

On Some Arguments for Epistemic Value Pluralism

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Abstract: Epistemic Value Monism is the view that there is only one kind of thing of basic, final epistemic value. Perhaps the most plausible version of Epistemic Value Monism is Truth Value Monism, the view that only true beliefs are of basic, final epistemic value. Several authors—notably Jonathan Kvanvig and Michael DePaul—have criticized Truth Value Monism by appealing to the epistemic value of things other than knowledge. Such arguments, if successful, would establish Epistemic Value Pluralism is true and Epistemic Value Monism is false. This paper critically examines those arguments, finding them wanting. However, I develop an argument for Epistemic Value Pluralism that succeeds which turns on general reflection on the nature of value.

On a widely held view, true beliefs are of final epistemic value. An interesting question is whether, and why, anything else is. Some authors hold that truth is the most basic thing of final epistemic value, embracing a version of “Epistemic Value Monism” that is sometimes called “Vertisim” or “Truth Value Monism.” Other authors demur, maintaining that the epistemic value of truth cannot explain the epistemic value of everything. Such authors embrace a kind of “Epistemic Value Pluralism.” The debate between Epistemic Value Monists and Pluralists is an important one. For instance, some philosophers might be inclined to understand other epistemic categories—e.g., epistemic obligations or epistemic virtues and vices—in terms of their relation to epistemic value. Clearly settling what is of epistemic value would be important for such projects.

Various arguments have been given against Truth Value Monism and in favor of Epistemic Value Pluralism. We can separate those arguments into two categories. *Knowledge based Arguments* argue that because the epistemic value of truth cannot explain the epistemic value of knowledge we must embrace Epistemic Value Pluralism to explain the epistemic value of knowledge. *Non-Knowledge based Arguments* argue that the epistemic value of truth cannot explain the epistemic value of things besides knowledge. In other work, I have discussed Knowledge based Arguments and will not discuss them here.

Rather, the aim of this paper is to examine Non-Knowledge based Arguments for Epistemic Value Pluralism. I will argue several such arguments fail—they are implausible, obscure, actually consistent with Truth Value Monism, or neglect the relevant distinction between basic and non-basic final value (see below). Nonetheless, I will claim that there is one Non-Knowledge based Argument for Epistemic Value Pluralism that succeeds. That argument turns on plausible general claims about final value.

After setting the stage in section I, I examine an argument for Epistemic Value Pluralism due to Jonathan Kvanvig in section II. I show how his argument is too obscure to carry force. In section III, I focus on a more straightforward argument from Kvanvig on the nature of understanding. But I argue Kvanvig’s view is actually consistent with Truth Value Monism. In

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section IV, I examine a sequence of arguments from Michael DePaul, including one about the appropriateness of responding to experience. I argue that DePaul's account is implausible and a more plausible one is consistent with Truth Value Monism. Finally, in section V, I argue that there is an argument for Epistemic Value Pluralism that is plausible that turns on the idea that it is of final value to value what is of final value. I defend this argument from an objection based on an alternative account of the nature of epistemic value.

I. Stage Setting

By "final epistemic value," I have in mind the kind of value that, from the epistemic point of view, is valuable in and of itself or for its own sake. I will not offer any analysis of the epistemic point of view. I assume that final epistemic value is a kind or species of final value. I do not assume that final epistemic value exhausts all the kinds of final value.

It is widely thought that final value has some sort of important connection to valuing. There are different accounts of this connection. Some offer a deontic connection: when something is of final value, we are obligated to value it; others offer a rationalist connection: when something is of final value, it is rational to value it; some offer a reason based account: when something is of final value, there is reason to value it. My own preferred view is that something is of final value just when it is appropriate to value it. I will assume it in what follows. Little will hang on this internal dispute in what follows.

In evaluating the dispute between Epistemic Value Monism and Epistemic Value Pluralism it will be important to have an account of the distinction between the two. However, one natural way of formulating the distinction between them is problematic. Specifically, it is natural to suppose that proponents of Epistemic Value Monism hold:

For any x and some P , if x is of final epistemic value, then x is P .

Different proponents of Epistemic Value Monism may give different accounts of P . For instance, on this way of thinking, Truth Value Monists hold:

For any x , if x is of final epistemic value, then x is a true belief.

Epistemic Value Pluralists would then be people who reject this general characterization.

This way of formulating the dispute is problematic because it contains a problematic characterization of Value Monism. As I've argued elsewhere (2018), value monists will want their view to have ontological flexibility. That is, they will want a wide range of things to be of final value—e.g., outcomes of actions, lives, entire possible worlds, etc. But this view will not have the desired flexibility. (Outcomes of actions, for instance, are not true beliefs.) Instead, we should think that what makes that position a monistic one is not that it maintains that only one kind of thing is of final value. What makes it monistic is that it maintains that any time something is of final value an explanation of its final value will refer to its connection to one kind of thing. For these reasons, proponents of Epistemic Value Monism should reject:

For any x and some P , if x is of final epistemic value, then x is P .

For this is too narrow a view of what is of value even by the monist's lights.

To understand the dispute between Value Monists and Pluralists, it will be helpful to introduce some terminology. Let us say something is of "basic final value" just when it is of final value but there is no explanation of the final value it has in terms of other things of final value.² Something is of "non-basic final value" just when it is of final value but there is an explanation of the final value it has in terms of other things of final value. Disputes between Value Monists

² This leaves open that there is an explanation of why something is of basic final value that does not appeal to final value. In this way, the distinction does not assume that epistemic value is, in some important meta-normative sense, reducible or not.

and Value Pluralists can then be understood as disputes about basic final value. Specifically, in this context, Epistemic Value Monism holds:

For any x and some P , if x is of basic final epistemic value, then x is P .

Epistemic Value Pluralists would reject this. But both Epistemic Value Monists and Pluralists can agree that a wide range of otherwise metaphysically distinct things are of final epistemic value. Their dispute is simply over whether, to explain such facts, we need to appeal to the final value of one thing or many. (For more on basic final value and issues involving Monism vs Pluralism, see Feldman (2000, 2004), Zimmerman (2001), Perrine (2018).)

Understood in this way, Epistemic Value Monism says that there is only one kind of thing that is of basic final epistemic value. However, this leaves open what exactly is of basic final epistemic value. There could be different “versions” of Epistemic Value Monism that identify different kinds of things as being of basic final epistemic value. For purposes of this paper, I will focus on Truth Value Monism, understood here as the position that the only kinds of things that are of basic final epistemic value are true beliefs. I will focus on this version of Epistemic Value Monism because it is the usual foil to Epistemic Value Pluralism.

II. A Plurality of Evaluations—Kvanvig

One critic of Epistemic Value Monism is Jonathan Kvanvig. In an important paper defending Epistemic Value Pluralism (2005), he urges that seeing truth as the sole or fundamental goal has a “strong reductionist flavor” (2005: 287). To get us to see this, he first characterizes epistemology as “the study of purely theoretical cognitive success,” and urges that we see value in each “independent kind of cognitive success” so that what is of final epistemic value would include a wide range of things including “knowledge, understanding, wisdom, rationality, justification, sense-making, and empirically adequate theories in addition to getting to the truth and avoiding error” (2005: 287). For ease of reference, let’s call this list ‘Kvanvig’s laundry list.’

However, it is not clear exactly what argument against Epistemic Value Monism Kvanvig intends to be defending. Perhaps Kvanvig’s argument is this:

(P1) If something is a “purely theoretical cognitive success,” then it is of final epistemic value.

(P2) There are many independent kinds of purely theoretical cognitive successes.

(C1) So, Epistemic Value Monism is false.

In defense of the second premise, Kvanvig may point to his laundry list. However, once we’ve drawn the distinction between basic final epistemic value and non-basic final epistemic value, we can see that this argument is invalid. For even if there are many kinds of “purely theoretical cognitive successes” it may still be that their value is always explained by appealing to one kind of thing of basic final epistemic value. Once we recognize this distinction, pointing to a plurality of things of final epistemic value cannot, in and of itself, show Epistemic Value Monism false.

Kvanvig might shore up this argument by maintaining that:

(P1) If something is a “purely theoretical cognitive success,” then it is of final epistemic value.

(P2) There are many independent kinds of purely theoretical cognitive success.

(P3). At least one of the independent kinds of purely theoretical cognitive success have final epistemic value that cannot be explained by appealing to a single kind of basic, final epistemic value.

(C1) So, Epistemic Value Monism is false.

This argument avoids the problem of the previous one. But the inclusion of the terminology “purely theoretical cognitive success” is now unnecessary. If (P1)-(P3) is true, then a weaker set of premises will also produce a valid argument against Epistemic Value Monism:

(P4): There is at least one thing of final epistemic value whose final value cannot be explained by appealing to a single kind of basic final epistemic value.

(C1) So Epistemic Value Monism is false.

At this point, it appears that the terminology of “purely theoretical cognitive success” is, at best, doing no necessary work and, at worse, is unduly obscure.

The best way to defend (P4) would be through existential generalization—to give an example of something that is of final epistemic value whose value cannot be explained by the final epistemic value of one thing like truth. I will focus on whether Kvanvig has given us any promising examples of this. The most promising example would be understanding. I focus on it next.

III. Kvanvig on Understanding

Kvanvig argues that the value of understanding is not explained by the value of true belief. If Kvanvig is correct about this, then we have an argument for (P4). This section critically examines Kvanvig’s argument.

Kvanvig focuses on the kind of understanding at issue when one understands that something is the case (2003: 189-90). To use his example, consider someone’s understanding of the “Comanche dominance of the southern plains of North America from the late seventeenth until the late nineteenth centuries” (2003: 197). Kvanvig makes three key claims about this kind of understanding. First, it is, for the most part, factive: such a person has a large number of true beliefs, and in so far as they have false beliefs on the subject matter, those false beliefs are peripheral.³ Second, these true beliefs need not amount to knowledge. A person whose true beliefs are “Getterized”—who, for instance, by pure coincidence picks up a book which contains true claims about the Comanche which were, nevertheless, shots in the dark by the author—can still possess understanding. In this way, understanding is not “a species” of knowledge.⁴ Finally, understanding requires “grasping” the relations between the items of knowledge, specifically the way in which that information “coheres” with one another (2003: 197, 202).

The value of understanding, as Kvanvig sees it, derives from two places. First, it derives from the number of true beliefs that help make up understanding. But, secondly, it derives from the “grasping” that is required for understanding. Kvanvig writes:

[To account for the value of understanding] we need to return to the notion of subjective justification, the value of which was defended earlier. Subjective justification obtains when persons form or hold beliefs on the basis of their own subjective standards for what is true or false. (2003: 200)

We thus get the following explanation of the value of understanding. The distinctive element involved in it, beyond truth, is best understood in terms of grasping of coherence relations. Such coherence relations in this context contribute to justification. Such justification is subjective, because the person in

³ Kvanvig does not spend much time on what counts as peripheral; neither will I. For critical discussion, see Elgin (2009) and Riggs (2009).

⁴ Again, I neither endorse nor deny this claim. For skepticism regarding it, see Grimm (2006) and Pritchard (2010: 77-80).

question must grasp the marks of truth within that body of information in order to grasp correctly the explanatory relationships within that body of information.
(2003: 202)

So, on Kvanvig's view, the grasping of coherence relations helps lead to subjective justification, and because the latter is valuable, the former is as well.

Clearly, if Kvanvig's view on the value of understanding is inconsistent with Truth Value Monism it will be inconsistent because of his view on the valuing of graspings. On Kvanvig's view, graspings lead to subjective justification, which he claims is of value. He distinguishes between two kinds of extrinsic value (2003: 60-5). The first kind is the standard *instrumental* value, where something is of instrumental value when (roughly) it is an effective means to a valuable end, increasing the likelihood of securing that value (2003: 63). Kvanvig considers a second kind of extrinsic value, which need not be an effective means to a valuable end but is rather an "intentional means." An action (for instance) is an intentional means to a valuable end, when a person undertakes that action with the aim of achieving that valuable end (2003: 60). The distinction between an effective means and an intentional means are illustrated in cases where there is no action that I can perform that will make it more likely that I'll achieve a valuable end, but nevertheless there are actions I can undertake with the aim of achieving that valuable end. To use Kvanvig's own example, perhaps there is nothing I can do to sink a basketball shot from half court and win a million dollars—so that there are no effective means to that end—but there are actions I can perform with the aim of achieving the end—so there are intentional means (2003: 60-1).

The notion of intentional means thus far developed only applies to actions. But, Kvanvig claims, it can also be extended to beliefs (2003: 65-75). Thus, consider a person who follows their own standard—whatever it is—for getting at the truth. Let's say that a person's belief is *subjectively justified* when it is held in accordance with their own standard (2003: 56). Even if the person's own standards are woefully inadequate—so that it is not an effective means to get to the truth by following those standards—following those standards will be an intentional means and thus valuable. Thus, subjective justification is valuable as a kind of intentional means.

One might object to Kvanvig's argument at several places here. One might argue that understanding does not require subjective justification. Or one might argue that the notion of intentional means cannot apply to belief. Or one might argue that intentional means are not extrinsically valuable. But none of these objections are necessary to defend Truth Value Monism. For Truth Value Monism is a position about *final* epistemic value—it is a thesis about what is valuable for its own sake. But it is perfectly consistent to accept Truth Value Monism and hold there are many different kinds of things with *extrinsic* epistemic value. For instance, one might hold that reliable belief forming processes are valuable but only extrinsically, specifically, instrumentally because they are likely to lead to true beliefs. But even if we follow Kvanvig and "loosen up" extrinsic value to allow for another kind of extrinsic value distinct from instrumental value, this is perfectly consistent with Truth Value Monism. Consequently, Kvanvig's account of the value of understanding provides no problem for this version of Epistemic Value Monism.⁵

IV. DePaul against Epistemic Value Monism

⁵ These points do not require that final epistemic value always supervenes on the intrinsic features of something. (In fact, Truth Value Monism probably could not say that, since truth is not an intrinsic property.) They only require that the category of extrinsic value is distinct from the category of final value in that being of extrinsic value does not entail being of final value, which is clearly true.

Another proponent of Epistemic Value Pluralism is Michael DePaul. DePaul criticizes Truth Value Monism before offering up his own version of Epistemic Value Pluralism. In what follows, I'll briefly sketch and respond to his criticisms of Truth Value Monism before discussing his positive view.

A. *DePaul's Argument against Truth Value Monism*

DePaul's first criticism goes (2001: 173):

...I think deep down we all recognize that truth is not the only thing of epistemic value. Here is an easy demonstration. Take your favorite well-established empirical theory, a theory you believe that we know. Throw in all the evidence on the basis of which we accept that theory. Depending on the theory you selected, all this will likely add up to a substantial number of beliefs. Now compare this set of beliefs with an equal number of beliefs about relatively simple arithmetic sums and about assorted elements of one's current stream of consciousness. I suspect that most of us would want to say that the first set of beliefs is better, epistemically better, than the second set. But the two sets contain the same number of true beliefs. And so, to the extent that we are inclined to say that these sets differ with respect to broad epistemic value, it would seem that we are committed to saying that truth is not the only thing that has broad epistemic value.

The thrust of his criticism is clear: the only way to accommodate a difference in epistemic value between these two sets is to postulate something *else* of epistemic value and embrace a kind of Epistemic Value Pluralism.

However, DePaul is wrong that the *only* way to accommodate this difference in epistemic value is to postulate something else of basic final epistemic value besides truth. First, one can retain Truth Value Monism and account for the difference of value between these two sets by appealing to the conditions under which truths have any epistemic value whatsoever. Specifically, one might hold that whether a set of truths has any epistemic value depends partially upon extrinsic (and contingent) features of the set. For instance, Goldman (1999) explicitly holds that epistemic value depends partially upon whether or not a person is *interested* in whether the relevant proposition is true or false (see also Alston (2005)). Thus, *contra* DePaul, even if one can provide two sets with the same number of true beliefs, it does not follow that they have the same epistemic value, given this view on the conditions under which something has epistemic value.

Second, one can retain Truth Value Monism and account for the difference of value between the two sets by appealing to the particular *contents* of the truths. Part of the intuitive motivation behind DePaul's criticism is that truths about (e.g.) organic chemistry are more *important* than truths about (e.g.) what's going on right now on the left side of my visual field. One might try to cash out this importance in terms of the interest of inquirers, which would lead us back to a response similar to the one given in the previous paragraph. But one might cash out this importance in terms of the contents of the propositions themselves. The idea that some propositions are more "natural" or "cut nature at its joints" or are otherwise descriptively superior to others has gained some currency recently. One can hold that while any true belief has some epistemic value, a true belief has *more* epistemic value if its contents are more "natural." In this way, the particular *objects* of belief can play a role in determining the overall value of a set of beliefs. While few have fully developed such a position, and I won't do so here, I see no

reason why it cannot be. So DePaul is wrong that the only way to account for the difference in epistemic value between those two sets is to abandon Truth Value Monism.⁶

B. DePaul's Argument for Epistemic Value Pluralism

Turning to DePaul's positive proposal, he argues that there are two kinds of things that have final epistemic value: true belief and warrant (1993: 77). He follows Plantinga as holding that warrant is "the epistemic feature which plays the preeminent role in distinguish mere true belief from knowledge" (1993: 67). Nevertheless, in contrast to Plantinga, DePaul does not take truth-conduciveness to be necessary for warrant; warrant, for DePaul, is not believing in a way that is likely to be true. But if warrant is decoupled from believing in a truth-conducive way, what is it? DePaul despairs of giving a particularly helpful, positive account of warrant. He holds that it is believing "appropriately" specifically believing appropriately "in the face of experience" (1993: 82-3).⁷

DePaul gives an argument that believing appropriately in the face of experience is of final epistemic value. The argument is a thought experiment (1993: 80-1, 191-2). Imagine a non-deceiving demon. The demon does not aim to make most of your beliefs about your immediate environment false; rather, the demon aims to disrupt the connection between your experiences on one hand and your beliefs and the world on the other. To this end, the demon gives you a visual field as if you were watching old Laurel and Hardy movies. Nevertheless, you continue to believe that you are (e.g.) currently sitting, reading a paper even as a slapstick gag unfolds before your eyes.

This case illustrates a breakdown of warrant, according to DePaul. In it, while many of one's beliefs may be true, they don't *appropriately fit* one's experience as of old movies. But it is not just that this case illustrates how warrant can breakdown; according to DePaul, it reveals an overly narrow conception of the epistemic value of *experience*. Truth Value Monists are concerned to evaluate the truth of *beliefs* and insofar as experiences are mentioned it is as instrumental to forming true beliefs. But experiences should play a more important role:

When one recognizes the possibility of correspondences among experiences, belief, and reality, it is easy to see that such a person's cognitive state may fall short of epistemic excellence. For it might be that there is the same sort of incoherence between the person's experience and his belief as epistemologists fear to find between belief and reality. And, I maintain, where there is such an experiential incoherence, we fall short of warrant and knowledge, no matter what the connection between our beliefs and truths. (1993: 86)

It is not obvious how best to regiment DePaul's argument. I think the following captures it fairly. First, in the non-deceiving case, there is an "incoherence" between the experiences of the subject and the way the subject is forming beliefs that is disvaluable. Second, that disvalue cannot be understood in terms of the instrumental disvalue of forming false beliefs because the subject is forming true beliefs. Therefore, we must think that the disvalue is a kind of final epistemic disvalue. Thus, there is something of final epistemic value in forming beliefs that

⁶A similar kind of move to appeal to the particular *objects* of attitudes has been made by Fred Feldman in defending a form of hedonism; see his (2004). For a different kind of response to DePaul on this issue see Treanor (2014).

⁷ There are problems with DePaul's view when applied to a wide range of cases of knowledge. Perhaps responding appropriately to one's experiences is important for distinguishing between true belief and knowledge for certain *kinds* of knowledge like perceptual or even testimonial knowledge. But it is not clear how it will apply to other cases, including not only *moral* knowledge (as DePaul is aware) but logical, mathematical, or inductive knowledge. I'll set aside these worries in what follows, though.

“appropriately fit” one’s experiences and something of final epistemic disvalue in forming beliefs that do not “appropriately fit” one’s experiences. Thus, Truth Value Monism is false.

Why think that, in the non-deceiving case, there is an incoherence between the experiences the subject is having and the way the subject is forming beliefs? DePaul assumes that we can tell there is something defective here by simply comparing experiences and beliefs. In other words, the appropriate belief response to one’s experience supervenes just on those qualitative experiences, or sensations, themselves. Other facts—about whether, e.g., one is being messed with by an evil demon—are irrelevant. And it is natural for him to think this. After all, incoherence is an *internal* relation. So if there is an incoherence here it should be determined *solely* by the beliefs and experiences.

However, this view is implausible. For this view ignores the general or specific cognitive abilities of the cognizer having the experience. The relevance of a cognizer’s cognitive abilities becomes clear when we consider less extreme examples. For instance, when I was seven and I had a certain olfactory experience, I did not form any beliefs about what caused it; now when I have the very same olfactory experience, I form the belief that someone is brewing coffee. It was inappropriate for me to form the belief that someone was brewing coffee then, it is not so now. Or, consider a novice bird watcher. Upon seeing a bird initially, it will be inappropriate for the bird watcher to believe it’s a woodpecker (he’s only started watching birds yesterday). But after a decade of watching birds, if the now expert bird watcher has the exact same visual experience, it would be appropriate to form a belief that it’s a woodpecker. These examples show that what constitutes an appropriate response to experience doesn’t supervene on just the experience the person has.

Indeed, there is a more principled reason for denying that appropriate responses supervene on just the experiences a cognizer has. Recall that, for DePaul, warrant is both responding appropriately to one’s experience and the property that plays the chief role in distinguishing knowledge from mere true belief. There are (and could be) many different kinds of cognizers that know things, and even among cognizers of the same type or kind (such as human beings), there are many different kinds of things they know—different “sources of knowledge” as it is sometimes put. Consequently, if warrant is that property which helps account for the difference between knowledge and mere true belief in all (or even most) of these cases, warrant (or the degree of warrant) will presumably supervene partially on the different cognitive faculties of the different cognizers. But if, as DePaul claims, warrant is also responding appropriately to one’s experience, then it follows that responding appropriately to one’s experience will supervene partially on the different cognitive faculties of different cognizers.

In response, DePaul might press that even if it’s not true, generally speaking, that what is appropriate to believe should supervene solely upon our experiences, surely in the cases provided above it is clear that *those* cognizers aren’t responding appropriately to their experiences. But even this is doubtful. After all, in those cases, the non-deceiving demon has radically altered their cognitive faculties so that, really, the experiences they have are playing no role in how they are forming beliefs. But given how radically different that way of forming beliefs is from how we form beliefs, we should not be very confident that *not* responding to their experiences is the right way of “responding” to their experiences. So, I claim, it is not clear that in DePaul’s non-deceiving demon case the subjects are forming beliefs in an “incoherent” way or a way that is inappropriate.

Additionally, when we think more about the role that cognitive abilities play in determining appropriate responses to experience, we are led back to the instrumentally valuable picture of

experience. Specifically, it is natural to think that the appropriateness of certain beliefs vary with the *reliability* or *truth-conduciveness* of a cognizer's cognitive abilities. The reason why it is appropriate for my current self to believe that someone is brewing coffee on the basis of a particular olfactory experience, but not my seven year old self, is that the former can very reliably pick out coffee by scent whereas the latter could not. Similarly, the expert bird watcher is much more reliable when it comes to identifying woodpeckers. This explains why it is appropriate for the expert, but not the novice, to believe a certain bird is a woodpecker on the basis of a certain visual experience (cf. Goldman (2012)). (It's worth noting that when DePaul goes into detail about beliefs that are appropriate for him (1993: 82-3) they are all cases of beliefs that were arrived at reliably.) Thus, when we reflect on *how* cognitive abilities are relevant to the appropriateness of beliefs, we are most naturally pushed back to understanding warrant, i.e. responding to one's experiences appropriately, as having a close connection to truth-conduciveness and the instrumental model DePaul criticizes.

C. *More on Epistemically Appropriate Responses to Experiences*

In discussing DePaul's argument, I briefly argued that appropriately responding to one's experience required forming beliefs in a reliable or otherwise truth-conducive way. My argument for this turned on a discussion of how agents can learn to acquire beliefs on the basis of sensations. To be sure, I have not offered a full defense or development of these ideas. But I will briefly consider some alternative accounts of responding appropriately to one's experience. To be clear, even if these other accounts are right, it would still not yet show that responding to one's experiences appropriately or properly is of basic final epistemic value. We would still need an argument for that. Rather, they would at best undermine my positive proposal for the instrumental value of responding appropriately or properly to one's experience.

One account is Markie's (2006). Broadly speaking, on Markie's account, when a response to an experience is "epistemically appropriate" it is because we have learned or otherwise know how to identify objects and their features on the basis of those experiences (2006: 123, 130, 139). Markie then teases out three different "ways" a belief might be epistemically appropriate (2006: 130-4). However, a full review of Markie's account is unnecessary. For Markie thinks that a belief is "most fully" appropriate when it satisfies all three of his ways (2006: 134). Additionally, one of those ways requires that the way the belief is formed is authorized by a reliabilist norm. So I doubt Markie's account is in deep tension with what I say here.

A different proposal would be to appeal to seemings. It is unclear what a seeming is, though most authors think they are *sui generis* mental states wherein a proposition is presented "as true" or "forcefully". So understood, seemings are not beliefs, inclinations to beliefs, or sensations. (Cf., e.g., Tolhurst (1998), Huemer (2007), Cullison (2010), McAllister (2018).) The proposal would then be that while (e.g.) my 7 year old self and my current have the same sensations, I have a seeming that coffee is being brewed while my 7 year old self does not. Further, it is this difference of seemings that explains why it is epistemically appropriate for me to believe that someone is making coffee but it is not epistemically appropriate for my 7 year old. (Though he is speaking of justified beliefs, and not appropriate responses to experiences, Tucker (2010: 537-8) offers essentially this view.)

Underlying this response is the view that, absent reasons for doubt, it is epistemically appropriate to believe that *p* if it seems to one that *p*. But such a view is very implausible. One problem is that there are a number of counterexample to it. For instance, Peter Markie gives the following example (2005: 357). I have a sensation as of a walnut tree. I have two seemings. First, that there is a walnut tree. Second, that the walnut tree was planted in April 24th, 1914. I form

both beliefs. But clearly the second one of these beliefs is not an epistemically appropriate response, setting aside whatever reasons for doubt I might have. But there is also a deep theoretical problem. Seemings can be caused in all sorts of epistemically problematic ways. But this view ignores that fact. Thus, this view will have the result that, so long as one lacks a relevant reason to doubt, it is appropriate to form a belief as a result of a seeming even if that belief was formed by biases, wishful thinking, poor reasoning, poor education—not to mention brain lesions, evil geniuses and clairvoyant powers. And that is very implausible.⁸

V. Valuing the Valuable

This final section presents an argument for Epistemic Value Pluralism that I believe succeeds. It does not turn on the particularities of epistemological theories but plausible general claims about value.

A. An Argument for Epistemic Value Pluralism

The argument contains the following premises. The first is this:

Iterated Appropriateness: If someone bears an appropriate attitude towards something of final value, then it is appropriate to bear a pro-attitude towards the fact that they bore an appropriate attitude towards something of final value.

This assumption is plausible on the face of it. Here is an additional reason for thinking it is true. Suppose a person bore a pro-attitude towards something of value—e.g., a friend is pleased that her son is happy. Now suppose a further person was aware of this pleasure but was either indifferent towards her attitude or even adopted a con-attitude towards it. We would normally think that such a person is behaving in way that is at least insensitive if not inappropriate. A natural explanation for this is that it is appropriate to value the fact that a person is adopting an appropriate attitude towards something of value.⁹ Of course, in this situation, the person is *aware* of the appropriate attitude. But even if someone is not aware of an appropriate attitude, it can still be appropriate for someone to bear a pro-attitude towards it. To use an analogy, it might be appropriate to praise a person for a very difficult basketball shot. (After all, the shot was difficult.) This might be appropriate *even if* no one is aware of it (besides, of course, the person who made the shot).

Earlier I assumed that when it is appropriate to adopt a pro-attitude towards something, then that thing is of final value. Given that assumption, *Iterated Appropriateness* implies:

Iterated Value: If someone bears an appropriate attitude towards something of final value, then the fact that they bore an appropriate attitude towards something of final value is, itself, of final value.

Like *Iterated Appropriateness*, *Iterated Value* is quite plausible. Several contemporary philosophers have adopted something close to it, though they usually add some qualifications and make additional claims about such a principle that are independent to our discussion. (See, e.g., Nozick (1981: 428ff.), Hurka (1992: chps. 1&2), Zimmerman (2001: chp. 6), Adams (2007: chp. 2).) Now *Iterated Value* is formulated simply in terms of final value. But my immediate

⁸ The issues mentioned here mirror issues about the cognitive penetration objection to Phenomenal Conservatism. (I criticize Phenomenal Conservatism at greater length in Perrine (forthcoming).) But there are some differences. First, we are here considered with epistemically appropriate responses to experiences, not necessarily justified beliefs. Second, cognitive penetration occurs when a cognitive state directly impacts a perceptual state (Lyons (2015: 154)) and my objection is not of that form. For additional critical discussion of the view in the text, as well as Phenomenal Conservatism, see Markie (2005, 2006), Alexander (2011) Siegel (2012, 2013), Brogaard (2013), McGrath (2013), and Lyons (2015).

⁹ Of course, sometimes people have *excuses* for not valuing things—they are too busy, their minds are elsewhere, etc. The existence of such excuses does not undermine the point.

concern is final epistemic value. Since final epistemic value is a kind of final value, it is plausible that *Iterated Value* implies:

Iterated Epistemic Value: If someone bears an appropriate attitude towards something of final epistemic value, then the fact that they bore an appropriate attitude towards something of final epistemic value is, itself, of final epistemic value.

Here's a simple argument for Epistemic Value Pluralism. Suppose, as is very plausible, some true belief is of final epistemic value. Now suppose an agent bears a positive attitude towards the fact that someone has a true belief. By *Iterated Epistemic Value*, it follows that such a pro-attitude is of final epistemic value. Therefore, Epistemic Value Pluralism is true.

This simple argument contains one lacuna. Recall that a proper formulation of Epistemic Value Pluralism must hold that there are several things of *basic* final epistemic value. Merely maintaining that there are a number of ontologically distinct things of final epistemic value is not enough. So this simple argument needs to be shored up by maintaining that adopting a pro-attitude towards something of final epistemic value is, itself, of *basic* final epistemic value.

Here is a reason for thinking that adopting a pro-attitude towards something of final epistemic value is of basic final epistemic value. If it were merely of non-basic final value, then all of the value it has could be explained by appealing to the thing of final epistemic value that the attitude is directed to. But it cannot. Suppose some belief that *p* is of final epistemic value. Now suppose one agent adopts a pro-attitude towards it while another agent adopts a neutral attitude towards it. Given *Iterated Epistemic Value*, one of those attitudes is of final epistemic value, while (plausibly) the other is not. But both are about the same thing of final epistemic value. Thus, appealing to just what the attitude is about—its object—cannot explain the final epistemic value of adopting the pro-attitude. So adopting a pro-attitude towards something of final epistemic value is of basic final epistemic value. But some true beliefs are also of basic, final epistemic value. Thus, Epistemic Value Monism—and all versions of it, e.g., Truth Value Monism—are false. Epistemic Value Pluralism is true.

B. Epistemic Value and Value Simpliciter

In the remainder, I want to focus on what will be a surprising inference to some authors working on epistemic value: my inference of *Iterated Epistemic Value* from *Iterated Value*. That inference assumed that final epistemic value is a kind of final value. However, that assumption has been questioned by some philosophers. They deny that epistemic value is a kind of final value, or more weakly, that if something is of final epistemic value, then it is of value *simpliciter*. For instance, Ernest Sosa claims that there are various “domains” of evaluation, with the epistemic domain being just one among many. These domains admit of “value.” And, for each domain, some of that value is “fundamental” and others “derived” from the fundamental value of that domain. But none of this indicates that the fundamental value of a given domain is of final value *simpliciter*. Perhaps it is of some domain independent value, but it is not final value but (e.g.) instrumental value to some domain independent value. As Sosa once wrote, “Truth may or may not be intrinsically valuable absolutely, who knows? Our worry requires only that we consider truth the *epistemically fundamental* value, the ultimate explainer of other distinctively epistemic values” (2007: 72). Similar kinds of views have been endorsed by others. Duncan Pritchard likewise allows that something might be of “fundamental epistemic good” without that good being “finally valuable *simpliciter*” (2010: 12). Pritchard even suggests that

from the fact that truth is of epistemic value it need not follow that it has any value *simpliciter at all* (2014: 113).¹⁰

These kinds of views are inconsistent with my claim that final epistemic value is a kind of final value, or at least that when something is of final epistemic value that implies it is of some final value. However, this disagreement would not simply undermine my argument from *Iterated Value* to *Iterated Epistemic Value*; it is inconsistent with the basic way that I have setup the issues of this paper. For this reason, evaluating this kind of position is a large task that I cannot complete here. With that in mind, I raise two issues.

First, I assume that when something is of value it is valuable—that is, is *worthy* of value or it would otherwise be *appropriate* or *fitting* to value it. This view says that there is a kind of “value”—epistemic value—on which that is false. From the fact that something is of epistemic value it does *not* follow that it is worthy of value or that it would be appropriate to value it. (Maybe it is; maybe it isn’t.) To be sure, this view has a fallback position. If something is epistemically valuable, it may be *epistemically* appropriate to value it; or, from the epistemic point of view, it is worthy of valuing (cf. Pritchard (2014: 113)). But this view denies that it follows from the fact that something is epistemically appropriate to value that it is also appropriate to value it *simpliciter*. At this point, I have begun to lose touch with what these words are supposed to mean. The problem is not the lack of a formal semantic device for this view.¹¹ The problem is more simply to understand what kind of thing deserves the title of value if it is not valuable!

Second, even if this way of thinking about epistemic value is inconsistent with mine, we might want to know why we ought adopt it. So far as I can see, the main argument is this. The inference from ‘x is a value in domain D’ so ‘x is a value *simpliciter*’ is invalid. (After all, there might be values in the “coffee domain” or even the “torture domain” that are fundamental to those domains. But we would not normally claim that their values are values *simpliciter*. See, e.g., Sosa (2011: 63; 2007: 73-4).) Thus, the inference from ‘x is a value in the epistemic domain’ to ‘x is a value *simpliciter*’ is likewise invalid. To mimic the wording of Pritchard (2014), it is a “further step” to say that if something is of final value in some domain that it is of final value *simpliciter*.

However, this argument is itself invalid. The following inference rule is certainly invalid: ϕ or ψ ; therefore, ϕ . After all, there are many instances of this inference pattern that do not preserve truth. But some instances of it *do* preserve truth. The inference ‘A or A; therefore, A’ is perfectly valid and is an instance of that inference. Similarly, there may be many domains that do not track value *simpliciter*. Those domains are merely ways of evaluating things. But from the fact that some domains do not track value *simpliciter* it does not follow that some *particular* domain also does not track value *simpliciter*. So this argument fails.

Of course, some might want to know why we should think that if something is of fundamental value in the epistemic domain that it follows that it is valuable *simpliciter*. A number of arguments could be developed here. One promising argument is through the similarity of epistemic evaluation and moral evaluation. Some authors have noticed that the kind of normativity, broadly construed, involved in moral and epistemic evaluations are very similar. But moral evaluations are widely thought to involve value *simpliciter*. If something is valuable in

¹⁰ Something like this picture is also implicit in Oliveira (2017), though generalized beyond issues of epistemic value. And there are some terminological issues that I’m ignoring here.

¹¹ For instance, one could utilize Geach’s (1956) distinction between “attributive” and “predicative” adjectives (or an analogous version for adverbs). Ridge (2013) is relevant here.

the moral domain it is valuable *simpliciter*. So too if something is valuable in the epistemic domain it is valuable *simpliciter*. (For discussion, positive and critical, of this kind of reasoning, see Cuneo (2007), Cowie (2014, 2016), Rowland (2013, 2016), Das (2016, 2017).)

Additionally, there is a problem for epistemologists who deny that values in the epistemic domain are not necessarily values *simpliciter*.¹² Let us take seriously Sosa's suggestion that human beings are "zestfully judgmental across the gamut of our experience" (2007: 70). Of course, different "domains" of evaluations can issue different judgments of the same thing. Inside the "aesthetic" domain, a particular gourd might be bad because it is ugly; but inside the "culinary" point of view it might be excellent, ready for one's fall soup. But there might be an "epistemic*" domain and in it true beliefs are not a fundamental epistemic* value; perhaps nothing is, or maybe only reasonable attitudes are. And perhaps there is an "epistemic**" domain where true beliefs are a fundamental epistemic** value, but knowledge is not more epistemically** valuable than true belief. Given such domains,¹³ a natural question is why should we give more attention to the epistemic domain than the epistemic* or epistemic** domain? This question is pressing for those who do not see the epistemic domain as tracking value *simpliciter*. But for those of us who see the epistemic domain as tracking value *simpliciter* there is a straightforward response. We should focus on the epistemic domain, instead of these competitors, because the epistemic domain tracks value *simpliciter* in a way that those other domains need not.

For these reasons, I think, this kind of response to my argument for Epistemic Value Pluralism is unpromising.¹⁴

¹² This problem is inspired by Stich's (1990) arguments against the value of true belief. But it is not quite the same. I discuss Stich's argument in Perrine (2017: 246-253).

¹³ If some domains do not already exist, we could easily introduce them. After all, prior to the cultivation and invention of coffee, there was not the "coffee domain" (or, there was, and it just wasn't used).

¹⁴ After writing this paper, I stumbled upon Kurt Sylvan's (2018). In it, Sylvan argues that we can retain the idea that "accurate belief is the sole fundamental epistemic value" (2018: 382) so long as we reject the view that "accurate belief is the sole non-instrumental epistemic value" (2018: 382). (By 'non-instrumental value' Sylvan just means 'final value' (cf. (2018: 431).) Sylvan's idea is that some things have a value that is derived from accurate belief in a way other than being instrumentally valuable. In defending his ideas, Sylvan even uses a principle of Hurka's (1992) reformulated in terms of "derivative non-instrumental value" (2018: 383).

Comparing Sylvan's argument to mine is difficult because he does not setup his discussion in terms of basic vs. non-basic final epistemic value. But there is a close affinity of our ideas. With that in mind, I'll make three brief comments. First, if by 'fundamental epistemic value' Sylvan means "basic final epistemic value" then we disagree. For I've argued that there are more things of basic final epistemic value than true beliefs. Second, if Sylvan thinks things of "derivative non-instrumental value" are things whose value can be entirely explained by appealing to the value of true belief, then we disagree. For I've argued there are some things of final epistemic value whose value cannot be fully explained by appealing to true beliefs. Finally, though Sylvan and I both sympathetically cite authors like Hurka, Sylvan offers a thinner reading of them. Specifically, Sylvan maintains that there can be responses to final value that are themselves of final value while those responses do not require forming any pro-attitudes. I think that is implausible, but will not argue that here.

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