

THE VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE AND ITS PROBLEMS

by

Kevin Patton

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The Value of Knowledge and its Problems

Kevin Patton, Ph.D.

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Advisor: David Henderson

This dissertation answers the three value problems in epistemology. These three problems require an answer as to how knowledge is more valuable 1) than mere true belief, 2) any of the proper subsets of knowledge, and 3) in kind than that which falls short of knowledge. The methodology used to provide an answer to these problems relies on the arguments put forth in a rarely discussed paper from Ward Jones. In short, the Jonesian approach can be summed up as the view that epistemic axiology and analysis ought to be kept separate. The Jonesian framework instead looks outside of the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge to find properties of knowledge which, though contingent, can explain the distinctive value of knowledge. This framework, though remarkably robust, requires going against what I consider to be the orthodox approach to the problems. This orthodox approach relies on two axiological assumptions. The first is that every component of an analysis on knowledge must provide independent value to knowledge. The second assumption is that the value of knowledge cannot be derived from factors excluded from an analysis of knowledge. Once these assumptions are appropriately discarded, the Jonesian view has a straightforward answer to the first problem. Answering the second requires assessing Jonathan Kvanvig's claim that a satisfied Gettier condition contributes no independent value. While I agree with Kvanvig regarding a satisfied Gettier condition, I will argue that an unsatisfied Gettier condition is not likewise neutral; it contributes *disvalue*. With that distinction in place, a solution to the second problem follows immediately. The third value

problem, however, is a different kind of problem altogether. Answering it requires not only the Jonesian framework, but also a novel account of how we determine final value. Once this account is offered, a Jonesian answer to the tertiary problem follows immediately. This dissertation closes by applying the Jonesian framework to an argument that claims there can be no modal conditions on knowledge due to such conditions failing to help answer the value problems. This claim will be found wanting.

For my family

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Contents

Chapter 1	3
Jones said it first, Jones said it best	3
§1 Chapter Goal	3
§2 The Orthodoxy: A Preamble	4
§3 Ward Jones: Contingency, Value, and the Limitations of Analysis	11
§4 Rejecting NCV	14
§5 The Jonesian Rejection of NCV and VVP	18
§6 A Note About Triviality	23
§7 Conclusion	25
Chapter 2	26
Instrumentalism: Rejected or Ristretto?	26
§1 Chapter Goal	26
§2 Value's Veto Power	27
§3 Abandon or Supplement?	31
§4 Triviality and Belief	33
§5 Conclusion and Vindication	36
Chapter 3	37
On Subsets and Swamps	37
§1 Chapter Goal	37
§2 Solving the Primary Problem	38
§3 Virtue and Gettier	41
§4 Super -NCV and -VVP	45
§5 Expanding the Secondary Problem	52
§7 Two Solutions?	56
§6 Conclusion	58
Chapter 4	59
Motivating the Tertiary Problem	59
§1 Chapter Goal	59
§2 Motivating The Tertiary Value Problem	60
§3 The Problem with the Continuum	62
§4 Weak Superiority	67
§5 Flourishing	74
§6 Weakest Superiority	77
Chapter 5	79
An Epistemic Axiology	79

§1 Chapter Goal	79
§2 Fundamental vs Non-Fundamental	80
§3 Knowledge as an Achievement	87
§4 The Two Master Intuitions	92
§5 Final Value	96
§6 Back to the Swamp	104
§7 Conclusion	106
Chapter 6	107
Unswamping Modal Epistemology	107
§1 Chapter Goal	107
§2 Entering the Swamp	108
§3 Escaping the Swamp	112
§4 Value Enhancers	115
§5 A Clarification about Triviality	118
§6 Conclusion	119
Bibliography	121

Chapter 1

Jones said it first, Jones said it best

“But I don’t want to go among mad people,”
Alice remarked.
"Oh, you can’t help that," said the Cat: "we’re
all mad here. I’m mad. You’re mad."
"How do you know I’m mad?" said Alice.
"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn’t
have come here.”

Alice in Wonderland
Lewis Carroll

§1 Chapter Goal

The goal of this initial chapter is to establish a superior methodological approach to what are known as the value problems in epistemology. This framework, however, is not novel. Ward Jones sketched the beginning of it in a paper nearly 30 years ago. The paper was seemingly not read, or not appreciated, at the time of its publishing. Though more recent summaries of the value problems have included a citation of the paper, discussions of the arguments and claims within are virtually nonexistent. This chapter serves to partially correct this oversight while also building upon Jones's foundation.

§2 The Orthodoxy: A Preamble¹

The late 1990s through the mid 2000s saw the rise of a literature focused on what would come to be known as *the value problems* in epistemology. While the history of these problems will be discussed below, the motivating issue is in seeking an explanation of why knowledge is more valuable than that which falls short of knowledge. This literature, though vast, would be shaped by just a handful of theorists. The three theorists that this dissertation takes to be core to this literature are Linda Zagzebski, Jonathan Kvanvig, and Duncan Pritchard. To be clear, I am not claiming that these authors more or less share the same views or answers to the value problems. What I am claiming is that these three significantly helped structure the methodologies and assumptions that have shaped (and hindered) the literature.

Zagzebski's 2003 paper "The Search and Source of Epistemic Good" was influential in at least two ways.² First, it reignited interest in Plato's inquiry in the *Meno*. There, Socrates asks if a person having a "true opinion" (e.g. a mere true belief) about the path to a city will be as good a guide as the person who knows the path. (*Meno* 97) If we reply in the affirmative, then it is unclear why knowledge seems more valuable than mere true belief. If we reply in the negative, then an explanation of the superior status of knowledge is required. Apart from Plato's own proposed answer, the issue of explaining

¹ Each of the following authors will be dealt with in much more detail in each subsequent chapter. This section serves as both an introduction to the issue, as well as to set up the goals of each subsequent chapter.

² Zagzebski (1996) and (2000) did raise the issue with some interesting discussion, but the arguments in the 2003 paper contain the core arguments that have remained influential (and will be the focus of the next chapter).

the superior value of knowledge over mere true belief was largely undiscussed until Zagzebski raised the issue.³

Second, she introduced an argument, still employed today, against a certain kind of reliabilist answer to this value problem (though, as will be discussed in the next chapter, her argument targets any variety of what she calls *machine-product model* of belief / knowledge). The kind of reliabilism that she was arguing against took knowledge to just be a true belief formed by a reliable process / faculties. (Zagzebski 2003, 13) The core of her criticism for this proposed analysis was by way of analogy. True beliefs, she argued, are like good cups of coffee. The reliability of the process which produced a good cup of coffee ceases to be valuable once we have the actual thing that we value. The reliable coffee maker, then, is only *instrumentally valuable*. Similarly, *being reliably formed* is valuable only to the degree that we get what we really want, true belief. Hence, being so formed is merely *instrumentally* valuable. Such instrumental value, she concludes, is not the kind of value which can answer Plato's challenge.

This argument by analogy was adopted and broadened by Kvanvig in his 2003 book *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*. The broadened version of the argument he names the *swamping problem*. The standard explanation of the swamping problem states that any condition on knowledge beyond mere true belief must

³ David Armstrong's 1973 book *Belief, Truth, and Knowledge* offers the only exception that I have found. According to Armstrong, let 'A' stand for an agent who has attained knowledge, and let 'H' stand for the agent's condition and circumstance when they gained such knowledge. How general or specific must H need to be in order to "register correctly in a variety of conditions"? (Armstrong 1973, 173) Armstrong's answer is that, "all other things being equal, the less specific H is the greater the 'value' of A's knowledge, because this increases the probability of repetition." (Armstrong 1973, 173) Hence, becoming proficient with a reliable belief forming process is valuable because of the true beliefs it produces now *and* will produce in the future. While there is much to say about such a view, my claim is that Zagzebski's influence is much more consequential with regard to how the value literature developed.

offer additional value beyond that already afforded by mere true belief. If a condition cannot do this, such as *being reliably formed*, then the value afforded by the condition is swamped and abandoned.⁴ (Kvanvig 2003, 45-46) Additionally, Kvanvig introduces what is eventually accepted as a second value problem. This second problem is a kind of expansion on the primary as it requires an explanation of why knowledge is not just more valuable than mere true belief, but than *any* of its proper subsets. Kvanvig eventually concludes that while the primary problem is able to be answered by certain theories of knowledge, the secondary problem cannot. This conclusion relies on Kvanvig's claim that while an anti-Gettier condition is required for any theory of knowledge, it can offer no independent value. (Kvanvig 2003, 139) The proper subset which contains all of the components of knowledge except for the anti-Gettier condition will, thus, be equal in value to knowledge itself. The upshot of this, according to Kvanvig, is that philosophers should shift their focus away from knowledge and towards understanding.

Finally, a third value problem was initially introduced by Pritchard in 2007, mentioned briefly in a footnote four of his paper "Recent Work on Epistemic Value". This problem, Pritchard claimed, requires an answer as to why knowledge is more valuable in kind, and not just degree, than that which falls short of knowledge. He further claims that even if the problems that Zagzebski and Kvanvig highlight can be answered, such an answer will not explain why knowledge has received the attention that it has over the centuries. In the end, however, Pritchard views this tertiary problem as a pseudo-problem due to his diagnosis that philosophers have erroneously thought of knowledge as a species of achievement. (Pritchard 2010, 62-65) In total, then, there are three value

⁴ Though, as will be explained in chapter five, there is a more interesting way to understand the issues at play with swamping than the standard formulation appreciates.

problems to be addressed by any proposed theory of knowledge. The standard formulation of these value problems are as follows:

The *primary value problem*: The problem of explaining why knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief.

The *secondary value problem*: The problem of explaining why knowledge is more valuable than any of its proper subsets.⁵

The *tertiary value problem*: The problem of explaining why knowledge is more valuable *in kind and not just degree* from that which falls short of knowledge.

For all three of the above authors, failing to answer the primary and secondary problems is itself a decisive failing of some kind.⁶ For Zagzebski, the failure of reliabilism to answer the primary problem entailed that reliabilism itself was false. For Kvanvig, the improbability of answering the secondary problem despite having two plausible analyses of knowledge meant that knowledge itself didn't have much special value (at least over any of its proper subsets). For Pritchard, the matter is a bit more complicated (and will be fully explained in chapters four and five). The rough idea, however, is that a disjunction

⁵ This dissertation will remain neutral on whether such superior value is a matter of value being additive or emergent. For more discussion of these accounts see §4 and §5 of chapter four.

⁶ Though, as was stated above, Pritchard does not find the tertiary problem to be a genuine one and so there is no fault imparted on a theory that cannot answer it. Despite Pritchard's own conclusion, others have posited their own explanations which do not reject the problem as pseudo. (e.g. Greco 2019; Simion and Kelp 2016)

is licensed when a theory of knowledge fails to answer one or more of the value problems: either the theory is immediately rejected, or the problem itself is a mere pseudo-problem in need of being explained away. Pritchard holds that the primary and secondary problems can be given an answer given his preferred theory of knowledge. Any rival theory which fails to answer either of those problems can be immediately dismissed. But, according to Pritchard, the tertiary problem can be explained away because it trades on the mistaken view that knowledge is a species of achievement. Inherent in each of these authors, therefore, is shared assumption about the authority and power that the value problems have (at least, for Pritchard, the legitimate value problems). This assumption I call “value’s veto power”.

Value’s Veto Power (VVP): If (i) a theory of knowledge, or (ii) a proposed necessary condition of knowledge beyond mere true belief, or (iii) a proposed sufficient condition of knowledge beyond mere true belief does not to contribute, even partially, to an explanation of the value of knowledge within the context of the value problems, then that theory or condition is vetoed.⁷

⁷ Michael DePaul comes somewhat close to recognizing VVP. He states that his “...point here is not that there is nothing to be gained by reflecting upon adequate analyses of our concepts when we are attempting to decide questions regarding the value of the things that fall under those concepts. My point is merely that *if we fail to recognize that things satisfying the conditions of such an analysis are valuable, it does not immediately follow from this fact alone that those things are not intrinsically valuable* as things falling under that concept. Even if it is correct, this negative conclusion obviously falls well short of being the last word on the issues I’ve been considering. The obvious next question to consider is how reflection on adequate analyses, or for that matter theories, should factor into our views regarding what it makes sense to value.” (DePaul 2009, 135 italics added) Rather than criticizing VVP, as I will do below, DePaul seems to accept VVP but with a caveat regarding our ability to recognize intrinsic value. While this point is important (especially in his discussion of Kvanvig), it does not get at the heart of the issue.

VVP is the first tenant of the orthodox position that this dissertation seeks to challenge. While this dissertation will eventually argue that VVP is false, it is worth exploring a bit. One interesting aspect of VVP is that it is logically independent from the kind of counterexample epistemology that has been so common since Gettier. This is a well-worn path, so I will only summarize the approach: a theorist introduces a proposed theory of knowledge intended to be (more or less) counterexample proof; a critic concocts a case where the theory is satisfied but knowledge fails to be had. The theory, then, is rejected as it failed to rule out certain kinds of confounding cases. The veto power of the value problems, in contrast, does not rely on concocting any such scenarios. Rather, those who assume VVP need no counterexample to reject a theory or condition on knowledge. In fact, it is no longer enough for a proposed theory of knowledge to merely be immune to a counterexample (Gettier or otherwise); it must also be able to explain the unique value of knowledge. For those epistemologists who had grown tired of the counterexample approach to theory assessment, this may have been a welcome change of focus.

While VVP establishes the importance of the value problems, a second assumption of the orthodox position must be noted as well. This assumption limits what aspects of knowledge can be appealed to when providing answers to the value problems. This I call “no contingent value”.

No Contingent Value (NCV): Whatever value knowledge has beyond mere true belief is explained by its necessary conditions alone.

NCV sets a fairly restrictive axiological standard with regard to answering the value problems. Often, demonstrating that a philosopher holds NCV is evidenced in their methodology. For example, in the next chapter I will show that Zagzebski must hold NCV given the way that she first rejects the reliability position and then offers her positive account. A similar diagnosis will occur with Kvanvig in chapter three.

Interestingly, I interpret Pritchard as accepting only NCV (Pritchard 2009, 15) This is a consequence of his more cautious approach to the value questions (which will be fully unpacked in chapters four and five). Despite this, NCV is more problematic than VVP. So, while Pritchard deviates from Zagzebski and Kvanvig here, his acceptance of NCV creates many of the same problems for him as it does for Zagzebski and Kvanvig. The remainder of this chapter will be the establishment of a view of value which challenges and undermines both VVP and NCV. The subsequent chapters focus on the implications of rejecting those assumptions for each of the three authors above while also providing answers to each of the value problems.

One final note about these two assumptions. Logically speaking, NCV and VVP are independent. VVP, for example, says nothing of whether or not the *contingent* conditions on knowledge can ever add value to knowledge. VVP merely requires that any theory of knowledge or proposed necessary conditions on knowledge must themselves contribute unique and positive value. VVP has no bearing on whether or not the contingent conditions of knowledge can be further bearers of value for knowledge. In contrast, NCV explicitly denies the possibility that the contingent conditions on knowledge can bear the kind of value required to address the value problems. NCV, however, does leave open the possibility that, for example, some of the necessary

conditions on knowledge may not, contrary to VVP, add to the value that knowledge has over that which falls short of knowledge.

§3 Ward Jones: Contingency, Value, and the Limitations of Analysis

In his 1997 paper “Why Do We Value Knowledge?”, Ward Jones argues for a triad of claims which, if true, provide an answer (or at least the skeleton of one) for the primary value problem.^{8,9} For Jones, there is an epistemic theory that is both promising and inherently limited. This theory is epistemic instrumentalism.

For Jones, an epistemic instrumentalist is someone who “accepts a means/ends approach to analysis.¹⁰ He groups processes or acts according to their goals, and then evaluates these processes or acts according to how well they achieve these goals.” (Jones 1997, 424) Jones goes on to describe Utilitarians as a kind of ethical instrumentalists whereby the goal of our actions is the creation of happiness. This allows us to evaluate actions based on how much, or how effectively, happiness is produced. Instrumentalism, then, can be understood as adhering to a two-step process. The first step requires the

⁸ The distinction between the three value problems was not established at the time of Jones's writing. His focus on ‘the value problem’ is actually a focus on the primary value problem given his focus on the value of knowledge over mere true belief. As he says on the first page of his paper: ‘we do and should value true believing. I want to know why we value knowledge over ‘mere true beliefs’, those true beliefs which are not knowledge’. (Jones 1997, 423)

⁹ This paper predates and anticipates many of the central arguments and claims made by Zagzebski and Kvanvig. Despite this, however, neither Zagzebski nor Kvanvig address or take into account the arguments that Jones offers. In fact, neither even cite him or his paper in their bibliographies. Such an oversight, the next two chapters will argue, greatly reduces the plausibility of their arguments.

¹⁰ To be clear, the discussion of ‘epistemic instrumentalism’ will be quite different from the contemporary literature’s use of the phrase. The contemporary use is primarily focused on what reasons an agent has to adopt, revise, or abandon certain doxastic attitudes. As Daniel Buckley has helpfully summarized, the contemporary epistemic instrumentalist claims ‘that we have reason to respond to truth-related considerations when forming and maintaining doxastic attitudes since regulating our doxastic attitudes in this way helps us satisfy our aims, interests, or goals.’ (Buckley 2021, 9294)

formation of a goal, and the second step requires a way(s) to achieve that goal. The epistemic instrumentalist, therefore, holds the following two similar theses:

1. The end of belief-formation is to gain true beliefs.
2. Justification is a means to attaining the end of true belief.

As an example of such a position, Jones focuses on reliabilism. For the kind of reliabilism that Jones is discussing, essentially knowledge is a *reliably formed true belief*.¹¹ (Jones 1997, 424-425) A belief that is justified is justified if that belief was brought about by a reliable belief forming process (and for which any input beliefs used in the inference were themselves justified). Plausible as this analysis might be, Jones points out that reliabilism cannot provide a satisfying answer to the primary value problem.

The reliabilist takes the goal of belief-formation to be true belief. The value of true belief is taken for granted. Justifying (that is, reliable) processes are valuable because they tend to end in true beliefs. So we could say that on a reliabilist account, we value truth intrinsically and reliable processes instrumentally. But where does this valuing of true belief and reliable processes leave knowledge? If we care about justifying processes merely because they lead to true beliefs, then why should we value the true beliefs gained from justifying processes over the ones that

¹¹ While Jones specifically had in mind a Goldman-styled reliabilism (see footnote 4), his account of epistemic instrumentalism ought to also apply to virtue reliabilist accounts.*

are not so gained? If truth is the goal of epistemic inquiry, then why do we care whether someone gets her beliefs via a reliable method or via an unreliable method? (Jones 1997, 425)¹²

The problem, according to Jones, is that the reliable process is valued only to the degree that we value true beliefs. The reliabilist is, therefore, unable to answer the primary problem.¹³ Despite the focus on reliabilism, Jones sees the problem as quite general. Whenever a justification condition describes a feature or process that is likewise instrumental to mere true belief, then that condition will play no role in explaining the superior value of true belief. Hence, all permutations of epistemic instrumentalism will be unable to answer the primary value problem. The conclusion that Jones draws from this is much more restricted than the one outlined above for orthodox position. Though the epistemic instrumentalists cannot *currently* answer the primary problem, "the possibility remains, at this point, that the explanation of the value of knowledge is compatible with instrumentalist approaches." (Jones 1997, 428) In other words, all that can be concluded from the above argument is that instrumental approaches are incomplete. Before offering his own supplement to such theories, he would make an important point.

¹² Jones, thus, anticipated Zagzebski's coffee argument by many years. As will be shown in chapter two, the lessons that Jones takes from this kind of argument are radically different from what Zagzebski took the lessons to be.

¹³ Jones does state that if given the choice between two processes, one which produces true beliefs 49% of the time versus a process that produces true beliefs 51% of the time, then we should use the 51% method. This preference, though, is based solely on our wanting true beliefs. (Jones 1997, 426)

§4 Rejecting NCV

For Jones, part of the legacy of Edmund Gettier's 1963 paper was that it transformed epistemological methodology in two ways:

In the past thirty years, many theories have been discarded in the face of counterexamples. This move was justified as long as we were only looking for necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge. But in doing so we have thrown away some important contingent characteristics of knowledge. The theories we threw out did not include necessary conditions for knowledge, but the possibility remains that they did include aspects which we value about knowledge. They included characteristics which, while not necessary to knowledge, were important to knowledge and important to us. (Jones 1997, 433; italics added)

In other words, the counterexample methodology employed between Gettier's paper and Jones's own is, while useful for determining the necessity of a condition, quite deficient for determining the value of such conditions. Some of these discarded conditions, while not necessary or sufficient for knowledge, may yet play an axiological role. Through this allowance, Jones is explicitly denying NCV.¹⁴

¹⁴ Moreover, many epistemologists have become somewhat skeptical that any philosophically interesting concepts can be understood in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. David Henderson, for example, has mused that "that many relevant concepts involve things like paradigms (associated with norms) and exemplars - to which we model our practice without hard analytic edges. We might value "things like that" where the likeness is somewhat multidimensional." (personal correspondence)

Jones offers two arguments in favor of expanding the possible sources of value to include the contingent conditions of knowledge. The first is an analogy intended to motivate the kind of contingently valuable view he seeks to develop. Jones states that he enjoys going to the fair, he states, because it is fun. This remains true even though there were a few times when he did not have fun and got sick on a ride. Hence, while it is not guaranteed that when he goes to the fair he will have fun, Jones does value the fair because he *usually* has fun. Knowledge, for Jones, is like the fair. Certain contingent aspects of knowledge are why I value it even if those aspects are not always present. (Jones 1997, 434) This analogy does require us to deny that all cases of knowledge are more valuable than the corresponding mere true belief. This is no bullet to bite for Jones as the next argument explains.

The second argument begins by noting that it is a matter of some controversy as to whether or not a full analysis of knowledge can ever be completed. It may just turn out that we can't determine the individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions on knowledge. If, however, the only elements of knowledge which can contribute to an answer to the primary value problem are the necessary elements of knowledge, then a failure to complete the project of analysis would also result in the primary value problem being impossible to answer. (Jones 1997, 434-435) Here, Jones appears to miss the following possibility. Suppose that a full accounting of the necessary conditions of knowledge is in principle impossible. This does not automatically prevent us from having a partial accounting. Suppose that in addition to mere true belief we arrive at just one more necessary condition of knowledge which helps to explain the unique value of knowledge. The primary value problem would be answered. This is no serious issue,

however, and one probably influenced by the fact that at the time of Jones's paper the tripartite way of viewing the value problems was unknown. A Jonesian styled response can be given that notes that while this possibility does answer the primary problem, it fails to answer the secondary problem. That this is so is straightforward: the secondary problem requires a full accounting of the proper subsets of knowledge (i.e. all of the necessary conditions). Hence, if a full analysis of knowledge never occurs / can never occur, then the secondary problem can never be answered. For Jones, there is no reason to impose such a restriction on explanations of the unique value of knowledge. In essence, Jones is seeking an explanation as to why we should, by default, expect that issues of value are informed by analysis.

To understand why let us suppose that *every* instance of knowledge is itself always more valuable than the corresponding true belief. Call this interpretation of the primary value problem the *all-cases interpretation*. NCV entails the all-cases interpretation since the necessary conditions of knowledge are always present when knowledge is had. Hence, the value captured by those necessary conditions will always be present, and all cases of knowledge will have superior value to mere true belief. If the all-cases interpretation is false, then something other than the necessary conditions of knowledge are axiologically relevant and NCV will be false. According to Jones, claiming that all cases of knowledge are more valuable than the corresponding true beliefs overlooks a category of knowledge which is clearly *not* more valuable than the corresponding true belief. Jones dubs this category *trivia knowledge*.

The same is true of a great deal of our knowledge of what we call ‘trivia’ ...These are the sort of beliefs, of which there are surely many, we are willing to call knowledge even though we do not see any importance in their being knowledge and not just mere true belief. If there are such beliefs, then whatever facts are responsible for the value of knowledge are contingent properties of knowledge, properties which are not present in every instance of knowledge. (Jones 1997, 435)

In other words, the value that a case of trivia knowledge has is not greater than the corresponding true belief. Jones's account of trivia knowledge, however, is a bit brief and abstract. In order to make the notion more concrete, I will rely on Jason Baehr who offers a few concrete examples of such knowledge.

Consider as well cases of so-called ‘trivial knowledge,’ for instance, knowledge about the number of blades of grass on one’s front lawn or the number of names listed under ‘C’ in the local phonebook. Here the subject matter is likely to be of no interest to me at all (it lacks even the practical payoff of the belief just considered). I am likely to regard knowledge of this subject matter as epistemically neutral, and perhaps even as a waste of cognitive resources. But if the subject matter in question is not an epistemically worthy one, why should knowledge of it be superior or preferable to mere true belief? (Baehr 2009, 50)

The value of such trivia / trivial knowledge is not clearly superior to the corresponding mere true belief. This allowance renders the all-cases interpretation false. The proper way to understand the primary value problem, therefore, is to view the problem as being focused only on the cases of knowledge which are more valuable than the corresponding true belief. Call this reframing of the primary value problem the *vast majority interpretation*.¹⁵ The vast majority interpretation claims that while not all cases of knowledge are more valuable than their corresponding true beliefs, the vast majority are. As a consequence of this interpretation of the primary problem, we can reject NCV. This, then, frees us to expand out axiological candidates to include the contingent conditions of knowledge. What now remains for Jones is to offer up some such contingent conditions which can play such an axiological role.

§5 The Jonesian Rejection of NCV and VVP

Expanding our domain of allowable value bearers is, by my lights, a welcome consequence of the previous section. The more places we have to find value, the greater our chances of solving the value problems. Not just any contingent condition on knowledge will do and Jones is well aware of this. For any bit of knowledge that I have, there are an unimaginable amount of axiologically irrelevant contingent conditions related to that knowledge (my height, hair color, location, etc.). To this end, Jones proposes two specific conditions. The first condition relies on what Jones calls the *internalist intuition*:

¹⁵ I take it that most epistemologists accept something like the vast majority interpretation. A natural question that follows from accepting that interpretation, however, revolves around explaining why knowledge is valuable when it is non-trivial. Answering this question will pose a significant challenge to those that I criticize, and will find a satisfying answer once the full Jonesian view is unpacked.

Internalist Intuition (I/I): Someone who knows that p understands why she has the belief that p.

Jones finds I/I compelling because, he claims, when we understand why we have a particular belief we are aware of the ‘sources, origins, grounding, or support that we have for that belief,’ and such understanding is valuable (Jones 1997, 431) Let us call these aspects of I/I the *basis for belief*. Jones claims that I/I is contingent because of cases of *forgotten knowledge*. In cases of forgotten knowledge, I have met all of the necessary conditions for knowledge and yet lack the ability to access the basis for the belief. One can know, for example, that Caesar crossed the Rubicon without thereby being able to recall if this was learned in a history class, from an ancient historian, or from a documentary. Despite having knowledge, however, such a case is not intuitively more valuable than the corresponding true belief. What is missing is my ability to access the basis for my belief. As Jones says, “I want to have knowledge [with I/I] and not just mere true beliefs, because I prefer having beliefs which I monitor, beliefs whose personal warrant is open to me.” (Jones 1997, 432) Hence, while I/I is contingent, it does elevate the value of knowledge (in many cases) over the value of the corresponding true belief.

The second contingent condition on knowledge that Jones discusses emphasizes the testimonial value of knowledge. The specific kind of testimonial account that Jones focuses on is the one offered by Edward Craig in his 1990 book *Knowledge and the State of Nature*. For Craig, knowledge has a function, and this function is to indicate which agents are good informants. (Craig 1990, 18) Knowers and knowledge are valuable

because a knower has true belief *and* a special property. This property is labeled by Craig as *property X*. Property X has two features: 1) X is (to a degree) detectable, and 2) X has been found to correlate in a lawlike way when one has a true belief. (Craig 1990, 25; 90-91) Hence, Craig finds it valuable that knowers ‘show’ others that they are approved sources of information. In short, knowledge is more valuable than true belief when others can tell that you are a good informant. Though Jones does offer some criticisms of Craig’s overall view, he does not deny that something like Craig’s account of testimony is right. Being a reliable informant is valuable because knowers ‘wear their true beliefs on their sleeve.’ (Jones 1997, 429)

Although Craig’s account requires that knowledge *always* has the detectable property X, Jones thinks this is too strong. For Jones, it takes no great imaginative leap to consider an agent who seeks to keep their knowledge a secret. Craig’s response to such a claim is that the concept of knowledge has, in his words, been *objectified*. Roughly speaking, a concept is created in response to the subjective needs / goals of the agent. When the agent is the member of a group, however, subjective concepts often need to be generalized if the group finds the concept useful. Once objectified, however, the concept changes from its original subjective meaning. This is what Craig claims has happened to the concept of knowledge. The original function of the concept was to highlight good informants. We now, however, have more uses for the concept beyond such highlighting, and so the objectified concept is not identical to the original. Moreover, whatever necessary and sufficient conditions hold for the objectified concept will not help explain the original value of knowledge. The original subjective concept would have had at least some difference in its necessary and sufficient conditions. Despite Jones being quite

sympathetic to Craig's theory, Jones maintains that it does not explain why we value knowledge in ourselves.

The spirit of Craig's theory is rooted in a testimonial understanding of the purpose of knowledge. Such a purpose for knowledge, however, leaves out whatever value I get from being able to monitor and assess my beliefs (i.e. Craig's theory doesn't fully capture the intuitive appeal of I/I). Craig could respond that these aspects of I/I are valuable only to the degree that they make us a good informant (an informant who monitors their beliefs prior to communicating is likely to be a better testifier), but for Jones this leaves out the personal side of knowledge. We, at some fundamental axiological level, usually prefer to know even if we can't share such knowledge.¹⁶ (Jones 1997, 430) I/I can explain this preference in a way that Craig cannot.

With these two contingent conditions now unpacked, Jones can now fully understand why epistemic instrumentalism cannot answer the primary value problem. The first pillar of instrumentalism was that the end of belief-formation is to gain true beliefs. As an analysis that may be true, but it does not help us answer the primary value problem. When we consider the value problem, we must acknowledge that knowledge is *another* goal of belief formation. (Jones 1997, 436) As regards the second pillar (that justification is a means to attaining the end of true belief), Jones again claims that this is similarly incomplete. The value of justification can in part be explained as the instrumentalists claim, but it can also be *indicative* to both ourselves and to others to

¹⁶ Given these two valuable contingent conditions, I take Jones's position to be a form of epistemic value pluralism. This feature of his view is not explicitly stated in Jones's paper, but it seems a natural fit. This will be addressed in much more detail in chapter five, and so I will shelve any further discussion until then.

whom I am testifying that the belief in question is likely to be true. These additional features of justification, while contingent, are quite valuable. Thus, Jones concludes:

Even if [epistemic instrumentalism] is right, [as an] analysis of knowledge [it] is at best incomplete. A full understanding of knowledge requires that we take more than an instrumental approach...As long as the goals of belief-formation do not include knowledge itself, and as long as the means to gaining these goals are merely means, then epistemic instrumentalism can give us no account of why we value knowledge. (Jones 1997, 436 - 437)

Despite this limitation for the instrumentalist, it is no reason to veto the theory. The instrumentalist, now supplemented by the Jonesian framework, can claim that knowledge is (in the vast majority of cases) more valuable than mere true belief because either the knower understands why they believe, or because they are a good informant. The failure of the reliability condition to play a role in this explanation is no longer a basis for rejecting the theory. Hence, VVP is now also rejected. While much more needs to be said with regard to NCV and VVP, this chapter is primarily focused on reconstructing the Jonesian arguments as he himself stated them. In the chapters that come I will offer many modifications and arguments which will more decisively show the falsity of VVP and NCV. Before moving onto that, however, a quick note about trivial knowledge must be made.

§6 A Note About Triviality

Something missing from the Jonesian account is a discussion of how trivial cases of knowledge affect the value contributions of both I/I and the Cragian account of testimony discussed above. A concern to address for the Jonesian is whether the contingent conditions associated with knowledge always generate added value. If they do, then it's hard to see why a case of trivial knowledge with either (or both) I/I and testimony present would not be more valuable than the corresponding mere true belief. Thankfully, I think this worry can be easily assuaged.

Starting with I/I, let us imagine an agent who has gained some trivial bit of knowledge: they know how many blades of grass there are in their backyard. Does the presence of I/I for this agent enhance or upgrade the value of the trivial case of knowledge? My answer is no. When the belief in question is trivial, then such monitoring is likewise valueless (or even *disvaluable*). I do not mean just that it lacks practical value (though it probably does), but such monitoring lacks epistemic value as well. It is a *waste* of my cognitive abilities to monitor trivial beliefs. Internally monitoring the basis for a trivial belief would be like hiring an accountant to keep track of the finances of a child's lemonade stand. It is a bad use of the accountant's time and skill. Likewise, being a good epistemic agent requires that I monitor truths worth monitoring.

As for a Craigian styled account of testimony, if I testify to you about the number of blades of grass in my backyard, this trivial knowledge is not made more valuable just because you can detect that I am testifying truthfully. It is a waste of my testimonial abilities to convey such worthless truths (and a waste of your epistemic abilities to learn it). It'd be like having the news break into regular scheduled broadcasting for a special

alert that a nickel has been found on the sidewalk. The news should not be focused on such things, and neither should good testifiers. Being a good testifier requires that I convey truths worth conveying.¹⁷

¹⁷ The role that intuitive appeal and judgment are playing here cannot be understated. This is, for better or worse, the primary tool that we have in matters of value. I unpack this more in chapter five where I offer two criteria for final value. The short version is that we can only establish the value of something by intuitive appeal and indirect argument (usually in the form of cases). Trivial beliefs are, to me, clearly worthless. Secondly, value can be enhanced or diminished for something given certain relational properties it has or loses. In the case of a trivial belief, the kind of pointlessness of the belief paired with its use of limited cognitive resources stand out to me as the key relational properties which establish such a belief as valueless. Trivial beliefs, however, can be made non-trivial if those features of the case are changed. My knowledge about the number of blades of grass in my yard can be non-trivial if, say, gaining such knowledge somehow benefited my cognitive life in important ways.

§7 Conclusion

Regardless of how one feels about Jones's view, it cannot be understated how regrettable it is that his perspective has been sidelined for so long. To summarize, his perspective is the conjunction of the following three claims:

1. Epistemic Instrumentalism cannot, on its own, answer the primary value problem.
2. The contingent properties of knowledge can supplement epistemic instrumentalism and can, when so combined, explain the value of knowledge over mere true belief.
3. The project of knowledge-analysis and the goal of answering the primary value problem are distinct from one another.

The goal of dedicating a chapter to Jones's theory was to make these three points touchstones for the remainder of the dissertation. The most direct application of the Jonesian approach will be evidenced in the next chapter where I offer a rival to Zagzebski's answer to the primary value problem. Applying the Jonesian framework to the secondary and tertiary problems will require my own amendment to the above three claims. For example, the three claims on their own do not explain how contingent properties of knowledge are relevant to the value knowledge has over all of its proper subsets. Additionally, the kind of value that Jones appears to focus on in his paper is epistemic value alone. The tertiary problem requires that knowledge not just be more valuable than that which falls short, but also be of a better kind of value. Despite this and many more challenges to be faced in each subsequent chapter, the Jonesian view will bear much fruit.

Chapter 2

Instrumentalism: Rejected or Ristretto?

“If a man knew the way to Larisa, or any other place you please, and walked there and led others, would he not give right and good guidance?”

Meno 97a
Plato

§1 Chapter Goal

The purpose of this chapter is to address Linda Zagzebski’s influential 2003 paper “The Search and Source of Epistemic Good”. In this paper Zagzebski forcefully argues that there is a new kind of litmus test for all theories of knowledge: the primary value problem. After making many of the same points and distinctions that Jones made in the previous chapter, Zagzebski arrives at a very different conclusion than Jones. If the Jonesian position is to survive, it must face her arguments head on. Her view is that all “machine product” models of belief fail to answer the primary value problem, and are therefore faulty. This chapter will demonstrate that Zagzebski’s arguments are both too quick and reliant on the two problematic assumptions VVP and NCV. Once those assumptions are discarded, then the arguments that she marshals against the machine product models fail.

§2 Value's Veto Power

Linda Zagzebski's influential paper "The Search and Source of Epistemic Good" sought to undermine various proposed conditions on knowledge by demonstrating that they fail to answer the primary value problem.^{18,19} The first two sections of her paper are primarily negative. She criticizes what she calls the "machine-product model of knowledge" which is the view that knowledge can be identified with the state of a true belief that is the output of a valuable cause. (Zagzebski 2003, 14) As an example of this model she, like Jones before her, highlights reliabilism. Her main argument against the reliabilist is her now famous thought experiment involving two different espresso machines. Suppose that we have before us two equally good cups of coffee. The first cup was produced by a machine that regularly produces good cups of espresso. The second cup, in contrast, was produced by a machine that rarely produces good cups of espresso. Zagzebski's claim is that the reliability of the machine neither confers (in the first case) nor diminishes (in the second case) the value of both cups of espresso. The cups of coffee are, of course, supposed to be stand-ins for true beliefs where we contrast one true belief (formed in a reliable manner) and a second true belief (which was formed in an unreliable manner). Her argument is meant to show that as long as the belief comes out true, then any supposed value in the reliability of the belief forming process is as irrelevant as the reliability of the coffee machines. What we value are true beliefs, and once we have

¹⁸ Though, in 2003 it was not widely appreciated that there were distinct value problems. Zagzebski simply refers to the primary value problem as 'the value problem'. (Zagzebski 2003, 13)

¹⁹ It is important to note that while many of the following arguments and terms will sound nearly identical to the way that I described Jones's position, Zagzebski does not cite nor discuss Jones's paper.

them, then we have all that is valuable. (Zagzebski 2003, 13-15) The argument, Zagzebski claims, generalizes.

“What the espresso analogy shows is not only that a reliable cause does not confer value on its effect but also that there is a general problem in attributing value to an effect because of its causes, even if the value of the cause is independent of the value of the effect.” (Zagzebski 2003, 14)

In other words, all machine-product models fail to answer the primary value problem. While she is not explicit about this in the paper, she does regard this failing as fatal to any theory. The reason is because Zagzebski implicitly accepts VVP. That VVP is assumed can be seen when analyzing the following passage:

“We cannot explain what makes knowledge more valuable than true belief if we persist in using the machine-product model ... Knowledge cannot be identified with the state of true belief that is the output of a valuable cause, whether or not the cause has a value independent of the value of true belief.” (Zagzebski 2003, 14)

Because the reliability view in particular, and the machine-product model more generally, fail to explain what value knowledge has beyond what is already present in true belief, they are to be abandoned. Such a claim is simply an application of VVP.

Zagzebski calls this the “first moral of the [primary] value problem.” (Zagzebski 2003, 14)

This “first moral” has fundamentally shaped the literature. Erik Olsson, for example, has placed Zagzebski in his list of epistemologists who are credited with starting a new movement in epistemology founded on a “discovery”. (Olsson 2011, 877)

The starting point for much deliberation in this new movement was the discovery that reliabilism seems particularly ill-equipped to deal with the [primary value problem]. Indeed [the espresso machine argument] was taken to be something of a knockdown argument against reliabilism. (One rarely finds knockdown arguments against anything in philosophy, whence the excitement.) (Olsson 2011, 877)

In his review of Zagzebski's collected papers, *Epistemic Values* (2020), Adam Carter states that:

“It would probably be rare nowadays for the value of knowledge problem to be explained in an epistemology classroom without some reference to Zagzebski’s espresso-machine example...” (Carter 2022, 238)

And finally, in his *Epistemic Explanations: A Theory of Telic Normativity, and What it Explains* (2020) Ernest Sosa contrasts his telic virtue approach with that of process reliabilism. Sosa focuses on Zagzebski’s argument to assess whether or not it fails. After

unpacking his preferred analogy (involving maps and cartographic methods), Sosa concludes that “Zagzebski’s objection is sustained”. (Sosa 2021, 30) I offer these three quotes simply to demonstrate the dominance and influence that the “first moral” continues to exert on the epistemic value literature. Given that this first moral is essentially an application of VVP, the Jonesian is well positioned to challenge it.²⁰ Before getting to that, however, it is important to note that Zagzebski does not think that the primary problem is unsolvable. Her answer is as follows.

“...knowledge is better than true belief because it is a case in which the truth is reached by intellectually virtuous motives and acts, the value of which can be traced back to the value of the motive of valuing truth.”

(Zagzebski 2003, 23)

What makes this traceability important is that it allows the agent to get *credit*. (Zagzebski 2003, 24) The agent gets credit precisely because their being in the state of knowledge is due to their agency. The credit that the agent receives for such a belief is part of why being in the state of knowledge is more valuable than merely having the corresponding true belief. In short, Zagzebski’s virtue condition confers non-instrumental value.²¹ The non-instrumental value provided by the virtue condition results in, according

²⁰ Some, like Georgi Gardiner, have become much more explicit about their commitment to such a principle. Gardiner claims that, ‘The [value problems] can be seen as constraints on a theory of knowledge: To the extent that the claims are plausible, any proposed theory must either explain, or explain away, these value claims.’ (Gardiner 2017, 121) See chapter six of this dissertation for a detailed discussion and criticism of her view.

²¹ The second moral of the value problem is simply that even if the process that brings about a true belief has independent value, that value does not necessarily matter with regard to the value of knowledge. “The problem is not that proper function is not a good thing but that it is not a

to Zagzebski, knowledge being more valuable than mere true belief. The remainder of the paper goes on to address why knowledge is, in her words, "good enough" to warrant the amount of attention that it has. (Zagzebski 2003, 12)

Rather than attacking her answer the primary problem head on, I intend to focus on its stated motivations. Zagzebski's invocation of *credit* was motivated entirely by the perceived failings of the machine-product model. Should the Jonesian be able to push back on these perceived failings, then the stated basis for proposing a virtue condition on knowledge will have been made too hastily. This is not to further claim that a virtue theoretic approach to epistemic value is without merit. This is just to say that such merit is not due to an axiological difference between it and machine-product models.

§3 Abandon or Supplement?

I take it that Zagzebski's "machine-product model" is nearly identical to Jones's "epistemic instrumentalism". The machine-product model just was the framework that she took the reliabilist to adopt. This framework characterizes knowledge as being constituted by a belief state produced by a belief-forming process. The problem for that framework is that once we have the belief so formed, we cease to care about the process. Knowledge, then, is not more valuable than mere true belief. For Jones, epistemic instrumentalism is the view that the belief forming process plays a justifying role where that justification is dependent on some feature of the process (e.g. reliability). The limitation of that view, though, is that this justification is valued only to the degree that we gain true beliefs. Once so gained, the justification ceases to be valuable. The

value in the knowing state itself." (Zagzebski 2003, 14) The only way out of this problem is to dump the machine-product model and to opt for some value retaining condition on knowledge.

instrumentalist account of knowledge can, therefore, not establish the superior value of knowledge over mere true belief. What are we to do in the face of such axiological failings? Zagzebski would have us discard the machine model, while Jones would have us supplement it. Zagzebski's conclusion, I will now argue, is too strong. In order to see why, it will be helpful to see the structure of her argument in comparison to Jones's.

	Zagzebski - Espresso	Jones - River Crossing
Have a goal	Goal: a good cup of coffee	Goal: getting to the other side of the river safely
Have two (or more) means of achieving that goal	Means: two coffee makers; one is very reliable, and the other is not	Means: ferry, swim, use a cannon
Suppose that the least reliable means achieves the goal	Unreliable coffee maker produces a good cup of coffee	Land safely across the river despite being shot from a cannon
Reflect on whether or not the unreliable means adds or subtracts from the value of the achievement	Intuition: Once I have the good cup of espresso, the reliability of the machine fails to offer any further value.	Intuition: Once I am safely across the river, the means of travel fail to produce any further value.

The conclusions they draw, however, are quite different.

	Zagzebski - Espresso	Jones - River Crossing
Conclusion	Reliabilism in particular, and instrumentalism more generally, are <i>faulty</i> theories of knowledge which need to be <i>abandoned</i> (i.e. apply VVP).	Reliabilism in particular, and instrumentalism more generally, are <i>incomplete</i> theories of knowledge which need to be <i>supplemented</i> (i.e. deny VVP).

Without the implicit endorsement and use of VVP, Zagzebski's conclusion does not follow. After all, the axiological limitations of the machine-model only render it faulty if we accept something like VVP. If we do not, then there is no reason to jump to such a conclusion. Why, then, does Zagzebski accept it? I think the answer to this is to note that VVP is a very natural assumption if one already assumes NCV. While logically independent from VVP, NCV restricts the possible explainers of value to the necessary conditions of knowledge alone. It is because the machine-product model cannot explain the value that knowledge has (beyond mere true belief) that Zagzebski rejects it. This is clear evidence that she accepts (or at least utilizes) NCV too. Additionally, there is no hint in her paper of even considering contingent conditions as possible value bearers. In fact, once she discards the machine-product model, she just moves on to her own preferred analysis. The possibility that some contingent conditions could also serve as important explainers of value is not one that she considers. Zagzebski's conclusion thus utilizes both VVP and NCV. My argumentative strategy, then, is to target NCV first. Once it is dispatched, the primary motivations of VVP will likewise fall.

§4 Triviality and Belief

To begin, it is worth highlighting that NCV is at odds with other epistemic commitments that Zagzebski herself endorses. She, for example, does *not* endorse the all-cases interpretation of the primary value problem as outlined in the previous chapter. Her reason for rejecting it is nearly identical to the reasons offered by Jones and Baher. In her own words:

There is only so much good that knowing a trivial truth can have. If it is fundamentally valueless to have a true belief about the number of times the word 'the' is used in a McDonald's commercial, it is also valueless to know it. So even if trivial truths are believed in the most highly virtuous, skilful, rational, or justified way, the triviality of the truth makes the knowing of such truths trivial as well. The unavoidable conclusion is that some knowledge is not good for us. Some might even be bad for us.

(Zagzebski 2003, 21)

Zagzebski, then, accepts something like the vast majority interpretation.

Accepting the vast majority interpretation, however, makes NCV difficult (if not impossible) to motivate. To see this, assume that NCV is true and that the vast majority interpretation of the primary problem is correct. We then have two piles into which we put cases of knowledge: those with value exceeding mere true belief and those with value that does not exceed mere true belief. The exceeding pile will have all of the necessary conditions of knowledge satisfied with the right kind of value present. The not-exceeding pile, however, will have all of the necessary conditions of knowledge satisfied (these are still cases of knowledge) but will lack additional value beyond mere true belief. The challenge is in explaining how only the necessary conditions can provide the right kind of value while also claiming that, in the case of trivial knowledge, the value is lacking despite the very same conditions being satisfied. As our focus is on trivial knowledge, it is useful to recall what was said in the previous chapter regarding trivial beliefs. My view is that it is the content of the various beliefs in question that renders those beliefs trivial

or non-trivial. NCV, however, does not regard the content of a belief (or any other condition of knowledge) as being relevant to the value contribution of the satisfied condition.²² NCV claims that the value of knowledge is explained by its necessary conditions. A proponent of NCV would be unable to explain the lack of value for a case of trivial knowledge because it is not the conditions of knowledge that determine its triviality. The conditions of knowledge determine when knowledge is present. Some *other* standard determines when value is present.

Additionally, the distinction between trivial and non-trivial truths renders VVP false for similar reasons. For if not all truths are created equal, then there must be some standard for value which is not fully captured by mere analysis. The McDonald's case is, by Zagzebski's own admittance, a case of knowledge. All the components of knowledge are present *and yet* the knowledge gained is not valuable. This can only be possible if the standards for being valuable are distinct from the analysis of knowledge that she provides. Accepting that requires divorcing the kind of union at play in the VVP. This is just to reject VVP (and to do so for identical reasons that Jones offered).²³ Hence, Zagzebski should abandon VVP and NCV. They both lack argument for their acceptance and are in conflict with a kind of knowledge that she herself accepts. So long as the

²² In other words, the necessary conditions of knowledge can be of contingent value, but why they are of contingent value is a matter independent from whether or not the condition is satisfied. The standards of value are, as I will fully argue in chapter five, a matter of intuitive appeal, indirect argument, and relational features of the case in question.

²³ To push the issue to the fullest, if Zagzebski were to still maintain VVP while also maintaining that some truths and knowledge are trivial, then a kind of skepticism follows. For if any theory of knowledge must allow for the existence of trivial cases, then there will always be cases of knowledge which are not valuable. VVP requires that this discontinuity between knowledge and value result in a rejection of the theory that produced the discontinuity. Hence, since trivial knowledge will exist regardless of which theory of theory is being considered, all theories of knowledge will be vetoed.

project of analysis is recognized as different from that of axiology, then VVP and NCV should be rejected.

§5 Conclusion and Vindication

The focus of this chapter was on undermining the influence that Zagzebski's arguments and methods have had with regard to the value problems. I did not, for example, argue that the specific contingent conditions on knowledge that Jones isolated were more valuable than, say, a virtue condition. Zagzebski's influence in this area is, largely, due to her argument against reliabilism and the machine-product model. The structural similarities between her and Jones's arguments were, to me, striking since they reached such radically different conclusions. My focus was on prying apart the premises of their arguments from the conclusions in order to assess which conclusion was truly warranted. A full-scale rejection of the machine-product (i.e. instrumentalism) was found to be not required *unless* NCV and VVP were assumed. Neither assumption was well motivated, however, and both are inconsistent with Zagzebski's claims about trivial truths. For those of us who find Jones's paper persuasive, this comes as no great surprise.

What these first two chapters have shown is that an epistemic instrumentalist approach, supplemented with some valuable contingent conditions, has the ability to answer the primary value problem. This chapter was tasked with undermining the most popular argument against instrumentalism by exposing its problematic assumptions. Having uprooted those weeds, the task now is to show that the Jonesian approach can bear fruit for the second value problem.

Chapter 3

On Subsets and Swamps

"Swamp, yes. Yes. Come master, we will take you on safe path through the mist. I found it, I did. A way through the marshes. Orcs don't use it. Orcs don't know it".

Gollum
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

§1 Chapter Goal

The goal of this chapter is to assess the arguments put forward in chapters three, four and five of Jonathan Kvanvig's influential 2003 book *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*. Kvanvig argues that while knowledge can be shown to be more valuable than mere true belief, it cannot be more powerful than any of the proper subsets of knowledge. Such a failure to answer this more expansive value problem results in Kvanvig's famous move to establish *understanding*, rather than knowledge, as the proper focus for epistemology. I will argue, however, that Kvanvig's conclusion is too quick. The Jonesian answer to the primary value problem can be adapted to serve as a satisfying answer to Kvanvig's more expansive value problem.

§2 Solving the Primary Problem

In chapter three of his book, Kvanvig argues, much like Jones and Zagzebski, that *being reliably formed* provides no additional value beyond what is already provided for by true belief. Kvanvig urges, however, that such a failure generalizes.²⁴ He dubs this generalized problem the “swamping problem”. (Kvanvig 2003, 45) Swamping occurs when some supposed property of knowledge, like *being reliably formed*, provides no additional value beyond what is already offered by true belief.²⁵ The supposed value from *being reliably formed* is swamped by the value already on hand. In short, swamping and the primary problem have largely been taken to be the same problem (though not all share this assessment)²⁶. In Kvanvig’s own words:

The central feature of this argument against a reliabilist account of the value of knowledge is, to repeat, the swamping effect that the value of truth has over the value of reliable belief. Once truth is in place, it has a kind of value that makes the value of reliability otiose. (Kvanvig 2003, 48)

²⁴ Though Kvanvig is quick to point out that such a view is a minority among externalist views. (Kvanvig 2003, 45)

²⁵ In chapter two, Kvanvig argues that belief, truth, and true belief are all valuable in different ways. He concludes the chapter by stating that, “.belief is valuable because it is action-guiding, and no substitute for belief, such as acceptance or acting as if one believes, gives an adequate basis for action. In this sense, belief itself is of practical utility. Truth, however, is not; put more carefully, we cannot account for the value of truth in terms of its practical utility. For empirical adequacy is just as successful as is truth, and hence empirically adequate belief is as useful for practical purposes as is true belief. Truth is important intrinsically, for even if our beliefs are empirically adequate, we desire, and legitimately so, to find the truth.” (Kvanvig 2003, 42)

²⁶ Viewing the primary problem and the swamping problem as more or less the same problem is very common. The SEP, for example, runs the two together when it states that ‘elsewhere in the literature (e.g., Kvanvig 2003), this problem [the primary problem] has been called the “swamping problem”, on account of how the value of true belief ‘swamps’ the value of the true belief being produced in a reliable (i.e., truth-conducive) way.’ (Pritchard, Turri, Carter 2022) As we will see in the next chapter, this is not the only way to understand the swamping problem. Duncan Pritchard has argued that the two problems are importantly different problems and that a solution to one problem does not thereby guarantee a solution to the other. (Pritchard 2010, 8-11)

For Kvanvig, avoiding the swamping problem is essential for theories of knowledge. Though Kvanvig does not discuss Zagzebski's coffee argument, he almost certainly would have endorsed it. That this is so can be seen by Kvanvig's initial presentation of the swamping problem. As an analogy, Kvanvig asks the reader to consider two properties: *being beautiful* and *being likely to be beautiful*. Once a thing has the property of *being beautiful*, "the property of being likely to be beautiful ceases to contribute any more value to the item in question." (Kvanvig 2003, 45) Thus, the value of *being likely to be beautiful* and the value of *being likely to make a good cup of coffee* cannot escape the swamp. This problem, as it was with Zagzebski and Jones, is generalizable: for any proposed property of knowledge, that property must provide value not swampable by the value already afforded by true belief.

Despite the generality of the problem, Kvanvig does not think that the primary value problem / swamping problem is unanswerable. Kvanvig goes on to discuss various proponents of epistemic virtue theory. It is the notion of *credit*, Kvanvig claims, that allows a basic kind of virtue theory to avoid the swamping problem.²⁷ In order to better

²⁷ To be clear, Kvanvig claims that both *being virtuously formed* and having *subjective justification* are not subject to swamping concerns. (Kvanvig 2003, 99) It should be noted that Kvanvig's use of a *subjective justification* is quite similar to Jones's I/I. The characterization that Kvanvig offers is at first a bit abstract by claiming that he sees "no path toward an account of the value of knowledge that is not strongly subjective and internalist in character." (Kvanvig 2003, 75). Later he clarifies a bit when he states that "...both truth and subjective justification are valuable independently of each other... To this basis, we add the value created by additional justified true beliefs regarding the general explanatory relationships (including logical and probabilistic relationships) that coherentists proclaim to be the defining features of justification. To have mastered such explanatory relationships is valuable because it gets us to the truth, but also because finding such relationships organises our thinking on a subject matter in a way beyond the mere addition of more true beliefs or even justified true beliefs. (Kvanvig 2003, 205) This kind of picture, while certainly not identical to Jones's I/I, does capture some of the spirit of the Jonesian view. According to Jones, I/I is a kind of belief monitoring. When a belief fulfills I/I, then the believer knows why they believe. (Jones 1997, 432) The primary difference between the two conditions is, of course, that Jones views I/I as a contingent condition of knowledge

unpack the notion of credit, Kvanvig discusses an earlier work by Zagzebski. There, she offers a thought experiment:

The guess that by luck is true is comparable in value to the act of recklessly shooting a gun in the air, accidentally hitting and maiming a tyrant, and thereby preventing him from signing an unjust proclamation. I have brought about a good, but I hardly get any credit for it. (Zagzebski 1996, 204)

The notion of credit is core to all virtue theoretic accounts of knowledge, and it is this notion of credit that Kvanvig sees as not being swampable. In Kvanvig's words:

“The basic idea of a virtue approach to the question of the value of knowledge over that of its subparts is that there is a special value for beliefs that arise out of intellectual virtue. When true belief is a product of the virtues the claim is that there is epistemic credit due to the agent in question and hence that virtuous true belief is more valuable than true belief.” (Kvanvig 2003, 106)

whereas Kvanvig's discussion treats subjective justification as a necessary condition. Jones's main reason for this was that he invoked cases of forgotten knowledge (i.e. cases of knowledge where one no longer has access to the grounds for the belief). (Jones 1997, 432) Ultimately, Kvanvig's conclusion regarding the impossibility of answering the secondary problem is due to his views on the value (or lack thereof) of a satisfied Gettier condition, and not due to anything that hinges on subjective justification. As such, I focus solely on the virtue condition both because nothing important is lost by doing this, and because Zagzebski (last chapter) and Pritchard (the following two chapters) do so as well.

Despite this allowance, it may seem like a virtue condition is just as subject to the swamping objection as was a reliability condition. After all, if virtue a theorist was merely claiming that the reason that we value a virtuously formed belief is because a virtuously formed belief is likely to be true, then the belief being virtuously formed would be swampable. That, however, is not the virtue theoretic claim. The virtue condition is not there to make a true belief more likely, but to account for the agency of the believer in the belief formation process. A true belief is, in an important sense, *mine*. I made it and I deserve credit for it. The value of this credit is independent of the value afforded by true belief, and so such a virtue condition is not swampable. On the assumption that knowledge is at least *virtuously formed true belief*, Kvanvig concludes that a virtue theoretic account of knowledge can provide an answer to the primary value problem: knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief because knowledge involves credit. (Kvanvig 2003, 106)

§3 Virtue and Gettier

Despite this initial success for the virtue theorists, Kvanvig denies that the virtue theoretic position can handle the secondary value problem. To understand why he claims this we first need to understand that Kvanvig is not stipulating that knowledge just is virtuously formed true belief. At least one more condition, he states, needs to be added: an anti-Gettier condition. This is because only minor adaptations are needed to generate Gettier cases capable of undermining the virtue theoretic position as an account of knowledge. He states that such “adaptations are not difficult, however; we need only include the relevant properties in each of the cases.” (Kvanvig 2003, 112) The idea behind this claim is that our intellectual powers do not operate in a vacuum. The

intellectual virtues must operate within an epistemic environment. In order to produce a Gettier case capable of undermining the virtue condition, we need only tweak factors in the epistemic environment enough such that despite the agent exercising their intellectual virtues and forming of a true belief, the truth of the belief is due to factors independent of the agent's intellectual abilities. Hence, we will need an anti-Gettier condition to make sure credit is genuinely due.²⁸ (Kvanvig 2003, 114)

Kvanvig then turns to the project determining which formulation of an anti-Gettier condition will cover all cases. He ultimately concludes, however, that the only way to create an anti-Gettier condition which will not be subject to a counterexample is to introduce a number of *ad hoc* addendums capable of avoiding this-or-that counterexample.²⁹ Such addendums, Kvanvig claims, follow a pattern. First, someone proposes an anti-Gettier condition. This is followed by some creative philosopher(s) publishing a counterexample(s). Such creativity forces further modifications to be made to the condition in order to prevent such a case(s) from arising. While these modifications may help prevent future Gettier cases, Kvanvig concludes that, from a value perspective, they are *ad hoc*. (Kvanvig 2003, 138-139) While Kvanvig does not say this explicitly, the idea seems to be that as more and more kevlar is added to the

²⁸ While I am going to grant Kvanvig this criticism, it is not uncontroversial. There is substantive debate about Kvanvig's characterization of the virtue theoretic position. Greco, for example, points out that Kvanvig fails to distinguish between a virtue theory which requires that 1) a belief be true and virtuously formed versus 2) a belief that is true because virtuously formed. (Greco 2009, 320) If Greco is correct, it does also seem to undermine Kvanvig's claims that an explicit anti-Gettier condition is needed but not valuable since he views the virtue condition as valuable. The issue hinges on 2 and how one unpacks the *because of* clause. See also: Piller (2012), Kelp (2011), Pritchard (2007), (2010), and Sosa (2011). For criticisms of virtue theory more broadly, see: Lackey (2007) and (2009); Melanson (2012). With regard to virtue theory and cases of lucky belief, see: Pritchard (2010). With regard to the stability of our cognitive functions across contexts, see: Olin and Doris (2013).

²⁹ The conditions which Kvanvig spends the most time on are Ernest Sosa's *safety* and *sensitivities* conditions (Sosa 1996), and Robert Nozick's *sensitivity* condition (Nozick 1981).

anti-Gettier condition, the less obvious its value becomes. In fact, Kvanvig states that the only value he can see for such a condition is its assumed connection to knowledge.

(Kvanvig 2003, 138) Hence, an anti-Gettier condition offers no independent value even when satisfied. Kvanvig's point can be made by using a bit of formalism. Let $V(x)$ stand for *the value of x*, Vf stand for *virtuously formed*, TB stand for *true belief*, G stand for a *satisfied anti-Gettier condition*, and \underline{G} stand for an *unsatisfied anti-Gettier condition*.

Kvanvig, by claiming that the value of $V(VfTBG)$ (i.e. knowledge) is equal to $V(VfTB\underline{G})$, is merely noting that G and \underline{G} do not change the "calculation". On the assumption that knowledge is just $V(VfTBG)$, knowledge can never be more valuable than $V(VfTB\underline{G})$.

This failing is not unique to the virtue theoretic approach so far discussed. *Any* theory of knowledge will, according to Kvanvig, require an anti-Gettier condition which is of no independent value. This has devastating consequences for any proposed theory of knowledge. The kind of virtue theoretic answer that proved fruitful for the primary problem falters with the secondary. Knowledge will not be more valuable than *all* of its proper subsets, specifically the subset containing only *virtuously formed true belief*. That the anti-Gettier condition is missing does not result in diminution of value for that subset, and that proper subset will be equal in value to knowledge. The special value that knowledge seems to have cannot be explained.

As the prospects rise for providing a counterexample-free account of the nature of knowledge, the prospects sink for providing an account of knowledge in terms of the value of its constituents... When we look carefully at the variety of failed attempts to satisfy the twin desiderata

concerning the nature and value of knowledge, we do not find signs of progress. We find, instead, a repeated pattern in which progress with respect to one desideratum is balanced by greater weakness with respect to the other...Extant approaches to the Gettier problem offer no basis for explaining the value of knowledge...The failure of these approaches gives a strong inductive argument for thinking that success is unlikely.

(Kvanvig 2003, 139)

This pattern, though disheartening, is not without a silver lining. According to Kvanvig, the failure is instructive as it indicates that a change of focus is needed. Rather than continuing to focus on knowledge, Kvanvig claims that *understanding* is what epistemologists ought to be focused on. (Kvanvig 2003, 202-203) Understanding is different from knowledge in a variety of ways. While knowledge is binary (you either know or you don't), understanding admits of degrees (we may both understand something, but you can understand it better than I). Additionally, luck and knowledge are incompatible whereas, according to Kvanvig, luck and understanding are compatible. (Kvanvig 2003, 199) The various other ways in which Kvanvig distinguishes understanding from knowledge, though interesting, are not relevant to our purposes here. Much of the criticism that Kvanvig has been met with in the literature focus not on the above arguments, but rather on his claims about understanding.³⁰ My purpose is to establish that, contrary to Kvanvig's supposition, a Jonesian answer to the secondary problem is, with some addendums, readily available. While such a claim does not render Kvanvig's focus on understanding mistaken, it does undercut Kvanvig's stated

³⁰ See, for example, Riggs (2009), Janvid (2014), Elgin (2009).

motivations for his claimed epistemological refocusing. Understanding is surely a worthwhile epistemic state to focus on, but not because knowledge cannot be shown to be more valuable than any of its subsets. Kvanvig, like Zagzebski in the last chapter, relies on our two problematic assumptions in order to get much of his argument off the ground. Additionally, however, Kvanvig also failed to recognize something important about the anti-Gettier condition and the kind of value that it has. Once those issues are corrected for, it can quite straightforwardly be shown that knowledge is more valuable than any of its proper subsets.

§4 Super -NCV and -VVP

Despite the novelty and rigor with which Kvanvig approaches the secondary problem, his survey of possible answers overlooks the Jonesian position.³¹ Jones himself, for example, anticipates Kvanvig's assertion that an anti-Gettier condition on knowledge cannot help to explain the value of knowledge.³² Though Jones does not say, with Kvanvig, that the only value that the anti-Gettier condition has is a derived value, such a claim is consistent with what Jones does say. In his effort to establish that the project of analysis cannot shed much light on why we value knowledge, Jones briefly considered Nozick's *sensitivity condition*.³³ According to this condition,

³¹ Though Kvanvig thanks Jones for his comments on the book, Jones's paper was not undiscussed or cited.

³² As was noted in chapter one, Jones took the counterexample method to be worthwhile so long as the purpose of introducing counterexamples was to isolate the necessary conditions on knowledge. The counterexample method is entirely unsuited, however, for isolating bearers of value. (Jones 1997, 433)

³³ As well as Goldman's *causal reliabilist theory*. Again, for brevity's sake I will look at just Nozick's condition though what will be said applies equally to Goldman.

Sensitivity: If p weren't true, S wouldn't believe that p . (Nozick 1981, 172)

Rather than offering a counterexample to the condition, Jones instead endorses Michael Ayers's criticism of sensitivity. Ayers claim is that the sensitivity condition has an 'almost superhuman aridity'. (Jones 1997, 433 / Ayers 1993, 118). This arid quality is a consequence of the anti-Gettier role that Nozick claimed sensitivity could play. If we adopt a Lewisian semantics for counterfactuals, this can be seen. If $\sim p$ is true in worlds near ours, then, when an agent is sensitive to p , they do not believe p . In Gettier cases, Nozick claimed, sensitivity is violated (i.e. in worlds near where $\sim p$ was true, the subject *would* believe p even though it is false). (Nozick 1981, 173) Despite some initial plausibility, the sensitivity condition has faced a variety of challenging counterexamples.³⁴ Ayers, however, does not reject the sensitivity condition primarily because of counterexamples (though he does offer some interesting ones of his own). He does so because such a condition does not help us in our understanding of knowledge. Ayers claims that Nozick, in his zeal to produce an anti-Gettier condition, has failed to tell us anything significant about knowledge. In fact, Ayers states that trying to bundle the various features of knowledge into a single set of conditions creates a kind of distortion about the value of knowledge.

As the consequences of such distortion become apparent (and one thing to be said for the present philosophical atmosphere is that the paradoxical consequences of all but our deeper errors are soon revealed—we live in

³⁴ See, for example, DeRose (1995), Kripke (2011) ch. 7, and Williamson (2000), ch. 7.

the age of the counterexample) the single criterion [on knowledge] becomes perforce less rich, and its application to the cases so ingeniously complex, *that the significant features of knowledge become obscured rather than revealed*. Nozick's achievement is to have produced a general criterion of almost superhuman aridity, but its application and justification, in so far as it is plausibly done, calls back the excluded rivals in disguise. Unless as an object-lesson, *it tells us rather little about knowledge*. (Ayers 1993, 118-119; italics added)

Jones, by endorsing this criticism, is anticipating Kvanvig's claim that anti-Gettier conditions do not shed light on the value of knowledge. Hence, even if the sensitivity condition were *the* correct way to formulate the anti-Gettier condition, it would not - cannot - broaden our understanding of the value of knowledge. Kvanvig's reaction to this conclusion was to thereby judge that the secondary value problem was unanswerable. That conclusion, however, follows only if one is also endorsing NCV. To see this, let me state Kvanvig's inductive argument formally.

P1: If the secondary value problem is likely to be explained, then the value of knowledge should be explained solely by each of its proper subsets.

P2: The proper subsets of knowledge include an anti-Gettier condition as a member.

P3: The anti-Gettier condition does not contribute independent positive epistemic value.

C1: Therefore, the value of knowledge cannot be explained by each of its proper subsets.

C2: Therefore, the secondary value problem is unlikely to be explained.

P1 is not due to an explicit claim made by Kvanvig, but is a reflection of his methodological approach to the secondary problem. The approach he took attempted to explain the superior value of knowledge over its subsets by appeal to only the members of those subsets. This is a kind of super-NCV since, for Kvanvig, each necessary component of knowledge must itself provide its own independent value. If not, then there will exist at least one proper subset of knowledge which is as valuable as knowledge itself. To this, the Jonesian objects. An axiological claim such as P1 requires some basis for its acceptance, and no such basis has been offered. In fact, since we really do want an answer to the secondary value problem, any axiological claim which prohibits an answer should be accepted for only the very best of reasons. I am of the view that not only are the reasons for accepting P1 not the very best, but they are non-existent. As such, I reject it.

Additionally, there is another reason for Kvanvig to reject NCV. In the last chapter, the rejection of NCV relied on an appeal to *trivial knowledge*. Zagzebski readily accepted its existence, though she did not see the implications of such acceptance. Interestingly, something similar can be said of Kvanvig. In chapter two of his book, Kvanvig discusses why true beliefs are intrinsically valuable. There he considers a case offered first by Ernest Sosa:

At the beach on a lazy summer afternoon, we might scoop up a handful of sand and carefully count the grains. This would give us an otherwise unremarked truth, something that on the view before us is at least a positive good, other things equal. This view I hardly understand. The number of grains would not interest most of us in the slightest. Absent any such antecedent interest, moreover, it is hard to see any sort of value in one's having that truth. (Kvanvig 2003, 41; Sosa 2003, 156)

Sosa's view is that such true beliefs are not automatically valuable just because they are true.³⁵ (Sosa 2003, 155 - 160) Kvanvig agrees, though he considers such occurrences to be rare. He explains in the following.

The default position for any truth is that our general interest in the truth applies to it, though, of course, there can be special circumstances involved so that the general interest in the truth is overridden by other factors.³⁶ (Kvanvig 2003, 41)

³⁵ In particular, Sosa claims that the value of a true belief is closely tied with specific goals that we have which involve our needing to have true beliefs for the achievement of those goals. Ultimately "Eudaimonist virtue epistemology gives pride of place to truth... what matters most importantly, 'the chief good', is your grasping the truth attributable to your intellectual virtues acting in concert conducted by reason, and thus attributable to you as epistemic agent. Nevertheless, other epistemic values may be understood in terms of this 'chief' good and of its contained lesser, though still intrinsic, good, namely truth itself, however acquired." (Sosa 2013, 178-179)

³⁶ It is important to note the use of the term "overridden". When a value is overridden, it does not necessarily lose its value. Rather, other factors of the case which are more important or relevant, determine the assessment of the case. This does seem at odds with Sosa's claim that such truths lack "any sort of value". Perhaps a better way to put this is that the value is so tiny as to be inconsequential. If, after forming such a belief while on the beach, you fell and hit your head which resulted in you losing only that belief. I doubt you would mourn the loss of such a truth even if it has some infinitesimal amount of value.

So, while Kvanvig takes cases of trivial true belief to be rare, he does accept them. Thus, he accepts the vast majority interpretation of the value problems. Accepting the vast majority interpretation, however, makes NCV difficult (if not impossible) to motivate. To see this, as we did last chapter, let us assume that NCV is true and that the vast majority interpretation of the primary problem is correct. We then have two piles into which we put cases of knowledge: those with value exceeding that of its proper subsets and those with value that does not exceed its proper subsets. The exceeding pile will have all of the necessary conditions of knowledge satisfied with the right kind of value present. The not-exceeding pile, however, will have all of the necessary conditions of knowledge satisfied (these are still cases of knowledge) but will lack additional value beyond mere true belief. The challenge is in explaining how only the necessary conditions can provide the right kind of value while also claiming that, in the case of trivial knowledge, the value is lacking (despite the very same conditions being satisfied). My view is that it is the content of the various beliefs in question that renders those beliefs trivial or non-trivial.³⁷ NCV, however, does not regard the content of a belief (or any other condition of knowledge) as being relevant to the value contribution of the satisfied condition.³⁸ NCV

claims that the value of knowledge is explained by its necessary conditions. A proponent

³⁷ Kvanvig hints at something like this in his discussion of understanding where he states that “Many in our information age wonder where all of our understanding has gone, replaced by knowledge of the sort celebrated on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* and *Jeopardy* and in games such as *Trivial Pursuit*. A head full of trivia and detail is an amazing thing, but nothing to be compared with the reach and sweep of a person of understanding, so if knowledge is a good thing, understanding is even better.” (Kvanvig 2003, 186) Though here he is trying to motivate the view that understanding is better than knowledge, he does so by nearly recognizing that it is the content of trivial beliefs that render them valueless.

³⁸ In other words, the necessary conditions of knowledge can be of contingent value, but why they are of contingent value is a matter independent from whether or not the condition is satisfied. The standards of value are, as I will fully argue in chapter five, a matter of intuitive appeal, indirect argument, and relational features of the case in question.

of NCV cannot explain the lack of value in cases of trivial knowledge because it is not the conditions of knowledge that determine its triviality. The conditions determine only when knowledge is present. Some *other* standard determines when value is present (or absent). This, again, is because matters of value are not determined by some sort of *a priori* arguments or first principles.³⁹ Value is, at its core, a matter of intuitive appeal and judgment. Indirect argument can supply new ways to test the intuitive appeal of a proposed value, but, if someone disagrees with your values there is very little proof that can be offered to change their mind. The conditions under which knowledge occurs, however, are not as dependent on intuitions. Hence, P1, NCV, and super-NCV should all be rejected. This rejection, however, makes the move to C1 and C2 uncogent, and Kvanvig's argument doesn't go through.

Additionally, I think it is just as important that we note Kvanvig's "strong inductive argument" is a kind of super-VVP. The typical kind of VVP application that we have seen thus far resulted in either a theory (e.g. reliabilism) or a family of theories (e.g. the machine-product model from last chapter) being vetoed. In Kvanvig's case, the inability to explain the value of knowledge requires a vetoing of any focus on it. I find such a conclusion more as a cautionary tale for those who use axiological standards to judge the acceptability of theories of knowledge. The intuitive appeal of whether or not something is valuable is not going to help one with their analysis. Just because something is not valuable does not entail that that something isn't part of a concept. I don't find it very valuable that a circle is defined as a "plane figure bounded by a single curved line, called the circumference, which is everywhere equally distant from a point within, called the centre." (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024) It would have been quite a mistake,

³⁹ My thanks to William Melanson for helping me flesh these ideas out.

though, if Euclid had put down the pen for that reason alone. Perhaps, however, Kvanvig is thinking that there is some important difference between the epistemic and other domains. By my lights the best case scenario for such an appeal is due to the normative nature of epistemology. As with ethics, epistemology produces ought-claims. For example, *I ought to form beliefs on the basis of good evidence*, and *I ought not to believe contradictory claims*. Such claims are expressions of certain values in a way that is different from what the *Elements* tell me about lines and shapes. While this certainly is true, I don't see it aiding Kvanvig. Those two ought-claims above reflect our intuitive judgments regarding beliefs, good evidence, and contradictions. The conditions under which something counts a belief, or good evidence, or a contradiction, however, are not the standards by which the ought-claims are assessed. Hence, there is no good reason to think that theories should be held to axiological standards, and so VVP and Kvanvig's super-VVP ought to be rejected lest we throw the axiological baby out with the conceptual bathwater.

With the limitations of Kvanvig's strong inductive argument made clear, it now remains to actually solve the secondary problem. The solution is not as straightforward as with the primary problem, however, as I too fail to see any positive value afforded by the anti-Gettier condition. What is important, however, is the axiological implications of an unsatisfied anti-Gettier condition. This, I will now argue, is *disvaluable*.

§5 Expanding the Secondary Problem

With NCV and VVP rejected, it may appear that answering the secondary problem is a straightforward matter for the Jonesian. As with the primary problem, the Jonesian could simply point to either I/I or a Craig-styled account of testimony to

establish the superior value of knowledge. Knowledge coupled with either of those contingent conditions will be more valuable than any of the proper subsets of knowledge because the contingent conditions are not members of the proper subsets. While this does answer the secondary problem as stated, it fails to address a simple reformulation of the problem.

The modified version of the secondary value problem can be made by simply noting that both I/I and a Craig-styled testimony condition needn't be thought of as factive or as only accompanying knowledge. If they were, then the value would be (in some sense) baked right into the conditions. Let us add onto our previous formalism to make the point clear. Let $+CC$ stand for *the contingent conditions*. $V(VfTBG+CC)$ (i.e. knowledge with the contingent conditions present) will be equal to $V(VfTB\bar{G}+CC)$ as the only difference is a valueless condition. This leaves it unanswered as to why knowledge with the contingent conditions satisfied is more valuable than any of the proper subsets of knowledge likewise coupled with the contingent conditions. This is the expanded secondary problem

With that clarification out of the way, my answer to the secondary problem begins by highlighting something that neither Kvanvig nor Jones consider. Both were right to conclude that the anti-Gettier condition does not contribute any independent *positive* value when satisfied, but neither considered if there was any *negative* value contribution when the anti-Gettier condition was not satisfied. I contend that an unsatisfied anti-Gettier condition is a *bad* thing, and that the value afforded by it is correspondingly *negative*. If I am right, then the value equivalence in the previous paragraph was incorrect.

$V(VfTB\bar{G}+CC)$ is less valuable than $V(VfTBG+CC)$ because of the negative value of \bar{G} .

To be clear, it is hard to directly argue for this claim. There are no *a priori* arguments regarding value. Despite this, the case can be made that failing to rule out Gettier cases is a bad epistemic situation to find oneself in. Let us first keep in mind that Gettier cases drive a wedge between our justification for a true belief and the actual truth maker for the belief.⁴⁰ To make clear that such a wedge is a bad thing, let us imagine the following scenario.

Gettier World: Imagine a world where every epistemic agent regularly forms highly justified true beliefs, but where that justification always fails to track the actual basis for the truth of the belief. The basis for the truth of the belief is always some other factor outside the scope of one's justification.

An externalist about justification would, perhaps, disagree with my framing of this issue. After all, if my beliefs regularly turn out to be true for reasons that are non-random, then I am (in some sense) tracking the truth even though the way in which the tracking functions is opaque to me. A great many of these true beliefs may even count as knowledge. Perhaps. My purpose, however, is not to settle what theory of justification is correct, but instead to establish what is of value. To the externalist, I ask two consider two agents: one who is externally justified in a bit of knowledge, and another agent who is likewise externally justified in their knowledge but also fulfills I/I. I hope that the externalist views the latter agent's situation as more valuable, even if the former agent's situation is fully sufficient for knowledge. If the externalist disagrees, however, I cannot

⁴⁰ I am using 'truth maker' here simply to pick out whatever the relevant features are in a case of knowledge which could be said to 'make' the belief true. I do not intend to endorse or defend any of the metaphysical accounts of truth makers.

offer much more in my defense. Matters of value are matters of intuitive judgment and indirect argument.

The situation is much more straightforward for the internalist about justification. In the Gettier World, not only is knowledge impossible (as we would merely have either lucky or accidentally true beliefs), but the value of justification is greatly reduced. The reasons that we would point to as evidence of the truth of our beliefs would always be mistaken. When someone challenges our beliefs our responses would always be rooted in error. If there is any plausibility to I/I being valuable, then Gettier World is clearly a bad epistemic place for the internalist. True, there are still true beliefs for us, and in that regard the world isn't entirely bad. But, if we compare Gettier World to a world where Gettier cases are always prevented, I think it clear that preventing Gettier cases prevents something bad. Hence, when the anti-Gettier condition goes unsatisfied, it reduces the value of the corresponding epistemic state.

Moreover, this view of disvalue seems consistent with the virtue theoretic account that Kvanvig found initially promising. According to that account, credit is independently valuable. If Kvanvig is right, however, and Gettier cases can be easily generated for such a view, then when Gettier cases arise, they reduce the credit that the agent deserves. By my lights, this should not be axiologically inert to the virtue theorist. Reductions in credit are disvaluable. Such an implication, to be fair to Kvanvig, has not been widely discussed in the value literature. When explaining disvalue, many theorists do so by appealing to the *pro tanto* positive value. Such value is contrasted with *all things considered value*. The former is valuable relative to some consideration(s) whereas the latter is valuable

when all things are considered. *Pro tanto* positive value can be overridden by various bad making features of a case, but a discussion of the *negative value* contributed by a thing is not a common category. The *pro tanto* and overriding categories do make good sense of many of the kinds of issues at play in the moral sphere. Giving money to charity, for example, is *pro tanto* good, but not when a particular charity that is known to be corrupt.⁴¹ With regard to the value of knowledge, however, it is not clear to me that overriding is the right way to view value. The benefit of an account which appeals to overriding is that it allows whatever is overridden to retain the value that it normally has. Donating to charity is still a good thing even when the greed of the CEO prevents you from donating. As was noted above in his discussion of trivial beliefs, Kvanvig too appealed to overriding factors to explain why such beliefs lacked value. It seems to me, however, that it is equally fair to view truth, belief, and the like as being capable of having positive, negative, and neutral value. In fact, it may be that in paradigm cases of true belief the positive value that such cases blind us to the neutral and negative value of non-paradigm cases.

§7 Two Solutions?

One final issue can now be addressed. My view is that an unsatisfied anti-Gettier condition is a bad thing and has correspondingly negative value. This move does allow the Jonesian to highlight the greater value of knowledge over any of the proper subsets of

⁴¹ This is somewhat similar to the notion of a *prima facie* duty. Drawing a clean line between the *pro tanto* and the *prima facie* is a bit challenging. The basic idea of a *prima facie* duty is that 1) at first a duty appears to apply, but 2) upon further inspection of all of the relevant features of the case there is no such duty. For a *pro tanto* circumstance, in contrast, 1) there is some duty that applies, but 2) some other duty / duties override it. The issue is made more difficult as W.D. Ross seems to treat *prima facie* and *pro tanto* duties similarly in *The Right and the Good* (1930 / 2002).

knowledge due to the contingent conditions. The move also, however, offers a path for other theories to offer their own solutions. After all, if \underline{G} provides negative value, then $V(VfTBG) > V(VfTB\underline{G})$. Hence, an answer to the secondary problem exists without needing to appeal to the contingent conditions of knowledge. Why, then, preference the Jonesian answer?

The first, and clearly best reason by my lights, is that the Jonesian account is essentially theory neutral. Whichever theory of knowledge turns out to be correct, the Jonesian view will simply offer even more value for knowledge beyond what the theory itself can already explain. True, if a theory views something like I/I or being a good testifier as *necessary* for knowledge, then the Jonesian view will disagree with that analysis. So, then, a more precise way to put the point is that for all theories of knowledge which do not *necessify* either of the Jonesian contingent conditions, then the Jonesian view is theory neutral.

A related reason to preference the Jonesian view is that there have not been any good or principled explanations of why NCV or VVP ought to be adopted by epistemologists. Part of why I bristle so strongly against those two principles is that this issue reminds me much of issues in value theory more generally. The expansion and complexity involved with, for example, accounting for final value seem relevant here. G.E. Moore (1903 / 1993), for example, took the most important kind of value (what we think of today as *final value*) to be solely a matter about the intrinsic properties of a thing. Christine Korsgaard (1983), famously challenged this claim and argued that final value could sometimes be accounted for by the extrinsic properties. More recently Dale Dorsey (2012) has argued that instrumental value may itself be intrinsic. Needless to say, the

distinctions are still being drawn and debated. The lesson for epistemologists to draw from this, I think, is that axiological principles should not be adopted without careful reflection and explicit discussion. Once firm ground can quickly turn to sand given just a few novel thought experiments. So, then, the Jonesian view ought to be preferred because it is (fairly) theory neutral and because epistemic axiology has not seriously considered reasons against it.

§6 Conclusion

The Jonesian approach to the secondary problems, when supplemented by a recognition of the negative value afforded by the unsatisfied anti-Gettier condition, has again borne fruit. Knowledge is more valuable than any of its proper subsets both because of that disvalue, and because of the independent value of the Jonesian contingent conditions. What remains is to assess the third and final value problem. Duncan Pritchard's four chapter treatment of the issue serves as the most direct and focused attempt to solve the problem. The following two chapters are dedicated towards assessing his claims and solving the third value problem.

Chapter 4

Motivating the Tertiary Problem

“But when once they are fastened, in the first place they turn into knowledge, and in the second, are abiding. And this is why knowledge is more prized than right opinion: the one transcends the other by its trammels.”

Meno 98a
Plato

§1 Chapter Goal

Addressing the tertiary problem will take up this and the following chapter. This may strike the reader odd as the expectation for this chapter may be that I will simply apply the pattern that I have used in the two preceding chapters: 1) discuss the dominant approach to this third problem, 2) establish that the lead author is relying on NCV and VVP, 3) argue against NCV and VVP, 4) use the contingent conditions on knowledge to establish the superior value of knowledge over that which falls short. Such an approach, however, will not work here as the tertiary problem is a different kind of challenge entirely. This chapter will serve to get clear on what is at stake with the tertiary problem. Then, it will critically assess the handful of published attempts to answer it by people other than Duncan Pritchard. Pritchard’s own detailed account will be the focus of chapter five.

§2 Motivating The Tertiary Value Problem

The first formulation of the tertiary value problem was offered by Duncan Pritchard in a footnote of his 2007 paper "Recent Work in Epistemic Value". According to Pritchard, even if the secondary problem (and, therefore, the primary problem) was successfully answered, a third problem would remain.

“The rationale for the tertiary value problem is that a response to the secondary value problem leaves it open whether the difference in value between knowledge and that which falls short of knowledge is merely a matter of degree. If the difference is merely one of degree, however, then this leaves it unclear why it is knowledge, specifically, that is of distinctive value to us.” (Pritchard 2007, 104)

A difference in degree, for Pritchard, is not sufficient to explain the distinctive value that knowledge has to us. This brief statement of the tertiary problem, and its motivation, would be expanded upon by Pritchard three years later.

“After all, if one regards knowledge as being more valuable than that which falls short of knowledge merely as a matter of degree rather than kind, then this has the effect of putting knowledge on a kind of continuum of value with regard to the epistemic, albeit further up the continuum than anything that falls short of knowledge. The problem with this ‘continuum’ account of the value of knowledge, however, is that it

fails to explain why the long history of epistemological discussion has focused specifically on the stage in this continuum of value that knowledge marks rather than some other stage (such as a stage just before the one marked out by knowledge, or just after). Accordingly, it seems that accounting for our intuitions about the value of knowledge requires us to offer an explanation of why knowledge has not just a greater degree but also a different kind of value than whatever falls short of knowledge.” (Pritchard 2010, 7 - 8)

The tertiary problem, then, is *the* value problem. Part of what Pritchard seems to be pointing out here is that both the primary and the secondary problems do not require that knowledge be of a different kind of value in order to explain its distinctive value. This, though, leaves open the possibility that knowledge is just a few degrees more valuable than that which falls short. Such a minor kind of superiority in value would not explain our historical preoccupation with knowledge, and so something important would be left out of those answers. In contrast to that limitation, an answer to the tertiary problem would immediately answer both the secondary and the primary value problems. An answer to the tertiary problem requires that the kind of value that knowledge has be both different *and* greater than that which falls short. The primary and secondary problems require only a greater value. Hence, an answer to the tertiary problem is an answer to all of the problems. Given the primacy that Pritchard claims this problem has, we would expect a robust and lively literature to have developed in response to this problem. Apart

from Pritchard's own lengthy discussions of the problem, however, there are just a handful of publications devoted to addressing the tertiary problem.

Mona Simion and Christoph Kelp have offered their account which also rejects the continuum model of value. Their key move, however, is to modify the tertiary problem's requirement that knowledge be of a different kind of value. They claim that a virtue theoretic approach, specifically the one offered by John Greco (2009; 2010), can be modified to show that knowledge is *discontinuous* in value from that which falls short.⁴² So, while knowledge is not of a different kind of value, it is discontinuous in a way which addresses what is really at issue in the tertiary problem. Adrian Haddock, in contrast, criticizes the motivation for the tertiary problem by stating that if some epistemic standing is at the apex of the *continuum* of value, then that alone is all that needs to be said. Its being at the apex *is* the reason to focus on it. (Haddock 2010, 209) Apart from these treatments, however, there is little else in the literature offering a direct answer to the tertiary problem. Hence, it will be worthwhile to unpack each approach, followed by my reasons rejecting both.

§3 The Problem with the Continuum

Haddock's discussion of the tertiary problem is fairly quick. In short, he claims that there is no good reason to reject the continuum model.

⁴² There is a way in which Greco himself can be interpreted as offering his own answer to the tertiary problem directly. Greco's core claim is that knowledge is a kind of success or achievement due to agency. (Greco 2009, 2010, 2014) In order to transform this claim into an answer to the tertiary problem, such success or achievements must be different in kind than less epistemic states. Pritchard himself has conveyed to me through correspondence that he interprets Greco's view in this manner. The view that achievements or successes are *sui generis* is one that Pritchard adopts and is the focus of the following chapter, so I will save my discussion of the Greco-inspired view until then.

Why should it seem in need of further explanation that philosophy might want to focus on the cognitive standing which stands at the apex of the continuum of value? This is of more value than lesser standings. Why is that not enough to explain our specific interest in it? (Haddock 2010, 219)

The rhetorical force of these questions challenges the very motivation for the tertiary problem that Pritchard offered above. Pritchard's claim was that the continuum model fails to explain why philosophical history has been so concerned with a spot merely 'further up' on the continuum than lesser epistemic states. Haddock's reply is not just that knowledge is higher up on the continuum of value, but that it is at the apex.

On the surface, it may seem as though Haddock's response is a fairly plausible rebuttal to Pritchard. In the abstract, it certainly seems like being at the apex of a continuum would warrant at least some special focus. The problem, however, is that Haddock's claim may require too much of knowledge. For if knowledge is at the apex, then no other epistemic state can be more valuable. Though I will not develop this claim further in this chapter, it has certainly been intuitive to many epistemologists to find understanding more valuable than knowledge.⁴³ Such a view does not necessarily diminish the value of knowledge over that which falls short, but it does deny that knowledge is at the apex of value. Perhaps Haddock would reply by claiming that knowledge and understanding are both equal in value (i.e. both sit at the apex). Such a move will not help him as Pritchard could simply respond by asking why have those other equally valuable states not garnered as much historical attention as has knowledge.

⁴³ See, for example: Elgan (1996); Zagzebski (2001); Kvanvig (2003); Riggs (2003); Pritchard (2010).

In other words, insofar as Pritchard is correct to connect what is of value with what philosophers have focused on historically, then Haddock's claim is insufficient to render the tertiary problem a pseudo-problem.⁴⁴

Despite this, I do not accept that a continuum can model the kind of value at play with regard to knowledge. I do so, however, for slightly different reasons than Pritchard. In my estimation, a continuum model of epistemic value is structurally incapable of modeling something non-quantifiable like value. The value that we have for knowledge over that which falls short is not a matter of knowledge having more units of value than, for example, mere true belief.⁴⁵ The value problems are not problems of accurate calculation. Part of what is muddying the waters is that we talk of beliefs individually and collectively. If we let $V(x)$ stand for *the value of (x)*, let n stand for *the current number of beliefs*, and let p stand for *a new belief*, then when an agent forms p it seems somewhat intuitive that the overall value of their set of beliefs is just $V(n) + V(p)$. To me, however, it just seems wrong to think that, for example, there are units of epistemic value. I am of the view that this is some kind of ordinal, rather than ratio or interval, scale.⁴⁶ An ordinal

⁴⁴ Just to be clear, however, I find Pritchard's above quoted ways of motivating the tertiary problem to be a bit vague. A clearer expression of why historical focus and intuitive appeal establish the special value of knowledge needs a more robust explanation. I will offer such an explanation in the following chapter.

⁴⁵ It has puzzled me as to why Pritchard used the phrase 'just before' in his rejection of the continuum. William Melanson (in correspondence) has suggested that Pritchard's worries about the continuum stem (possibly) from the way in which the value literature was birthed. As we've seen in the previous three chapters, reliabilism was the foil used to establish the importance of the value problems. One issue that constantly haunted reliabilism (apart from worries about value) was the issue of what level of reliability was required for knowledge? Is it 51%? Is it 95%? If 95%, why not 94.5%? Such challenges to reliabilism require framing an aspect of epistemic inquiry by appeal to questions of interval scales. Hence, to the degree that there was a kind of 'reliabilism-hangover' in the early value literature, then Pritchard's concern about the continuum is understandable (albeit misplaced).

⁴⁶ Part of the larger axiological issue, and one that I do not intend to weigh in on, is that it is not clear if value is *additive* or *emergent*. If value is additive, then the value of the whole is merely a matter of adding the value of each of its parts. Kvanvig's approach to the secondary problem certainly can be viewed as treating value as additive. The failure of the satisfied anti-Gettier

scale is a way of ranking without entailing anything quantifiable about the attributable differences between the items ranked. If I were ranking the quality of an experience, for example, I may say it was fun, boring, or annoying. The difference between fun and boring needn't mirror the difference between boring and annoying. It is this lack of mirroring that is important. On such a scale, *n-and-p* can be ranked higher than either *n* or *p* alone. As a bit of a precursor to my arguments in the next chapter, I take it that determinations of value are almost entirely determinations relating to intuitive strength. I deny, for example, that there are any *a priori* arguments that can settle questions of value. Hence, the basis for an ordinal ranking with regard to epistemic value will be some set of relevant intuitions. The strength of those intuitions is what determines the corresponding ordering. While it is true that speaking of the "strength" of an intuition gets the point across, it is also a somewhat misleading way to speak. Speaking of the "strength" of an intuition may seem to imply that some sort of force calculations are possible. I deny this as well. We do not have a way to measure intuitive appeal apart from how such intuitions "feel". So, the so-called strength of the corresponding intuitions is more a matter of

condition to add any positive value was what led Kvanvig to conclude that the secondary value problem was unsolvable. The issue was one of simple addition. If, on the other hand, value is emergent, then when various parts are brought together in the right kind of way, then value emerges which is more than just the sum of the parts or different in kind from the parts. The emergent view is most easily associated with G.E. Moore (though he called them *organic unities*). Moore famously warned, in full italics no less, that "the value of such a whole bears no regular proportion to the sum of the values of its parts." (Moore 1993, 79) The easiest case for the emergent view is that of the aesthetic. An ugly bit of color when added to a painting can enhance the beauty of the painting. (Heathwood 2013, 3735) Moore's own case was that of the "consciousness of beauty". (Moore 1993, 80) A beautiful yet unobserved thing has some minor value approaching "absolute neutrality", and consciousness "does not always confer great value upon the whole of which it forms a part". Thus, for Moore, simply adding the value of both does not properly account for the value of the whole. (Moore 1993, 80) The state of being conscious of a beautiful object is more valuable than the sum of the parts. There are some difficulties, however, in understanding exactly how to best interpret Moore's official view. For a nice discussion of some of the interpretive issues at play see: Carlson 2015, 285-299. On the opposite side of the debate, Zimmerman 2001 has heavily criticized the Moorean view in favor of the additive view.

phenomenology than measurement. The ordinal approach can represent this kind of intuition-based ordering in a way that a ratio or interval scale cannot. So long as the intuition regarding the greater value of *n-and-p* is “stronger” than for *n* and *p* alone, then *n-and-p* can justifiably be ranked higher. An ordinal ranking also avoids the worries that Pritchard had since the intuitive appeal of knowledge as being special are correspondingly strong enough to justify the attention that knowledge has received historically. An ordinal ranking also allows for other valuable epistemic states to be ranked higher than knowledge (such as understanding) so long as the strength of our intuitions is such.⁴⁷

This ordinal ranking, however, requires supplementation. Haddock, for example, could simply concede to me everything that I have just said. His goal, after all, was not to defend the continuum model so much as to deny that knowledge is of a different kind of value. Nothing that I have said about the ordinal scale above requires or entails that knowledge has such value. The way in which I establish the final value of knowledge is beyond the scope of this chapter, so here I issue a promissory note. The following chapter addresses Pritchard’s rejection of the final value of knowledge. In response, I claim that matters of final value are settled by assessing both the strength and persistence of certain intuitions (this is the topic of the next chapter and so I save my full discussion for it there). I then argue that intuitions regarding the value of knowledge have the kind of strength and persistence required to establish that knowledge is finally valuable. Similarly, I place the role of intuitive appeal and judgment as the primary tool for determining where various epistemic states fall on the scale. Those very same intuitions, I claim, also establish the final value of knowledge. Hence, if Haddock wishes to adopt an

⁴⁷ My thanks to David Henderson for pushing me on this issue.

ordinal scale, he will also have to explain how the basis for his ranking avoids concluding that knowledge has final value.

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to assessing a kind of response to the tertiary problem offered by Mona Simion and Christoph Kelp. Their view is more is a kind of hybrid view as they claim that John Greco's 2010 account of knowledge can *nearly* answer the tertiary problem. They are of the view that while Pritchard is right to reject the continuum model, he is wrong to claim that the only way to account for the special value of knowledge is for it to be *sui generis*. Simion and Kelp claim that the value of knowledge need only be *discontinuous* with lesser epistemic states in order to establish that value as special. As their approach relies on Greco's earlier work I will turn to consider his view first.

§4 Weak Superiority

John Greco, while not directly addressing the tertiary problem as such, has offered a solution to the secondary problem which may have the resources to address the tertiary problem.⁴⁸ According to his view,

...there is a clear difference in value between knowledge and mere true belief. In cases of knowledge we achieve the truth through the exercise of our own intellectual abilities, which are a kind of intellectual virtue. Moreover, we can extend the point to include other kinds of intellectual virtue as well. It is plausible, for example, that the successful exercise of

⁴⁸ Pritchard, in correspondence, informed me that he takes this to be Greco's intended answer to the tertiary problem.

intellectual courage is also intrinsically good, and also constitutive of the best intellectual life. And of course there is a long tradition that says the same about wisdom and the same about understanding. On the view that results, there is a plurality of intellectual virtues, and their successful exercise gives rise to a plurality of epistemic goods. The best intellectual life—intellectual flourishing, so to speak—is rich with all of these. (Greco 2010, 98)

Going back to the previous chapter's discussion of how Kvanvig understood the virtue condition, it should be quite clear that Greco and Kvanvig are at odds.⁴⁹ But, even if we suppose that Greco's virtue theory can address the secondary value problem, it does not establish that knowledge is of a different kind of value. As such, Greco's account needs some kind of supplement in order to address the tertiary problem on its own terms. In an effort to provide such a supplement, Simion and Kelp take Greco's theory to be composed of the following three theses:

The Knowledge = Achievement Thesis (KAT): Knowledge, as opposed to belief that falls short of knowledge, is a form of achievement.

The Final Value of Achievement Thesis (FVAT): Achievements are finally valuable.

The Exclusivity Thesis (ET): Successes that are not from ability fail to enjoy final value. (Simion and Kelp 2016, 399)

⁴⁹ See footnote 28 for that discussion.

Simion and Kelp do briefly discuss KAT and FVAT, but their most consequential discussion is of ET.⁵⁰ Though they do ultimately defend ET, they admit that even if knowledge has final value, it isn't obviously the case that this is a different kind of value from mere true belief. They state this for two reasons. The first is that it is a widely held position in epistemology that true belief is, like knowledge, a fundamental epistemic value. The second is that, by their lights, 'it...looks as though there is no kind of value that attaches to knowledge but not to true belief.'⁵¹ (Simion and Kelp 2016, 403-404) Hence, whatever *kind* of value knowledge has, so too will true belief, and so the Greco-styled virtue theory that they endorse cannot establish what the tertiary problem demands: that knowledge be *sui generis*. Rather than abandoning Greco's analysis of knowledge, however, they conclude that this requirement is too strong. If we recall that Pritchard's basis for requiring a difference in kind was solely to avoid the continuum, then the real issue at the core of the tertiary problem is avoiding the continuum. Hence,

⁵⁰ Simion and Kelp are willing to grant KAT because, as they say, 'it is fair to say that this debate [the truth or falsity of KAT] is still ongoing.' (Simion and Kelp 2016, 399) Simion and Kelp, however, spend considerable space responding to what they take to be the most forceful objection to FVAT. This objection comes from Christian Piller (2012) who argues that since not all achievements are valuable (such as the skillful shot of an assassin who kills an innocent child) then FVAT must be false. Simion and Kelp reply to this problem by claiming that though achievements are themselves always valuable, that value can be 'swamped' by wicked outcomes. In their words, "if a state of affairs contains a wicked outcome that has been attained in a way that accrues final value, the final value accrued by the way is swamped by the wickedness of the outcome and so does not contribute to the total value of the state of affairs." (Simion and Kelp 2016, 402) This notion of swamping is fundamentally different than it was in Kvanvig. For Simion and Kelp, swamping in their sense appears to amount to a kind of *pro tanto* value which, given certain contextual relevant features, can be overridden. My thanks to William Melanson for pointing this out.

⁵¹ Given how FVAT is formulated, it would appear that Simion and Kelp are lumping "fundamental" value and "final value" together. It would be good to hear more about this as it's not entirely clear to me that such an axiological view holds together. Given the claim in this quote, true belief also has final value since it has whatever value knowledge does. Mere true belief, however, is not an achievement. Knowledge (according to KAT) is an achievement and (according to FVAT) is finally valuable. This leaves unexplained why true belief would have final value. As we'll see in the next chapter, Pritchard himself is careful to distinguish final versus fundamental value in a way which avoids this lack of explanation.

any explanation of the superior value of knowledge which does not appeal to the continuum will have succeeded in establishing knowledge as special. (Simion and Kelp 2016, 404-405) They attempt to establish this by demonstrating that knowledge is *discontinuous* in value with that which falls short. In order to establish this, they distinguish two ways in which something can be more valuable than something else.

The first way Simion and Kelp call “strong superiority”. If A has strong superiority to B, then any amount of A has more value of a certain kind than any amount of B. As an example, Simion and Kelp state that the loss of the high aesthetic value of witnessing the Vienna Philharmonic performance is not compensated for by being offered some finite number of barely tolerable burgers (i.e. something of low aesthetic value). (Simion and Kelp 2016, 405) Such burgers may be more valuable than the Philharmonic's performance in regard to other values, but insofar as the focus is on aesthetic value, the Philharmonic has strong superiority. The second way that they account for value discontinuity is what they call “weak superiority”. If A has weak superiority to B, then some amount of A has more value of a certain kind than any amount of B. As an example of this, they offer an example from Derek Parfit.

I could live for another 100 years, all of an extremely high quality. Call this the Century of Ecstasy. I could instead live forever, with a life that would always be barely worth living... the only good things would be muzak and potatoes. Call this the Drab Eternity. I claim that, though each day of the Drab Eternity would be worth living, the Century of Ecstasy would give me a better life. Though each day of the Drab Eternity would

have some value for me, no amount of this value could be as good for me as the Century of Ecstasy. (Parfit 1984, 17-18 / Simion and Kelp 2016, 405)

According to Simion and Kelp, the living of an extremely pleasurable life for 100 years is weakly superior to living a drab life for all of eternity. (Simion and Kelp 2016, 405 - 406) Their goal, then, is to establish that Greco's account of knowledge results in knowledge having weak superiority over that which falls short. (Simion and Kelp 2016, 405)⁵²

The question, then, is to isolate in what respect knowledge is weakly superior to that which falls short. It would be wrongheaded, they claim, to think that some amount of knowledge is, in *all* respects, more valuable than that which falls short. They offer the following example to justify this claim. Suppose that gaining knowledge about *p* will lead to my financial ruin. With respect to my financial stability, then, knowledge would *not* be weakly superior. The respect that they claim knowledge has weak superiority is, as one might expect from a virtue theoretic approach, that of *human flourishing*. (Simion and Kelp 2016, 405) As justification for this, they note that Greco looked to Aristotle's distinction between lucky / accidental achievements versus achievements gotten by the

⁵² Strong and weak superiority are value relations that have garnered some discussion in the axiology literature more generally. For interesting discussions of these and more kinds of potential value relations see: Wlodek Rabinowicz & Gustaf Arrhenius (2003) and (2015).

exercise of one's abilities.⁵³ (Greco 2010, 97-98) They conclude, first, that in order to flourish cognitively, we must meet some standard.

The Necessity of Achievement Thesis (NAT): A life insufficiently rich in achievement will not be a life of human flourishing. (Simion and Kelp 2016, 406)

It is only achievement obtained by ability which can, Simion and Kelp claim, lead to *eudaimonia*. (Simion and Kelp 2016, 405 - 406) To motivate this principle, they use an example of Lucy, a person born with a wide range of natural talents and a family with enough wealth that she can live quite comfortably her entire life. They view Lucy's life as failing to flourish because she fails to realize her potential. She, in other words, achieves nothing. Things are paralleled with regard to the cognitive.

The Necessity of Cognitive Achievement Thesis (NACT): A life insufficiently rich in cognitive achievement will not be a flourishing cognitive life. (Simion and Kelp 2016, 406)

With all of this in place, they arrive at their official view.

⁵³ In some sense an *accidental achievement* may seem contradictory, but Greco discusses it without finding it problematic. Perhaps he has in mind something like the following case: Suppose that I execute a skilled release of an arrow from my bow. This arrow, as it travels down the field, is about to be met by a gust of wind which will knock it off course. At just the right time, someone lowers a windscreen on the field such that the gust is prevented from affecting my arrow, and the arrow hits the bullseye. I am the reason that the arrow struck the bullseye, but I am also lucky because the windscreen barely prevented the gust from interfering.

Weak Superiority of Cognitive Flourishing (WSCF): A flourishing cognitive life is weakly superior to a cognitive life without flourishing. (Simion and Kelp 2016, 406)

A flourishing cognitive life is one which has sufficient cognitive achievement. Knowledge, according to KAT, is a form of cognitive achievement. Therefore, with respect to a flourishing cognitive life, knowledge has weak superiority to a true belief that is arrived at through what they call “lucky cognitive success” (e.g. a true belief arrived at via luck or accident). (Simion and Kelp 2016, 406-407) They conclude,

...for the purpose of leading a flourishing cognitive life, knowledge is weakly superior to true belief that falls short of knowledge. (Simion and Kelp 2016, 407)

Hence, there is some kind of gap in the value of cognitive flourishing which cannot be overcome by any amount of lucky cognitive success. The upshot here is that this account avoids a continuum view of epistemic value without needing to establish a different kind of value for knowledge. The true tertiary problem was in establishing a model of epistemic value which was not rooted in a continuum styled account.⁵⁴ For Simion and Kelp, this discontinuity prevents there being anything ‘just before’ knowledge, and so Pritchard’s worries have been assuaged.

⁵⁴ What they call “Pritchard’s challenge properly understood”. (Simion and Kelp 2016, 398)

§5 Flourishing

Simion and Kelp, as we have just seen, attempt a kind of hybrid response. While they reject the continuum model, *a la* Pritchard, they also reject the formulation of the tertiary problem, *contra* Pritchard. Weak superiority, however, is difficult to accept. My primary issue with it is that Simion and Kelp also claimed that *whatever* kind of value attaches to knowledge likewise attaches to lucky / accidental true belief. (Simion and Kelp 2016, 403-404) If this is true, however, then lucky cognitive success *must* contribute to cognitive flourishing. To see that this leads to a problem, let us recall their own preferred example of something being weakly superior: a life lived in ecstasy for 100 years versus a drab eternity. The case was not set up such that the ecstatic life had something that the drab eternity did not; both lives had some amount of happiness in them both. The drab eternity did have potatoes after all. The point was that the amount of happiness produced in the 100-years case was preferable to the happiness accrued in drab eternity. The common “metric” is happiness as both cases contained some amounts of it and the point was that we prefer the happiness offered in the 100-years case. In the case of knowledge (an achievement) and lucky cognitive success (not an achievement), the metric is stated to be with regard to flourishing. To see this I offer the following table:

Happiness	Flourishing
An ecstatic life of 100 years is weakly superior with regard to happiness, than a drab eternity.	A cognitive life with some amount of knowledge is weakly superior with regard to cognitive flourishing than a life with any amount of true belief which falls short of knowledge.

This leads to a dilemma. If value is additive, then the value contributions of some enormous amount of lucky cognitive success should be such that they would reach some kind of tipping point where the enormous amount of lucky cognitive successes equals - or exceeds! - the value that knowledge has. If one lucky cognitive success contributes to cognitive flourishing, certainly 10 million, or billion, or trillion lucky cognitive successes would approach the value of knowledge in a way that violates weak superiority. It's important to note that this is a consequence of Simion and Kelp's desire to avoid having to claim that knowledge has final value. If knowledge does have final value, then this issue is immediately avoided.

Perhaps Simion and Kelp would opt for an emergent view of value such that knowledge is more valuable than the sum of its parts. This will not help Simion and Kelp establish discontinuity, however, as a hallmark of emergent views is an insistence that the value of the part is somewhat (or entirely) *unrelated* to the value of the whole.⁵⁵ Though this may be, in some sense, a discontinuity in value, it is not one that fits with the Greco-styled virtue theory that Simion and Kelp endorse. On such a view, a true belief that is virtuously formed is valuable because it counts as a cognitive achievement and such achievements contribute to human flourishing. If this were a case of emergent value, however, then it would be hard to draw a direct line from the value of the parts to the value of the whole. That is not the case here. Knowledge, on Greco's account, is a true

⁵⁵ In addition to the examples from G.E. Moore discussed in footnote 48, other theorists have their own. C.D. Broad, for example, discusses both music and food. With regard to music, he states that two tunes, which are each pleasing when listened to on their own, can become "hideous" when played together. With regard to food, he states that though pepper tastes unpleasant on its own, when combined with other ingredients, the resulting meal may taste quite good. (Broad 1985, 256-257) The upshot of these examples is that the initial value of the parts bears little-to-no relation to the value of the whole.

belief produced by my intellectual ability. (Greco 2010, 71) Knowledge is valuable because it is an achievement, specifically an achievement for which the knower deserves credit. (Greco 2010, 7). And, in general, such successes are very valuable. (Greco 2010, 99) Such an account is very different from the standard kind of examples used to motivate an emergent account of value, and so I fail to see how emergence can aid Simion and Kelp. Thus, if value is additive, then knowledge is not weakly superior, and if value is emergent, their account faces much work to fit that model.

Finally, the motivating case for weak superiority involving the Philharmonic / burgers is substantially *disanalogous* to the epistemic case. To see this, we must simply remind ourselves that true belief is a proper subset of knowledge. A burger, no matter how tasty, is not a proper subset of the Philharmonic. So, we must modify the case such that what is being axiologically contrasted to the Philharmonic is also a member of the Philharmonic. To that end I suggest that we contrast a couple of musicians who, though they perform with the Philharmonic, also perform as a duet. This better parallels the issue of the value of knowledge and true belief as true belief is part of knowledge just as the duet are members of the orchestra.

If weak superiority is to hold in this case, then some amount of performances by the entire Philharmonic should always be more aesthetically valuable than any amount of performances by the duet. The plausibility of that claim is, by my lights, dubious. I do tentatively agree that no one performance by the duet will likely ever be aesthetically superior to the entirety of a full performance of the Philharmonic. But that is not the issue. The issue is whether some number of performances from the Philharmonic will be more valuable than an infinite amount of duet performances. Having access to a duet

capable of producing wonderful music for eternity is pretty appealing to such a degree that I am tempted to sacrifice whatever value I lose by not seeing the Philharmonic. The duet is much more aesthetically valuable than bad burgers after all.

§6 Weakest Superiority

Lastly, the weak superiority of knowledge will fail to hold in cases of trivial knowledge. Simion and Kelp are aware of this. In footnote 12 they state:

We do not mean to suggest that the critical threshold of achievement here is simply a quantitative matter. One can achieve many trivial or bad things without making much headway in the direction of human flourishing.

(Simion and Kelp 2016, 408)

Simion and Kelp, then, are only claiming that some cases of knowledge (perhaps the vast majority, they do not say) have weak superiority. To be more precise, then, the lack of value (or disvalue) at play in trivial knowledge only licenses them to claim what we can call “weakest superiority”

Weakest Superiority: If A has weakest superiority over B, then some amount of A sometimes has more value of a certain kind than any amount of B.

Weakest superiority, however, does not seem to grant knowledge the kind of superior value that Pritchard himself thought so important. Simion and Kelp may have

prevented anything being “just before” knowledge, but they haven’t highlighted what is “special about” knowledge. Weakest superiority is consistent with the claim that only very rare, paradigmatic cases of knowledge are special. Such a claim would not satisfy Pritchard’s goal of explaining the long history of philosophical focus on knowledge. In fact, as the next chapter discusses, such a claim (according to Pritchard) renders the tertiary problem a pseudo-problem. In light of the above discussed failed attempts at rejecting or modifying the tertiary problem, I think it best to offer an answer to this problem on its own terms. Knowledge must be of a different kind of value than that which falls short if its special status is to be defended. To this I now turn.

Chapter 5

An Epistemic Axiology

"It is by logic that we prove, but by intuition that we discover. To know how to criticize is good, to know how to create is better."

Henri Poincaré
Mathematical Definitions and Education

§1 Chapter Goal

The goal of this chapter is to analyze Duncan Pritchard's own assessment of the tertiary problem. This assessment is found in Pritchard's fourth and final chapter of the 2010 book *The Nature and Value of Knowledge* and is his definitive discussion of the problem.⁵⁶ Ultimately, Pritchard concludes that the tertiary problem is a pseudo-problem which can be explained away. The core of his argument revolves around his determination that knowledge is not finally valuable because it is not an achievement. In response, I argue that knowledge does not have to be an achievement to be finally valuable as final value is a matter settled largely on intuitive grounds. On this basis I conclude that Pritchard faces a dilemma: either he must accept that knowledge is finally valuable or he must reject both that knowledge is finally valuable *and* his claim that achievements are finally valuable.

⁵⁶ Pritchard stated this in an email correspondence that he was kind enough to engage in with me.

§2 Fundamental vs Non-Fundamental

According to Pritchard, there are a handful of distinctions that need to be kept in mind when thinking about the distinctive value that knowledge supposedly has. The first is between *fundamental* and *non-fundamental epistemic goods*.

Fundamental Epistemic Good: Any epistemic good whose epistemic value is at least sometimes not simply instrumental value relative to a further *epistemic* good.

Non-fundamental Epistemic Good: Any epistemic good whose epistemic value is always instrumental value relative to a further epistemic good (and which is thus never epistemically valuable entirely for its own sake). (Pritchard 2010, 11)

Pritchard's introduction of the categories of *fundamental* and *non-fundamental* seems largely a distinction unique to him. The *Oxford Handbook of Value Theory*, for example, has just one occurrence of the term 'fundamental value' and it is in relation to intrinsic value. Additionally, of the numerous uses of the term 'fundamental', the primary sense is in connection with intrinsic value. Moreover, the SEP entry on value theory has three occurrences of 'fundamental'. One use is in regard to being a fundamental *question*; another is about value *priority*; and the final is in connection with *intrinsic* value. Finally, a classic work in modern axiology is Christine Korsgaard's 1983 paper "Two Distinctions in Goodness". There, Korsgaard distinguishes four types of value:

There are, therefore, two distinctions in goodness. One is the distinction between things valued for their own sakes and things valued for the sake of something else - between ends and means, or final and instrumental goods. The other is the distinction between things which have their value in themselves and things which derive their value from some other source: intrinsically good things versus extrinsically good things. Intrinsic and instrumental good should not be treated as correlatives, because they belong to two different distinctions. (Korsgaard 1983, 170)

Final value and instrumental are set as contrasting kinds of value, as are intrinsic and extrinsic. Final value is had by something when that something is valuable as an end. Instrumental value is had by something when that something is valued merely as a means. Intrinsic value is a kind of a value that a thing has “in itself”, whereas extrinsic value is a kind of value “outside” of a thing (usually in the form of a relation to some other thing). Pritchard’s fundamental / non-fundamental value categories do not neatly map onto these distinctions either, and so I think it fair to conclude that the fundamental / non-fundamental categories are unique to him.

With regard to the nature of final value, Pritchard does state that final value is not identical to *intrinsic value*. The traditional way to understand intrinsic value was due to a claimed connection with final value. On such a view something is finally valuable if and only if that value supervenes on the intrinsic

properties of the thing.⁵⁷ Others have held that the relational or extrinsic / relational properties of a thing can be a supervenient basis for that thing's final value.⁵⁸ Dale Dorsey (2012) has complicated the issue by arguing that some instrumental value is itself intrinsic (and dispositional!). Pritchard sides with those who claim that the relational / extrinsic properties of a thing can be a basis for final value.⁵⁹ (Pritchard 2010, ch. 2 footnote 6) As a further qualification about final value, Pritchard states that the fundamental / non-fundamental categories are domain relative, whereas final value is not. As Pritchard says:

The problem is that something can be a fundamentally epistemic good and yet not be finally valuable. For while a fundamental epistemic good can act as the terminus of the instrumental regress of epistemic value, this is entirely compatible with that good not being finally valuable *simpliciter*. After all, it could be that the value of the fundamental epistemic good in question is only instrumental value relative to some further non-epistemic goods (e.g. practical goods)...a further difference between final and fundamental epistemic value, in that when we describe a good as finally valuable we are claiming that it is in the nature of the good in question to be valuable in this way. In contrast, in calling an epistemic good a fundamental epistemic good we are merely saying that at least sometimes it has non-instrumental epistemic value. (Pritchard 2010, 12 italics added)

⁵⁷ See: G.E. Moore (1913) and, more recently, Michael Zimmerman (2005) as examples.

⁵⁸ See: Korsgaard (1996), and Shelly Kagan (1998) as examples.

⁵⁹ I will return to criticize Pritchard's characterization of final value in §5.

Thus, a fundamental epistemic good might lack final value because either it is instrumental relative to some non-epistemic good, or because it lacks the appropriate nature to be finally valuable. Something of final value, therefore, must have the right nature and never be merely instrumental to some other good. If knowledge has final value, then it will also be a fundamental epistemic good. (Pritchard 2010, 12) Though this may be surprising, Pritchard claims this is not to *qualify* final value, but rather it is simply “to note its axiological implications for a particular domain”.⁶⁰ (Pritchard 2010, 13) Having so carved up axiological space, Pritchard then helpfully reframes the *swamping problem*.

According to Pritchard many epistemologists have erroneously assumed what he calls *Value T-monism*. (Pritchard 2010, 14; 2011, 245) Value T-monism is the view that *true belief* is the only fundamental epistemic good. Such a monism is, according to Pritchard’s diagnosis, the root of the swamping problem. If one accepts T-monism, then the assumed value of true belief makes it such that any further proposed condition on knowledge will be swamped by the presence of true belief. If knowledge can be shown to be of final value, then knowledge will also be a fundamental epistemic good, and T-monism will have been shown to be false.⁶¹ (Pritchard 2010, 22-24) In order to avoid

⁶⁰ If the fundamental / non-fundamental categories apply to other domains, then anything of final value becomes a fundamental good in those domains. That would be rather odd, as it would then follow that knowledge is a fundamental good in all other domains. As this would be quite odd, I interpret Pritchard as viewing final goods as somehow connected to particular domains, but not others.

⁶¹ In his longer discussion, Pritchard claims that Kvanvig’s *swamping problem* presupposes T-monism. Pritchard claims that whatever else is being claimed to have relevant epistemic standing (such as *justification* or *reliability*), it will, at most, be merely instrumental to true belief. Hence, knowledge will never be able to be *more* valuable than true belief unless some non-instrumental epistemic standing is introduced. I am saving discussion of this until the end of this chapter since it dovetails with my general criticism of Pritchard’s approach.

ambiguity, Pritchard claims that the swamping problem can be reframed as a paradox involving the following three claims.

- (1) The epistemic value conferred on a belief by that belief having an epistemic property is instrumental epistemic value relative to the further epistemic good of true belief. (T-monism)
- (2) If the value of X is only instrumental value relative to a further good and that good is already present, then it can confer no additional value.
- (3) Knowledge that p is sometimes more epistemically valuable than mere true belief that p. (Pritchard 2010, 15)

Before unpacking the triad, it is worth highlighting how Pritchard's framing of the swamping problem introduces a level of nuance not usually recognized with regard to the swamping problem. The standard approach to the swamping problem is to view it as (more or less) the primary value problem. For example, the Stanford Encyclopedia entry on the issues states:

Elsewhere in the literature (e.g., Kvanvig 2003), [the primary value] problem has been called the "swamping problem", on account of how the value of true belief 'swamps' the value of the true belief being produced in a reliable (i.e., truth-conducive) way. So expressed, the moral of the problem seems to be that where reliabilists go awry is by treating the value of the process as being solely captured by the reliability of the

process—i.e., its tendency to produce the desired effect. Since the value of the effect swamps the value of the reliability of the process by which the effect was achieved, this means that reliabilism has no resources available to it to explain why knowledge is more valuable than true belief.

(Pritchard, Turri, and Carter 2022)

The standard formulation of the primary problem, however, does not restrict what kinds of values are at play (whereas the third of the three claims above does). One could propose an answer to the primary problem that appeals to a kind of practical value that knowledge has over mere true belief. Plato is a standard candidate for such an answer as he appealed to the *stability* of knowledge over mere true belief. (Meno 97a) Such stability has typically been interpreted to be a kind of practical, rather than epistemic, value. Such value, however, does not resolve Pritchard's reformulation of the paradox. Hence, they are different problems.⁶²

For Pritchard, the only plausible way to resolve the paradox is to reject (1). (3) being false results in all three value problems being either unsolvable or pseudo-problems. Pritchard has his own answers to the primary and secondary problems, so this option is unattractive. Additionally, there is no way (at least by Pritchard's lights) to reject (2). (Pritchard 2010, 16) Hence, he opts for denying (1). There are, however, two ways to deny (1) The first way is to adopt a different kind of monist view. As an example, Pritchard describes a view he dubs *epistemic value K-monism*. The view is in large part an extension of Timothy Williamson's 2000 book *Knowledge and its Limits*. There,

⁶²As Pritchard notes, denying (3) may motivate the practical value answer to the primary problem, but that such a move is not entailed by the practical answer. (Pritchard 2010 16-17)

Williamson advocates for a ‘knowledge first’ approach to epistemology. (Williamson 2000, v) A proponent of K-monism is someone who claims that knowledge (rather than mere true belief) is the *only* fundamental epistemic good. (Pritchard 2010, 19) Such a position flatly rejects (1) and so the inconsistency is immediately resolved. Helpful as this is, Pritchard claims the view faces two immediate challenges: (i) it must explain why T-monism has been so attractive, and (ii) it must establish that either knowledge has final value, *or* it must explain why the tertiary problem is not a genuine problem. (Pritchard 2010, 18-20)

The second approach that Pritchard surveys is that of epistemic value pluralism. This is the position that there are more fundamental epistemic values than just true belief. (Pritchard 2010, 21-22) An obvious proponent for such a view is Jonathan Kvanvig. Kvanvig argued that there were several fundamental epistemic goods; chief among them understanding. Such a view directly addresses the triad since more than just true belief is fundamentally valuable.^{63, 64} Other value pluralisms are possible, but Pritchard’s point is that they all result in a rejection of (1). Pritchard then claims that there are two challenges for the pluralist: (i) the value pluralist must explain why knowledge is not just instrumental to true belief, and (ii), they, like the K-monist above, must explain how

⁶³ Another proponent for a view such as this is William Alston (2005). There he states that while truth is the primary goal of cognition it is “...not the sole desirable feature of belief from the epistemic point of view, defined in terms of the primary aim of cognition at true belief. The crucial point is that the most basic aim of cognition is not the only thing aimed at by cognition, not even the only thing aimed at from the standpoint of that most basic aim.” (Alston 2005, 36)

⁶⁴ Though, as Pritchard points out, a Kvanvig-styled pluralism may also reject (3) for reasons surveyed in the last chapter. Rejecting (3), however, is not required as Kvanvig never argues that S knowing p excludes S from also understanding p. In fact, Pritchard claims in chapter four that very often, when one has ‘propositional understanding’ one also knows that very same proposition. (Pritchard 2010, 21; 83)

knowledge has final value, *or* they must explain the tertiary problem away. (Pritchard 2010, 22-23) The K-monist and the value pluralist, thus, have more work to do.

Rather than attempting to address those sets of challenges, Pritchard opts for a more direct resolution of the tertiary problem *and* the triad. With regard to the triad: if knowledge has final value then it is a fundamental epistemic good, and (1) can be rejected. With regard to the tertiary problem: if we can establish that knowledge has final value, then knowledge will be of a different kind of value than that which falls short. As a further bonus, establishing the final value of knowledge will help both the K-monist and the value pluralist with regard to the second challenge that both positions must face. That is quite a lot of philosophical bang for your axiological buck.

It is possible, however, that we will fail to establish the final value of knowledge. In that case, the only remaining option is to explain why the tertiary problem is a pseudo-problem. (Pritchard 2010, 24) Final value and the tertiary problem live or die together. In order to give knowledge the best chance at having final value Pritchard proposes that knowledge is finally valuable because it is a kind of *achievement*.

§3 Knowledge as an Achievement

Pritchard's method for establishing the final value of knowledge adopts, as did Zagzebski and Kavanvig above, a virtue theoretic approach to knowledge. Pritchard's reason for this is that the virtue theoretic emphasizes agency in a way that results in knowledge being a kind of achievement, and "achievements are finally valuable".⁶⁵

⁶⁵ This is inline with the views of Zagzebski and Greco already discussed, and also that of Sosa (2007).

(Pritchard 2010, 31) Pritchard's focus will be on what he calls *robust virtue epistemology*. The view is robust because it analyzes knowledge solely in terms of true beliefs which an agent holds *because of* their cognitive abilities. (Pritchard 2010, 25) The *because of* relation is meant to capture the notion that the "true belief is because of an agent's cognitive abilities when it is primarily creditable to the agent that her belief is true." (Pritchard 2010, 27) No further anti-Gettier condition, according to Pritchard, is required. Take, for example, Chisholm's famous case. Imagine a shepherd who forms a true belief about a sheep being in the field, but who unwittingly is staring at a sheep-shaped object which itself is actually in front of an actual sheep. (Chisholm 1989, 93) The robust account can handle this because the true belief in question is not because of - is not primarily creditable - to the shepherd. Pritchard takes this initial success to be evidence that the robust theory will be successful against Gettier-styled cases more broadly. (Pritchard 2010, 27)

When you hold a true belief because of your cognitive abilities, then it is a kind of achievement. Pritchard calls this the *knowledge-as-achievement* (KA) thesis. The motivation for this thesis is as follows:

"Imagine, for example, that you are about to undertake a course of action designed to attain a certain outcome and that you are given the choice between merely being successful in what you set out to do, and being successful in such a way that you exhibit an achievement. Suppose further that it is stipulated in advance that there are no practical costs or benefits to choosing either way. Even so, wouldn't you prefer to exhibit an

achievement? And wouldn't you be right to do so? If that is correct, then this is strong evidence for the final value of achievements." (Pritchard 2010, 30)

KA, according to Pritchard, provides a straightforward solution to the primary problem since the value of achievement is independent from the value of true belief. Additionally, it also sidesteps Kvanvig's objection to any proposed solution to the secondary problem (see chapter three). Kvanvig's claim was that, while necessary for knowledge, an anti-Gettier condition cannot provide non-derivative value. The robust account blocks Gettier cases with a condition that is also independently valuable. The robust theory also answers the tertiary problem. Knowledge is more valuable in kind because achievements are finally valuable, whereas that which falls short is, at best, a fundamental epistemic good. Finally, the inconsistent triad is resolved since the final value of knowledge entails that knowledge is a fundamental epistemic good, and so (1) can be rejected.

Despite these clear benefits of the view, Pritchard ultimately finds KA to be false. To demonstrate this, Pritchard argues that knowledge and achievement can be had independently of one another. To this end Pritchard first seeks to show that you can have cognitive achievement without knowledge. He does this by introducing a series of environmental luck cases which he claims are inconsistent with knowledge but consistent with achievements. Environmental luck cases are importantly different from Gettier cases. In such an environmental luck case, an agent achieves their goal despite the epistemic environment of the agent being unknowingly hostile. In cases where such luck

is at play, achievement can occur even though knowledge cannot. Take a standard barn façade case. In such a case the agent can be rightly said to have had a cognitive achievement since the true belief that they form is due to their cognitive abilities. Despite this, knowledge is not gained since they could have easily been mistaken. Pritchard takes cases like this to be very different from standard Gettier-style cases because in typical Gettier cases (such as Chisolm's) the luck at play is "between" the agent and the truth. In a barn façade case, however, the luck at play is not between the agent and the truth, but is in the epistemic environment itself. In other words, "...there can be cases in which (environmental) knowledge-undermining luck is involved where the luck does not in the process undermine the achievement in question." (Pritchard 2010, 36) Hence, cognitive achievement can be had even when knowledge is prevented by environmental luck.

Next, Pritchard seeks to demonstrate that you can gain knowledge without it counting as an achievement. To this end Pritchard relies on Jennifer Lackey's 2007 paper *Why We Don't Deserve Credit for Everything we Know*. Case 4 from that paper is most relevant to Pritchard's purposes.

"Having just arrived at the train station in Chicago, Morris wishes to obtain directions to the Sears Tower. He looks around, approaches the first adult passerby that he sees, and asks how to get to his desired destination. The passer-by, who happens to be a Chicago resident who knows the city extraordinarily well, provides Morris with impeccable directions to the Sears Tower by telling him that it is located two blocks east of the train

station. Morris unhesitatingly forms the corresponding true belief. (Lackey 2007, 352)

Lackey's main goal with this case is to put pressure on any epistemic principle which claims that knowledge entails credit for the agent.⁶⁶ The pressure from the case resides in a recognition that Morris did very little to gain knowledge of the Sears Tower's location. True, he deserves *some* credit as he didn't ask a baby for directions, he didn't ask a non-human animal, etc. He does not, however, deserve much credit as the basis for his choosing seems to be fairly non-discriminatory. He could have easily asked a bad informant and would have accepted a false claim. (Lackey 2007, 353-354) At most, Pritchard concludes, Morris deserves *minor* credit. (Pritchard 2010, 40) Given that Morris' true belief is not *primarily* creditable to him, the knowledge he gains is not a cognitive achievement. In addition to cases of testimony, Pritchard also claims that there is also a great deal of 'self-trust' involved in thinking that our faculties are reliable. (Pritchard 2010, 45) This self-trust, Pritchard claims, is as ungrounded as was Morris' trust in a stranger. If this is right, then an enormous amount of our knowledge is not an achievement since it is equivalent to asking the first stranger we see for directions. Knowledge and achievements, Pritchard thus concludes, come apart.⁶⁷ (Pritchard 2010, 46)

If Pritchard is right, the payoff for establishing the final value of knowledge was nothing more than a pipe dream. Viewing knowledge as a kind of achievement was,

⁶⁶ She calls such a principle CREDIT. (Lackey 2007, 346)

⁶⁷ It is an interesting aspect of this issue that the focus is entirely on individuals alone. Certainly there is some sense in which community practice is important in these determinations. Interestingly, this seems to be the exact kind of thing that Craig's account was interested in but which seems to have been lost (at least in this discussion).

according to Pritchard, the best - and only - option for establishing knowledge as finally valuable. (Pritchard 2010, 45) With that hope now dashed, the tertiary problem becomes unsolvable. (Pritchard 2010, 47) Rather than mourn this loss, Pritchard seeks to explain how so many epistemologists have been so deceived into accepting the claim that knowledge is finally valuable. If this assumption can be debunked, then the tertiary problem itself was merely a pseudo-problem the whole time.

§4 The Two Master Intuitions

Granting for the moment that robust virtue epistemology fails to establish knowledge as being distinctive in its value, Pritchard proposes a compromise. Virtue epistemologists, Pritchard claims, have been right to emphasize an ability condition on knowledge due to the strength of the intuition “that knowledge is the product of one’s cognitive abilities, such that when one knows one’s cognitive success is, in substantial part at least, creditable to one.” (Pritchard 2010, 51) What needs to be recognized by those epistemologists, however, is that there is another powerful intuition about knowledge. This intuition, states Pritchard, is the anti-luck intuition. (Pritchard 2010, 51) The anti-luck intuition is the intuition “that knowledge is incompatible with luck in the sense that if one knows, then it ought not to be the case that one’s true belief could easily have been false.” (Pritchard 2010, 51) For Pritchard when a belief couldn’t have easily been false then the belief is *safe*. Translating this anti-luck intuition into an explicit safety condition on knowledge has been, for Pritchard specifically, a matter of significant variability.⁶⁸ Rather than attempt to properly formulate it once again, Pritchard is content with the above rough characterization of safety. (Pritchard 2010, 54 footnote 2) The one

⁶⁸ See: Pritchard 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2014a, 2014b, 2019.

thing Pritchard does want to be clear about, however, is that the safety condition is much more than just an anti-Gettier condition.

The adding of an anti-Gettier codicil to one's view simply fails to comprehend the important role that the anti-luck intuition plays in our thinking about knowledge. (Pritchard 2010, 53)

Here Pritchard has in mind those who would claim that the virtue theoretic position is *nearly all* there is to knowledge, and that all that is needed is a further condition to prevent the occasional Gettier cases from cropping up. The anti-luck intuition is not some minor piece of the epistemic puzzle. There are many more ways that one's belief could have easily been false than just those cases that we deem to be in the spirit of Gettier. For Pritchard, the intuition that lucky true belief must be guarded against is a substantial one. (Pritchard 2010, 52-54)

This is not to place the anti-luck intuition ahead of the ability intuition. When these two, as he calls them, *master intuitions* are accorded "equal weight" we arrive at what Pritchard calls *anti-luck virtue epistemology*. (Pritchard 2010, 51-54) On such an account, knowledge is a safe true belief that arises out of the reliable cognitive traits that make up the agent's cognitive character, such that one's cognitive success is to a significant degree creditable to one's cognitive character.⁶⁹ (Pritchard 2010, 54) In the case of Morris, he still counts as knowing even though he fails to have a cognitive

⁶⁹ Pritchard's requirement that knowledge be 'creditable to one's cognitive character' is meant to be substantially different from the robust virtue theorist's 'being the product of' or Greco's *because of* relation. Pritchard's formulation is meant to be weaker. This is due to Pritchard's focus on the cognitive success only needing to be *primarily creditable to*, rather than *because of*, the agent's "cognitive character". (Pritchard 2010 54-55)

achievement. Though Morris' true belief was not primarily creditable to him, there is some amount of credit that he deserves. Pritchard claims such an amount of credit is significant enough to have satisfied the ability condition. Additionally, since the true belief was safe, testimonial knowledge is salvaged.⁷⁰ (Pritchard 2010, 55)

As a further benefit, anti-luck virtue epistemology is well positioned to answer both the primary and the secondary value problems. To do so, Pritchard relies on Edward Craig to explain how both problems can be solved.

After all, if the Craig-style story about the concept of knowledge is right, then we have the beginnings of a plausible answer to the secondary value problem and, thereby, the primary value problem too. For it seems that knowledge, on this view, marks out a distinctive epistemic standing which is of particular instrumental value to us. We would thus expect knowledge to be of more instrumental value than that which falls short of knowledge, even though knowledge is not finally valuable. (Pritchard 2010, 63-64)

While Pritchard does not endorse the details of Craig's account, he does find Craig's general framework to be promising. The idea that the concept of knowledge helps us to pick out reliable informants fits nicely with an anti-luck virtue account. Informants are reliable because of their cognitive abilities, and so the ability intuition is captured. Moreover, our being able to acquire knowledge from such informants shows that our

⁷⁰ Though Pritchard does not come back to the topic, such an account of knowledge also vindicates the aforementioned cases of self-trust as knowledge. Such self-trust arises from both our cognitive abilities to a significant degree, and (we hope) such beliefs could not have easily been false.

epistemic environment is friendly, and so the anti-luck intuition is also captured. For Pritchard, this matchup between the Craig-styled story and the two master intuitions is further support for his view. (Pritchard 2010, 60-62) Additionally, there are a few ways in which a proponent of anti-luck virtue epistemology can respond to the inconsistent triad. Since knowledge is not finally valuable according to Pritchard, he is open to denying (3). This would amount, he claims, to the view that knowledge is only more practically, but not epistemically, valuable than mere true belief. On the other hand, something like the K-monist or pluralist response doesn't seem obviously wrong to Pritchard either. If we remember back to that discussion, both the K-monist and the pluralist had two challenges from Pritchard. Rejecting the legitimacy of the tertiary problem solves half of those challenges. Pritchard thus concludes that since one of these answers to the swamping problem will work, he needn't take a stance. (Pritchard 2010, 64) All that remains, then, is for an explanation of why the tertiary problem is not a genuine problem.

What Pritchard now takes his task to be is to explain why it has seemed to so many theorists that knowledge is a kind of achievement. Pritchard claims that this is so because in *paradigm* cases of knowledge, there is an achievement present. (Pritchard 2010, 63) Cases such as Lackey's are quite peculiar and non-paradigmatic. Hence, we do not apply the lesson of those cases more broadly (even though we should). At most, Pritchard concludes, knowledge and a species of achievement sometimes coincide. (Pritchard 2010, 63) Paradigm cases of knowledge are almost always coincidental with an achievement, and we erroneously generalize from that coincidence. The cases which would show the foolishness of those judgements have features which do not easily translate easily, and so we treat them as exceptions rather than the rule. If we look more

generally at cases of knowledge, and do not sideline the odd cases, then knowledge cannot be viewed as an achievement. (Pritchard 2010, 63)

From the ashes of the tertiary problem, Pritchard then goes on to offer his account of why understanding, rather than knowledge, is finally valuable as a cognitive achievement. He also offers a thought provoking discussion of what constitutes an achievement of this kind and why such achievements are themselves finally valuable. (Pritchard 2010, 66-88) Interesting as those further claims are, I intend to put pressure on Pritchard's rejection of the tertiary problem itself. Knowledge, I will now argue, is of final value even if it is not an achievement.

§5 Final Value

By my lights, there are no *a priori* arguments that can be given with regard to whether or not something has final value. Despite this limitation, I propose two criteria which, when satisfied, provide good (though not decisive) reasons for thinking that something has final value. The first criteria is as follows:

Criterion 1: ϕ is finally valuable if there is a strong and persistent intuition about the special value of ϕ that is widely shared across time, place, and language.⁷¹

The strength and persistence of the intuition is meant to capture the kind Pritchard noted at the start of the previous chapter regarding the “long history” of philosophical theorizing about knowledge. That the intuition is widespread is meant to capture the

⁷¹ I wish to emphasize again that, at least with knowledge, the kind of final value present is to be best understood as being present in the vast majority of cases. Trivial cases of knowledge lack such value as is evident by their not satisfying Criterion 1.

notion that things of final value matter to most people. If it turned out that things of final value mattered only to the academically elite, then the source of such final value would be dependent on something like education. Again, I do not have an *a priori* argument against such a position, but I do think that an elitist axiology should be avoided. It should be noted that while the intuition that I'm after needs to be strong, intuitions are also quite difficult to articulate. Hence, though the intuition may be widely held and strong, finding evidence of its being held may not be easy to find. In fact, the only hard evidence of it may be in academic treatments. Hence, while this first criterion requires widespread acceptance of the intuition, what counts as "widespread acceptance" is difficult to test for. Additionally, we are subject to various biases that may influence which intuitions we take strong or widespread. Hence, a certain level of caution is required when sifting through our various intuitions. Despite these limitations, however, something like the first criterion does have support from theorists besides myself.

In chapter two of Kvanvig's book, he adopts the view that truth is intrinsically valuable. Just before closing the chapter, however, Kvanvig considers someone who would disagree with him about the intrinsic value of truth. The intrinsic value of truth is important to the epistemic picture that Kvanvig is painting, and so you would expect some kind of novel argument rendering such skeptical worries impotent. Kvanvig, however, does not do this. He instead states that such a challenge puts him "in an awkward position, for when pressed to account for the ... value of *anything*, it is very hard to know what to say," and that "claims of ... value are deeply troublesome claims to defend". (Kvanvig 2003, 42 italics added) Now, to be fair, Kvanvig is specifically

discussing intrinsic value, and not (at least explicitly) final value.⁷² The important point, however, is that Kvanvig is asserting that the plausibility or appeal of any given value claims bottoms out at the level of intuition. Such a view supports Criterion 1.

Additionally, Pritchard himself says something quite similar in his chapter on the final value of understanding. (Pritchard 2010, chapter 4) The context of the passage of interest revolves around whether or not any ole kind of achievement will count as finally valuable. Pritchard does not think so. As an example, he asks us to imagine someone who wants to raise their hand and then does. That person has successfully acted, and so has achieved their goal. This achievement, however, is *not* of final value. (Pritchard 2010, 70) In order to flesh out what kind of achievements do count as finally valuable, Pritchard seeks to compare the following two theses:

Weak Achievement Thesis: Achievements are successes that are because of ability.

Strong Achievement Thesis: Achievements are successes that are because of ability where the success in question either involves the overcoming of a significant obstacle or the exercise of a significant level of ability. (Pritchard 2010, 70)

The weak thesis is meant to capture cases analogous to the arm raising case, whereas the strong thesis is meant to capture cases requiring a stronger amount of agent involvement.

⁷² In fact, the phrases “final value” and “finally valuable” never occur in Kvanvig’s book. At some places his use of “intrinsic value” seems to be partially related to final value, but at other times it is not.

Pritchard concludes that it is only in the stronger sense that achievements have final value (Pritchard 2010, 73) But, on what evidence does Pritchard cite in favor of this conclusion? Intuitive appeal.

Think of the cases of easy achievements that we have just noted, such as raising one's arm in normal circumstances... *Do we have any intuition that such successes are finally valuable?* I suggest not. In contrast, when we turn our attentions specifically towards the class of achievements demarcated by the more restrictive strong achievement thesis, *the intuition of final value returns.* (Pritchard 2010, 70 italics added)

Hence, Pritchard is claiming that reflecting on achievements which satisfy the strong thesis will elicit a strong and widespread intuition. The rhetorical force behind Pritchard's above quote is in effect claiming that this intuition regarding the value of achievements is sufficient for establishing strong achievements as finally valuable. In other words, Pritchard endorses something very close to Criterion 1.

Hence, I think that something like Criterion 1 is an appropriate first step in establishing the final value of a thing. By my lights, knowledge fully satisfies this criterion. The verb *know* is in the top 100 most common words in English according to the Oxford English Dictionary.⁷³ Additionally, the term "know" occurs in every language and is considered by many linguists to be a *semantic primitive* or *semantic prime*. Such primitives or primes are claimed to be the most basic and simple linguistic concepts.

⁷³ By contrast, *understanding* and *believe* are in the top 500. For more see: https://www.oed.com/dictionary/know_v

Empirical evidence from cross-linguistic semantics indicates that despite the tremendous variation, a very small number of simple meanings connected with cognitive processes are shared across languages, namely (to list them using English terms) THINK, FEEL, WANT, and KNOW. These are among the 63 universal semantic primes identified over the past 20 years of cross-linguistic research. (Goddard 2010, 72)

In addition to the linguistic evidence, there is also the issue of skepticism in epistemology. The great variety of skeptical scenarios, and those theories meant to combat them, speak to a kind of unique focus on knowledge - even if this focus was adversarial. Skepticism, of course, looks differently depending on the kind of skepticism we are discussing. External world skepticism of the kind that Descartes sought to vanquish focuses on how we can have knowledge about anything outside of our mind. Others, such as Hume, focused on (among other things) skepticism about the ability for inductive inference to produce knowledge. Kant, famously, claimed that there were limitations to what could be known due entirely to the *a priori* preconditions for our experience. Such limitations allow us only to have knowledge of the appearances of reality, and never of reality in itself. Many more skeptical concerns and replies could be listed, but I will close this discussion by focusing back on Kvanvig and Pritchard. Though they disagree in the details of their arguments, they both agree that ultimately knowledge has been the wrong place to look for epistemic value. This is what I'll call a kind of value skepticism about knowledge. Neither of them claim that knowledge is impossible to be

had in the manner that a traditional skeptic would. Instead, they claim that because knowledge lacks a certain kind of value, it is not worthy of the focus that it has had historically. Despite this, both Kvanvig and Pritchard do concede that there is a long and pervasive interest in knowledge. The division between us is that they seek to explain this interest away. Should Kvanvig or Pritchard wish to deny this, then they must find a different basis for their claims about the final value of truth, understanding, and strong achievement. Until such a different basis can be offered, I am of the view that knowledge satisfies the first of my two criteria for final value.

The second criteria relies on the insights of Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen (hereafter RRR). The core of what I wish to draw on from RRR involves their claim that we often attribute more value to a thing when that thing has relations with some other thing that we also value. More formally, we value ϕ more when (i) ϕ is related to ψ , (ii) ψ is valuable. RRR use the example of Princess Diana's dress. (RRR 2000, 41) The value of the dress is due to its relation to the former princess. Might this just be instrumental value in disguise? RRR say no.

Diana's dress is perhaps valuable merely as a means: merely because it allows us to establish an indirect connection to a person we admire or find important in one way or another. Having such a connection may be something that we set a final value on. Couldn't this be what is going on here? Not necessarily. Even if the desire to establish such an 'affiliation' with Diana may well be a part of the causal explanation of our evaluative attitude towards the dress, this does not imply that the evaluative attitude

itself is of the instrumental kind: if we idolise Diana, we do not simply find the dress useful for some purpose; we ascribe an independent value to it. (RRR 2000, 41)

The dress is itself valuable because of the relation to Diana. An exact duplicate of the dress will fail to have the value of the actual dress. Hence, we value the dress as a kind of end and, hence, the dress has final value. Moreover these relations are often contingent (Diana was not fated to wear the dress). The upshot of this is that two things can vary in their levels of final value despite having the same intrinsic properties. This, of course, does not prevent a thing from having final value due to its intrinsic properties. RRR seek merely to expand the bases which can provide such value. The second criteria, then, states:

Criterion 2: ϕ is finally valuable if either 1) such final value is due to the intrinsic properties of ϕ , or 2) ϕ 's relation to ψ confers final value.⁷⁴

It should be noted that the above disjunction is meant inclusively. ϕ may be finally valuable due to its intrinsic properties, and due to its relation to ψ . A dress made of gold may be finally valuable due to the intrinsic nature of gold, and the dress may be finally valuable due to its relation to some important historical personage. Such cases of multiple sources for value strike me as an important axiological possibility. Pritchard

⁷⁴ Note that if a virtue theoretic account of knowledge fails to be a proper analysis of knowledge, it remains possible that a virtue condition itself may yet have value. I am certainly sympathetic to the idea that at least sometimes I value either receiving credit for an achievement, or deserving such credit. If it turns out that a virtue condition on knowledge is not necessary, it may in fact be valuable in the Jonesian sense, and hence the value of knowledge is explained even further.

would likely not accept this criterion. Pritchard claimed that things of final value have such value due to their nature. (Pritchard 2010, 12) In the original dress case, it is not the nature of the dress that explains the final value, but its connection to Diana. Despite this, I think that the non-instrumental nature of the kind of value relation that RRR are focused on requires us to allow for the possibility that such value is final. To that end, I find the second criterion plausible. The Jonesian account of the value of knowledge dovetails nicely with this second criterion. The value of knowledge is due in large part to its contingent, but frequent, relation with I/I and a Craigan testimony. It is these external relations that Jones himself pointed to as the basis for the value of knowledge over mere true belief. Knowledge is, in general, more valuable when the Jonesian contingent conditions are present. Such value is not instrumental, and so knowledge is finally valuable.

Knowledge thus satisfies both of the criteria that I have laid out. While I have tried to be careful to distance myself from this constituting some kind of proof, I do take it as good reason (perhaps as good a reason as is possible) for accepting the final value of knowledge. Even though Pritchard would reject Criterion 2, he does accept something like my first criterion. Such an acceptance, however, places him in an uncomfortable position. If his appeals to intuitions regarding final value are sufficient to establish the final value of strong achievements (a position I am more than willing to grant), then he ought to also accept that knowledge has final value for the very same reasons. If he seeks to reject the final value of knowledge, then he would in effect be rejecting the first criteria. He is free to do so, but in so doing he will be undermining his own view regarding the final value of achievements. Hence, Pritchard ought to accept either that

both knowledge and achievement are finally valuable, or that neither of them have such value. Assuming that he would opt for the first horn, then an answer to the tertiary problem follows immediately. That which falls short of knowledge is of a different kind of value than knowledge. As a kind of olive branch, I do also think it important to note that I have no objection to the claim that understanding also has final value. If Pritchard is right and understanding is more valuable than knowledge, then we can again rely on RRR's helpful account. If understanding is related to a greater amount of valuable things than knowledge, then establishing the superior value of understanding is fairly straightforward. Such flexibility is to me a great benefit of this axiological view. The final hurdle for the Jonesian to overcome is to provide a principled basis for rejecting one of the members of the inconsistent triad.

§6 Back to the Swamp

As a final benefit of my view regarding final value, an immediate answer to Pritchard's inconsistent triad is at hand. The inconsistent triad was the following set of three plausible but inconsistent claims:

- (1) The epistemic value conferred on a belief by that belief having an epistemic property is instrumental epistemic value relative to the further epistemic good of true belief.
- (2) If the value of X is only instrumental value relative to a further good and that good is already present, then it can confer no additional value.
- (3) Knowledge that p is sometimes more epistemically valuable than mere true belief that p. (Pritchard 2010, 15)

Pritchard claimed that rejecting (1) was the only likely path forward if we also sought to answer the tertiary problem. Explaining why we should reject (1), however, was the tricky part. For the K-monist, *a la* Williamson, rejecting (1) required addressing two issues. The K-monist must (a-i) explain why T-monism has been so attractive, and (ii) must explain how knowledge has final value, *or* they must explain the tertiary problem away. (Pritchard 2010, 18-20) For the value pluralist, who claimed that there are many fundamental epistemic goods, rejecting (1) required addressing two issues. The value pluralist (b-i) must explain why knowledge is not just instrumental to true belief, and (ii), must explain how knowledge has final value, *or* they must explain the tertiary problem away. (Pritchard 2010, 22-23)

As I am not a monism, either T- or K-, I seek to only develop a pluralist response to these two challenges.⁷⁵ Value pluralism seems a natural fit for the Jonesioan model. Both I/I and being a good informant are important epistemic goods which can exist alongside other valuable epistemic goods. Answering (b-i) and (ii) is a fairly straightforward matter given the above discussion of final value. With regard to (ii), the above discussion plausibly establishes the final value of knowledge. With regard to (b-i), this final value of knowledge prevents it from being merely instrumental to true belief. Knowledge just is valuable for its own sake. Hence, (1) can be safely rejected.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ I am finally fulfilling the promissory note of footnote 16.

⁷⁶ Interestingly, Pritchard almost anticipates this move in his discussion of the triad. "If it were to turn out, however, that knowledge is only of greater epistemic value than mere true belief because of the greater epistemic value of a necessary component of knowledge (still less, a non-necessary component), then that would surely threaten the central role that knowledge plays in epistemological theorizing almost as much as the claim that knowledge is never of greater epistemic value than mere true belief. After all, why should we now care whether we have knowledge, specifically, rather than just true belief plus the extra fundamentally valuable epistemic property? (The observant reader will spot that this is essentially a variant of the

§7 Conclusion

We now have our answers to the three value problems. The first two value problems were solved without an explicit appeal to final value. This was done strategically so as to avoid complicating the discussion as neither Zagzebski's approach to the primary problem, nor Kvanvig's approach to the secondary problem, invoked final value. With the tertiary problem, however, we can now see the larger axiological power of the Jonesian conditions. These conditions are related to knowledge in such a way that added final value is conferred upon knowledge. Neither mere true belief, nor any of the proper subsets of knowledge, enjoy such a kind of value. Hence, that which falls short is of a lesser kind of value than knowledge.

secondary value problem...as applied to the specific issue of epistemic value raised by the swamping problem.)" (Pritchard 2010, 22 italics added)

I think there is a bit of a conflation occurring here. Pritchard, by my lights, seems to be conflating an explainer of value with a bearer of value. With regard to the final value of knowledge, as I have just argued, establishing that knowledge has such value is a matter of intuitive appeal, indirect argument, and any relevant conferred value. With regard to what explains that value, however, our pointing to intuitions is of little help. But, the Jonesian claims, we do get explanations of the value of knowledge when its contingent conditions are present. So, while establishing that knowledge is finally valuable is one matter, explaining that value is quite another.

Chapter 6

Unswamping Modal Epistemology

"I am far from regarding metaphysics itself, objectively considered, to be trivial or dispensable; in fact I have been convinced for some time now that I understand its nature and its proper place in human knowledge and that the true and lasting welfare of the human race depends upon it. "

Immanuel Kant
Letter to Mendelssohn on April 8, 1766

§1 Chapter Goal

Georgi Gardiner has argued that modal epistemology is fundamentally flawed. Any such modal condition on knowledge fails to help explain the value of knowledge. Such a failure is, in Gardiner's estimation, fatal. In this chapter I adopt a framework for epistemic value first introduced by Ward Jones. This framework rejects two assumptions about epistemic value that Gardiner holds. The first assumption requires that any proposed analysis on knowledge must be capable of explaining the value of knowledge. The second assumption denies that there is any other way to answer questions about the value of knowledge. Hence, the Jonesian view seeks to divorce the projects of analysis and axiology. Once this divorce is finalized, the axiological limitations of modal epistemology can no longer be a basis for rejecting it. Hence, Gardiner's criticism fails.

§2 Entering the Swamp

Over the last two and a half decades, many epistemologists have attempted to explain the distinctive value of knowledge.⁷⁷ At first, the task was simply to explain that knowledge was more valuable than mere true belief. Such a task is now known as the *primary value problem*. Such a focus on mere true belief versus knowledge was due primarily to Plato's framing of the question in the *Meno*.⁷⁸ Explaining why knowledge is distinctively valuable, however, requires more than just contrasting it against mere true belief. It must also be explained why knowledge is more valuable than any of its proper subsets. This is the *secondary value problem*. Answering this problem proved much more challenging than the primary problem, though some have claimed to have solved it.⁷⁹ In support of the importance of these two problems, Georgi Gardiner has claimed the following.

These value claims are weak, and are correspondingly plausible and widely held. If [there is no answer to the value problems], it is hard to explain why we seem to care so much about knowledge, why people value attaining and sharing knowledge, why knowledge rather than other

⁷⁷ For example, see: Jones (1997); Williamson (2000); Zagzebski (1996), (2003); Riggs (2003); Kvanvig (2003); Pritchard (2007), (2009), (2010).

⁷⁸ While Plato does offer his own solution to the problem, serious discussion of the primary problem would not arise again until Zagzebski (1996) and Jones (1997). Jones's paper would both anticipate and caution against how much of the eventual literature would take shape. Despite this, most of the influential authors writing about the value problems would neither discuss nor cite Jones's work (a notable exception is Wayne Riggs). A full discussion of Jones's arguments is beyond the scope of this paper, but I do offer a brief discussion of it later in the paper.

⁷⁹ Famously, Jonathan Kvanvig (2003) has argued that the secondary problem cannot be answered. Knowledge, then, is not more valuable than any of its subsets. This led Kvanvig to claim that epistemology needed to be oriented not towards knowledge, but understanding. Duncan Pritchard, in contrast, has claimed to have solved both the primary and secondary value problems with his *anti-luck virtue epistemology*. (Pritchard 2010)

cognitive states plays such a large role in our lives, and why so much epistemological focus has been concerned with knowledge rather than with competing epistemic states such as true belief. The two value [problems] can be seen as constraints on a theory of knowledge: to the extent that the claims are plausible, any proposed theory must either explain, or explain away, these value claims.⁸⁰ (Gardiner 2016, 120-121)

The value problems, then, are a kind of litmus test. If a theory fails to answer them, then that is a failed theory. For simplicity's sake, let us call this view of the role of the two value problems "value's veto power":

Value's Veto Power (VVP): If (i) a theory of knowledge, or (ii) a proposed necessary condition of knowledge beyond mere true belief, or (iii) a proposed sufficient condition of knowledge beyond mere true belief does not to contribute, even partially, to an explanation of the value of knowledge within the context of the value problems, then that theory or condition is vetoed.

⁸⁰ There is a third value problem that Gardiner does not discuss. This is known as *the tertiary value problem* and is the challenge of explaining why knowledge is more valuable in kind and not just degree than that which falls short. The motivation for this problem is that if knowledge is only a little better than that which falls short, then it is left unexplained why so much epistemological focus, both past and present, has been given to knowledge rather than something almost as good. (Pritchard 2007; 2009; 2010) Ultimately Pritchard rejects the tertiary problem as genuine. (Pritchard 2010) In her paper, Gardiner never mentions or discusses the tertiary problem. It is unclear if this is because discussing it was, by her lights, immaterial to her thesis, or because she (like Pritchard) rejects the tertiary problem as genuine. Either way, this omission is not relevant to how I will criticize her argument, and so I will join Gardiner in focusing on just the two value problems for the remainder of the paper.

Such vetoing is required, Gardiner claims, for any modal condition on knowledge. In order to see why modal conditions cannot help answer the two value problems, Gardiner focuses on one of the most well known modal conditions discussed in the literature: *safety* (specifically on Duncan Pritchard's 2005 version).⁸¹ The motivation for Pritchard's version of safety is rooted in the intuition that luck is inconsistent with knowledge. According to Pritchard, a belief P is lucky if and only if P is true in the actual world, but false in a wide enough class of close possible worlds. (Pritchard 2005, 128 - 129) Since the belief could have easily been false (given its proximity to so many close possible worlds where it is false), this true belief is more accurately viewed as a *lucky* true belief. Lucky true beliefs are inconsistent with knowledge and so such cases need to be guarded against by an account of knowledge. Pritchard was, in 2005, a proponent of what has come to be called *robust anti-luck epistemology*. On such a view, knowledge just is *safe true belief*. There is a second way, however, by which one might be a safety theorist. This view has come to be called *modest anti-luck epistemology*. According to the modest account, safety is just another necessary condition of knowledge.⁸² (Pritchard 2015a, 103; Pritchard 2015b 11 - 12).

Whichever version is adopted, safety seems to be epistemically valuable as it prevents lucky true beliefs from counting as knowledge. Despite initial appearances, however, Gardiner claims that the value of such a condition requires explanation. (Gardiner 2016, 122) This cannot be done, she claims, because all of

⁸¹ For other accounts of safety, see: Sosa (1999); Williamson (2000).

⁸² The 2007 issue of *Synthese* (volume 158, number 3) was a special issue devoted to epistemic luck. Some powerful challenges to the safety condition occur in that issue. For other notable challenges and responses, see: Neta and Rohrbaugh 2004; Kelp (2009); Levy (2011); Dodd (2012); Coffman (2015); Pritchard and Whittington (2015).

the value afforded by the safety condition is already present in true belief. In other words, we care about safety only to the degree that we care about getting true beliefs. The value contributed by safety is thereby *swamped*.⁸³ Gardiner's formulation of swamping is as follows:

If we value something, M, only instrumentally in virtue of something else, N, and N is present, then in general, the value of M is swamped by the presence of N. M confers no additional value onto the whole. (Gardiner 2016, 122)

As an example of such swamping, Gardiner offers the often used example of *reliabilism*. (Gardiner 2016, 122) As this path is well trodden, we can dispense with the qualifications and simply understand reliabilism as the view that knowledge just is a *reliably formed true belief*. Sadly, so the argument goes, the reliability condition is valuable only to the degree that we value the output of such reliability. In this case, the output is a true belief, and so the value of the true belief swamps the value of the reliability condition. Thus, the reliability condition is vetoed.⁸⁴ In essence, Gardiner is claiming that the safety condition is valuable due solely to its connection with true belief. If there is some independent value contribution from the safety condition, she cannot find it. Such a failure, however,

⁸³ The issue of swamping was made famous by Kvanvig 2003, though he credits Swinburne (1999) and (2000) with originating the issue.

⁸⁴ The *robust safety view* would fail to answer both the primary and secondary problems. The primary problem is unanswerable because safety, the third and final condition of knowledge, derives all of its value from its connection to true belief. The secondary value problem is likewise unanswerable for the robust theorist for the exact same reasons. The *modest safety view* fares better with regard to the primary problem since we may yet hold out hope that some further condition on knowledge will provide independent value. The secondary problem, however, cannot be answered by the *modest view* if safety does not contribute positive value.

can be generalized. *Any* modal conditions on knowledge will be likewise subject to swamping. (Gardiner 2016, 122) Though she doesn't further explain this claim, it is not implausible. Many of the well known proposed modal conditions on knowledge besides safety (e.g. *sensitivity* and *anti-risk*) are formulated with an eye towards true belief.⁸⁵ If that is enough veto safety, then other modal conditions should likewise be vetoed.

§3 Escaping the Swamp

The remainder of Gardiner's paper focuses on four possible replies by modal theorists. Those replies, however, focus on establishing safety as independently valuable. This is not the argumentative strategy that I seek to employ. What I seek is a more fundamental change in methodology. The claim that I will begin to now develop is that it is the *contingent* conditions of knowledge which establish its superior value. If the contingent conditions of knowledge are valuable in the right kind of way, then the value of knowledge can be established even if some of its necessary conditions cannot offer unswamped value.

Such a view was first described by Ward Jones in his paper "Why Do We Value Knowledge?". According to Jones, such a view requires that we keep separate the projects of analysis and axiology. By Jones's lights, the wedding of these two projects is largely the result of decades of attempts by epistemologists to rule out Gettier cases. (Jones 1997, 432-433) Such a focus on producing a Gettier-proof theory of knowledge required a being focused solely on the correct analysis of knowledge. This focus,

⁸⁵ Nozick's sensitivity, for example, is formulated as follows: If p weren't true, S wouldn't believe that p. (Nozick 1981, 172) Additionally, as with safety, anti-risk epistemology "will be that we are intolerant of epistemic risk which is very high (i.e., where the risk event of false belief is modally very close), and hence will not ascribe knowledge, but we will be tolerant of epistemic risk that is very low (i.e., where the risk event of false belief is modally far-off)." (Pritchard 2020, 2886)

however, is quite impotent with regard to questions of value. Simply because some condition on knowledge is not necessary, does not immediately render such a condition valueless. This point, however, appears to have been missed by most authors.⁸⁶ For simplicity's sake, let's call the assumption that the contingent conditions of knowledge cannot contribute value "no contingent value" (NCV).

No Contingent Value (NCV): Whatever value knowledge has beyond mere true belief is explained by its necessary conditions alone.

Logically speaking, NCV and VVP are independent. VVP, for example, says nothing about whether or not the contingent conditions on knowledge can help to explain the value of knowledge. VVP merely requires that each necessary component of a theory of knowledge must contribute unique and positive value. In contrast, NCV explicitly denies the possibility that the contingent conditions on knowledge can bear the kind of value required to address the value problems. Additionally, NCV is consistent with the possibility that some of the necessary components of knowledge lack any value.

As a first step towards rejecting both VVP and NCV, we must first note that not all cases of knowledge are of distinctive value. Cases of what some have called *trivial knowledge* are sufficient to demonstrate this.⁸⁷ Suppose, for example, that I spend all of the time, energy, and resources in an effort to count every blade of grass in my backyard. That such knowledge is of more value than, say, the corresponding mere true belief is not

⁸⁶ DePaul (2009) appears to be the only other author who appears to have noted this.

⁸⁷ See: Jones (1997); Zagzebski (2003); Baehr (2009) (though Jones calls such cases *trivial knowledge*).

obvious.⁸⁸ Given that the necessary conditions of knowledge must all be satisfied in a case of trivial knowledge, the axiological variability must be accounted for by something *other* than those conditions. Such accounting, however, undercuts any plausibility that NCV may have. NCV requires that the only explainers of value for knowledge are its necessary conditions, but that is mistaken. The standards for when knowledge is had cannot be identical with the standards for when knowledge is valuable due to cases of trivial knowledge. Denying NCV does not, however, require Gardiner to drop VVP. As was noted in above, the two are logically independent. Without NCV in the mix, however, there is no good reason to hold VVP. For if the contingent conditions of knowledge can do some of the axiological lifting, then there is no principled reason to require that every necessary condition on knowledge also contribute value.⁸⁹ All that we need are enough value contributors such that, in the vast majority of cases, knowledge comes out on top. In the next section I will describe the two Jonesian conditions which, though contingent, provide sufficient value.

Without VVP, it must be noted, Gardiner's vetoing of all modal conditions fails. Simply because a necessary condition on knowledge lacks independent value is not a sufficient reason for its rejection. Without NCV, there may yet be value explained by the contingent conditions of knowledge. Treating questions of value and question of analysis as separate should be an especially welcome conclusion for those epistemologists who

⁸⁸ This also results in the value problems being understood as the problem of explaining how most cases of knowledge are more valuable than lesser epistemic states. Though this understanding of the value problems is fairly common, its consequences have not been fully appreciated.

⁸⁹ As a final bit of clarification, dropping NCV does not entail that any one contingent condition will be axiologically relevant. The color of my hair is certainly a contingent condition on much of my knowledge, and yet it plays no role with regard to the value of that knowledge. Rather than proposing some criteria for determining which contingent conditions matter, I will instead focus on two conditions that I take to be clearly valuable.

are skeptical that full analysis of knowledge can even be given.⁹⁰ Surely such a possibility shouldn't stifle axiological inquiry. And, even if a full analysis is possible, we should not limit our axiological inquiries to only those parts of knowledge. Modal epistemology, therefore, may yet prove fruitful.⁹¹

Ending the chapter there feels a bit hollow to me. True, I have shown that Gardiner's conclusion fails, but I have done so only by establishing that the contingent conditions of knowledge *may* help establish the distinctive value of knowledge. The Jonesian view highlights two specific contingent conditions that explain the distinctive value of knowledge in the vast majority of cases. I cannot, due to space, demonstrate that the view can address all three of the value problems (though it can). I do have enough space, however, to motivate the conditions as being both value enhancers for knowledge and not subject to swamping. Despite the potency of the Jonesian view, few have engaged with it. It is, by my lights, one of the great oversights of the epistemic value literature that Jones's arguments have not been discussed or debated. The section seeks to, in some small way, remedy that error.

§4 Value Enhancers

Jones proposed two specific contingent conditions which, when present in a case of knowledge, adds to the overall value of that knowledge. The first condition relies on what Jones calls the *internalist intuition*:

⁹⁰ E.g. Williamson (2000) and, to a degree, Zagzebski (1994).

⁹¹ I do not wish, however, to come across as endorsing modal epistemology. My core claim is simply that rejecting it for axiological reasons is misguided.

Internalist Intuition (I/I): Someone who knows that p understands why she has the belief that p. (Jones 1997, 430)

Jones finds I/I compelling because when we understand why we have a particular belief we are aware of the “sources, origins, grounding, or support that we have for that belief”, and such understanding is valuable (Jones 1997, 431) I/I explains what Jones calls the value of the “first person valuing of knowledge.” (Jones 1997, 40) Knowledge is valuable when we can, in a sense, monitor the grounds for that knowledge. Establishing that I/I is contingent is fairly straightforward. Jones highlights cases of what he calls *forgotten knowledge*. In a case of forgotten knowledge the agent has genuine knowledge, but is unaware of the sources, origins, grounding or support for the known belief. As an example, I can know that I need to pick up beer from the grocery store on my way home without thereby grasping the sources, origins, grounding, or support for this piece of knowledge. With regard to the value of I/I, a case of forgotten is clearly less valuable than when I have knowledge with I/I. The vast majority of knowledge is enhanced when we have access to the grounding of our beliefs. As Jones says, “I want to have knowledge and not just mere true beliefs, because I prefer having beliefs which I monitor, beliefs whose personal warrant is open to me.” (Jones 1997, 432)

The second contingent condition on knowledge that Jones discusses emphasizes the testimonial value of knowledge. The specific kind of testimonial account that Jones focuses on is the one offered by Edward Craig in his 1990 book *Knowledge and the State of Nature*. For Craig, knowledge has a function, and this function is to indicate which agents are good informants. (Craig 1990, 18) Knowers and knowledge are valuable

because a knower has a true belief *and* a special property. This property is labeled by Craig as *property X*. Property X has two features: 1) X is (to a degree) detectable, and 2) X has been found to correlate in a lawlike way when one has a true belief. (Craig 1990, 25; 90-91) Hence, Craig finds it valuable that knowers ‘show’ others that they are ‘good’ sources of information. In short, Craig’s answer to the value primary value problem is that knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief because knowers let us see that they (likely) have a true belief. Though Jones does offer some criticisms of Craig’s overall view, he does not deny that something like Craig’s account of testimony is right. In order to establish that this testimonial aspect of knowledge is contingent, Jones simply highlights that testimonial accounts of knowledge can only account only why we value knowledge *in others*. This misses something important for Jones since, even if we do not always inform others, we “think that knowledge is an important state for us to be in”.⁹² (Jones 1997, 430) When we do inform others, however, the value of our knowledge is likewise enhanced. Hence, I/I and a Craig-styled account of testimony explain the value of knowledge even though they are not necessary *for* knowledge.⁹³

⁹² Craig’s account claims that a knowing testifier always has the detectable property X. Jones thinks this too strong since it takes no great imaginative leap to consider an agent who seeks to keep their knowledge a secret. Craig’s response to such a claim is that the concept of knowledge has, in his words, been objectified. Roughly speaking, a concept is created in response to the subjective needs / goals of the agent. When the agent is the member of a group, however, subjective concepts often need to be generalized if the group finds the concept useful. Once objectified, however, the concept is now divorced from its original subjective meaning. This is what Craig claims has happened to the concept of knowledge. The original function of the concept was to highlight good informants. We now, however, have more uses for the concept beyond such highlighting, and so the objectified concept is not identical to the original. What made the original concept valuable was that it highlighted good informants. Granting that the concept has been objectified, means that the necessary and sufficient conditions of the objectified concept will not explain the original value of knowledge, because the concepts are not identical. Despite Jones being quite sympathetic to Craig’s theory, Jones maintains that it does not explain why we value knowledge in ourselves.

⁹³ Something missing from the Jonesian account is a discussion of how trivial cases of knowledge affect the value contributions of both I/I and the Cragian account of testimony discussed above. A concern to address for the Jonesian is whether the contingent conditions associated with

§5 A Clarification about Triviality

Something missing from the Jonesian account is a discussion of how trivial cases of knowledge affect the value contributions of both I/I and the Cragian account of testimony discussed above. A concern to address for the Jonesian is whether the contingent conditions associated with knowledge always generate added value. If they do, then it's hard to see why a case of trivial knowledge with either (or both) I/I and testimony present would not be more valuable than the corresponding mere true belief. Thankfully, I think this worry can be easily assuaged.

Starting with I/I, let us imagine an agent who has gained some trivial bit of knowledge: they know how many blades of grass there are in their backyard. Does the presence of I/I for this agent enhance or upgrade the value of the trivial case of knowledge? My answer is no. When the belief in question is trivial, then such monitoring is likewise valueless (or even *disvaluable*). I do not mean just that it lacks practical value

knowledge always generate added value. If they do, then it's hard to see why a case of trivial knowledge with either (or both) I/I and testimony present would not be more valuable than the corresponding mere true belief. Without trivial knowledge, the Jonesian is at a loss to reject the all-cases interpretation and, hence, their rejection of NCV and VVP cannot be sustained. This worry, however, can be easily assuaged.

Starting with I/I, let us imagine an agent who has gained some trivial bit of knowledge: they know how many blades of grass there are in their backyard. I/I tells us that it is valuable to monitor and to have access to the warrant of various beliefs. When the belief in question is trivial, however, then such monitoring is likewise valueless (or even disvaluable). It is, after all, a waste of my cognitive resources to monitor trivial beliefs in the ways that Jones highlights. Internally monitoring the basis for my trivial belief would be like hiring an accountant to keep track of the finances of a child's lemonade stand. It is a bad use of the accounts time and skills. Similarly, being able to access the basis for a trivial belief is not itself valuable. Additionally, if I testify to you about the number of blades of grass in my backyard, this trivial knowledge is not made more valuable just because you can detect that I am testifying truthfully or because I am a good testifier. It is a waste of my testimonial abilities to convey such worthless truths. It'd be like having the news break into regular scheduled broadcasting for a special alert that a nickel has been found on the sidewalk! The news should not be focused on such things, and neither should good testifiers. Being a good testifier requires that I convey truths worth conveying. Hence, trivial cases of knowledge are not made more valuable by the presence of the Jonesian contingent conditions.

(though it probably does), but such monitoring lacks epistemic value as well. It is a *waste* of my cognitive abilities to monitor trivial beliefs. Internally monitoring the basis for a trivial belief would be like hiring an accountant to keep track of the finances of a child's lemonade stand. It is a bad use of the accountant's time and skill. Likewise, being a good epistemic agent requires that I monitor truths worth monitoring.

As for a Craigian styled account of testimony, if I testify to you about the number of blades of grass in my backyard, this trivial knowledge is not made more valuable just because you can detect that I am testifying truthfully. It is a waste of my testimonial abilities to convey such worthless truths (and a waste of your epistemic abilities to learn it). It'd be like having the news break into regular scheduled broadcasting for a special alert that a nickel has been found on the sidewalk. The news should not be focused on such things, and neither should good testifiers. Being a good testifier requires that I convey truths worth conveying.⁹⁴

§6 Conclusion

My purpose in this chapter was two-fold. The first was to expose and reject the two axiological principles VVP and NCV. In so doing, the pressure was taken off of modal epistemology to provide answers to the value problems. The value of knowledge

⁹⁴ The role that intuitive appeal and judgment are playing here cannot be understated. This is, for better or worse, the primary tool that we have in matters of value. I unpack this more in chapter five where I offer two criteria for final value. The short version is that we can only establish the value of something by intuitive appeal and indirect argument (usually in the form of cases). Trivial beliefs are, to me, clearly worthless. Secondly, value can be enhanced or diminished for something given certain relational properties it has or loses. In the case of a trivial belief, the kind of pointlessness of the belief paired with its use of limited cognitive resources stand out to me as the key relational properties which establish such a belief as valueless. Trivial beliefs, however, can be made non-trivial if those features of the case are changed. My knowledge about the number of blades of grass in my yard can be non-trivial if, say, gaining such knowledge somehow benefited my cognitive life in important ways.

over lesser epistemic states (specifically true belief) could possibly be explained by the contingent conditions of knowledge. This, to be clear, is not an argument in favor of modal epistemology. All that I have done in this chapter is to take the axiological pressure off of the view. Additionally, I have attempted to reinvigorate Jones's view as its depths have not yet been fully plumbed.

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