peels (2012) and Pritchard (*forthcoming*). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For some, knowing *full well* evokes Ernest Sosa’s (2011) work, but I only mean to contrast an epistemic standing with the ignorance possessed by the Driverian modest person, who is ignorant *to some* *extent*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. John Locke similarly argued that “superficial and slight…observations that contain nothing of moment in themselves…should be lightly passed by, and never thought worth our searching after” (1996, p. 222). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for inviting me to draw out and address this point. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Duncan Pritchard argues that lacking trivial knowledge does not even count as ignorance, properly understood, and that “one manifests one’s rationality as an inquirer…precisely by *not* seeking out…trivial truths” (*forthcoming*, his emphasis). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. As noted, Driver thinks that modesty is valuable, in part, on account of (externally valuable) good consequences it systematically produces for others (e.g., easing jealousies). It might be thought that in omitting that feature of her view here I am failing to give a full response to the objection I just considered. But recall that this is Driver’s *non-neutral* claim about the value of virtues. She has no recourse to this feature of her view in arguing for an externalist position on the value of virtues. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for persuading me to mention this point here, too. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Note, for example, Zagzebski’s (1996, pp. 166-168) reluctance to mark a clear distinction between intellectual and moral virtue. Michael Brady (2018) and Alan Wilson (2017) mark such a distinction, but their views assume that virtues require intellectual and motivational excellence (Brady), or just motivational excellence (Wilson). Both views are inherently internalist in the relevant sense. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Pritchard (2018) and Roberts & Wood (2007) make similar points about intellectual humility. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for persuading me to address this objection further. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Relatedly, epistemic defect is a *normative* notion. As Christine Swanton argues, “what counts as [epistemic] defect is at least in part determined by moral considerations” (2003, p. 535). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For another problem for Driver’s distinction between moral and intellectual virtue, one which presses the egoistic implications of Driver’s account of intellectual virtue, see Carter and Church (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for inviting me to address this objection. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Wilson (2016, p. 78) offers a similar argument. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)