

Reflection, Epistemic Value and Human Flourishing

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“All men by nature desire to know.”
Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 980a25

1. NEW VIRTUE EPISTEMOLOGY: FROM THE IMPORTANCE TO THE VALUE OF REFLECTION

Judgment and Agency (SOSA, 2015) describes a development in Ernest Sosa’s virtue epistemology, centered on the “more agential and reflective side of [his] virtue epistemology”. In his previous work, particularly after *Knowledge in Perspective* (SOSA, 1991), he proposed a distinction between animal and reflective knowledge. This distinction aimed to overcome disputes between an externalist perspective (dealing with the processes for the formation of beliefs), on the one hand, and an internalist perspective (concerned with the way in which cognitive agents deal with reasons to believe) on the other.

In his new book, Sosa intends to overcome another dichotomy, which has featured in debates within virtue epistemology itself, namely, the distinction between virtue epistemologies, centered on *reliabilist* points of view (which consider agents’ competencies and skills), and those centered on *responsibilist* ones (aware of the epistemic agent’s character traits). Centered on the notions of *knowing full well*, epistemic competence and judgmental belief, Sosa posits that the “new virtue epistemology” is, in fact, a virtue reliabilist epistemology and a more radical form of a responsibilist epistemology, since it considers “responsibilist, agential competences to be crucial for a proper treatment of the most central, most traditional issues of pure epistemology” (SOSA, 2015, p. 55).

The “new virtue epistemology” goes beyond the simple externalism/internalism dichotomy seen in the animal/reflective distinction. It reintroduces to the contemporary debate the sort of knowledge at the center of the classic epistemological tradition, from the Pyrrhonists through Descartes, which is high-level reflective knowledge, characterized as knowledge “requiring free, volitional endorsement by the subject who judges, or the corresponding disposition” (Sosa, 2015, p. 36). In this sense, the idea of *judgment* – which is related to both epistemic agency and reflection (SOSA, 2014, p. 177) – starts to occupy a central position, since a “judgment is affirmation in the endeavor to affirm with apt correctness” (SOSA, 2015, p. 66). Judgment is both the act of *affirming* something with an intention and the *disposition* to consciously judge. In other words, “[j]udgment is *affirmation* in the endeavor to *affirm aptly*”, demonstrating competence and not only producing the correct affirmation but *doing this aptly*. Reflection is required in judgment, because the agent who *judges* “*affirms* fully aptly only if guided to a correct *and apt* affirmation by second-order awareness of their competence to so affirm” (SOSA, 2015, p. 80).

Here we address two recurring themes in Sosa’s work, which occupy a central position in the book: the *place* and *importance* of reflection in the cognitive economy of the epistemic agent and *epistemic value*. Regarding the former, Sosa (2015, p. 86) believes that “the aptness of *epistemic affirmation* on the first order is attained *through the guidance* of apt second-order awareness that such affirmation *would* then be apt”. In terms of the latter theme, in a section in which he deals with “human communication” and the “value of knowledge”, he asserts that “human knowledge is at least as important for *human flourishing* as is communication, both for the flourishing of individual lives, and for the collective flourishing of groups” (SOSA, 2015, pp. 189)¹.

In our opinion, although Sosa presents an eloquent argument in favor of the importance of reflection in epistemology (an argument that many of his critics must be inclined to accept), his defense of the value of reflection is not an argument.

1 Regarding the relationship between epistemic value and human flourishing, see Ernest Sosa (2011, pp. 62, 66 and 66n). Also, see the articles by Berit Brogaard (2014) and the interesting debate between Robert C. Roberts (2015) and Nancy E. Snow (2015).

2. ANIMAL AND REFLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

Between *Knowledge in Perspective* (SOSA, 1991) and *Reflective Knowledge: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge* (SOSA, 2009), Sosa defends bi-level epistemology based on a distinction between animal knowledge (AK) and reflective knowledge (RK)². In Sosa (1985, p. 240) the following distinction is established:

(AK) One has *animal knowledge* about one's environment, one's past, and one's own experience if one's judgments and beliefs about these are direct responses to their impact – e.g., through perception or memory – with little or no benefit of reflection or understanding.

(RK) One has *reflective knowledge* if one's judgment or belief manifests not only such direct response to the fact known but also understanding of its place in a wider whole that includes one's belief and knowledge of it and how these come about.

These definitions undergo later refinements, but the general meaning remains. Beliefs are a special case of performance, of epistemic performances: when a true belief is attributed to the subject's competence under the appropriate conditions, this count as an apt belief and as a kind of knowledge, animal knowledge (SOSA, 2007, p. 93). An agent has animal knowledge if his belief is apt, in other words: a) the belief is true (it achieves its objective), b) if the belief is the manifestation of the subject's skills, c) if the belief is true because it arises from the subject's competence; then he does not arrive at the truth by accident (SOSA, 2007, p. 92).

Reflective knowledge, in the other hand, is knowledge acquired as the result of the rational epistemic agent's *intentional and conscious investigation*. Reflective knowledge requires not only apt belief but also *defensible apt belief*, in other words, an apt belief in which the subject *aptly believes that it is apt* and where the subject's aptness may be defended against skeptical objections (SOSA, 2007, p. 24). While animal knowledge only requires that a belief is true, reflective knowledge *additionally* requires that the agent have an epistemic perspective "from which

2 In *Judgment and Agency* (SOSA, 2015), Sosa talks about something inferior to animal knowledge (subcredal animal knowledge) and considers various degrees, up to the maximum human degree, which is knowing full well; here it is possible to conceive not two, but three levels of knowledge: animal, reflective and full. We will not address this point here.

he endorses the source of that belief, from which he can see that source as reliably truth-conducive" (SOSA, 2009, p. 135).

In the first case (AK), one may talk of "animal competence", since it does not require the cognitive agent to strive "to endorse the reliability of the competence" in the same way, nor does it "require the believer to endorse the appropriateness of the conditions for the exercise of the competence in forming that belief." (SOSA, 2011, pp. 149-50). In the second case (RK), one may talk of reflective justification, rather than justification only arising from reliability. The (RK) case requires a rational endorsement of the reliability of the competence exercised by the agent and the "appropriateness of the conditions for its exercise" (SOSA, 2011, p. 15). In these terms, reflective knowledge goes beyond animal knowledge (SOSA, 2007, p. 108).

3. FROM ANIMAL/REFLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE TO KNOWING FULL WELL

Reflection is not necessary for knowledge in its most basic or animal sense. We know animally even when we are not apt to justify and to present reasons in favor of our knowledge. However, in a scenario of *epistemic evaluation*, when the subject is challenged to assess the status of their beliefs in the light of epistemic values, when it is necessary to declare that one's belief is true, competent, safe, coherent etc., in the face of skeptical objections (SOSA 2009, pp. 136-7), it is necessary for the epistemic agent to undertake a cognitive performance which is able to endorse the source of this belief and guarantee its reliability, forming a meta-apt or *fully* apt belief (SOSA 2011, p. 10).

This, according to Sosa, is what characterizes the *knowledge problem* in the epistemological tradition from Sextus to Descartes. Thus, from the point of view of *epistemic evaluation*:

Apt belief, animal knowledge, is better than belief that succeeds in its aim, being true, without being apt. Apt belief aptly noted, reflective knowledge, is better than mere apt belief or animal knowledge, especially when the reflective knowledge helps to guide the first-order belief so that it is apt. (SOSA 2011, p. 12-13)

The reflective knowledge 'that p' is epistemically *better* than the stand-alone animal knowledge 'that p' because "the safer, better justified, and more reliably acquired beliefs cons-

titute better knowledge" (SOSA 2009, p. 136). However, in *Judgment and Agency* the distinction between animal and reflective knowledge gives way to a sharper distinction between animal knowledge and *knowing full well*. This is because *knowing full well* necessarily involves *reflective knowledge*. This is due to the fact that our "rational nature is most fully manifest in such reasoned choice and judgment" (SOSA 2015, p. 51). An epistemic performance is *fully apt* – and not merely apt – if this performance is guided towards aptness through the agent's reflectively apt risk assessment, examining his own competency and aptness³.

4. THE VALUE OF REFLECTION

In relation to the appraisal perspective, a point shared by Sosa and other epistemologists, such as Pritchard (2010a), is that "[t]he importance of knowledge derives in good measure from how it relates to human achievement generally" (SOSA 2015, p. 142), in particular because this involves the *disposition* to affirm judgmentally in an *endeavor* to answer a given question correctly. "Endeavor" and "achievement"⁴ are key words to characterize those things most valued in our epistemic performances.

In *Judgment and Agency* (pp. 84-88), Sosa presents a new defense about the *importance of reflection*. But can this argument help us understand the *value* of reflection? At a certain point, he asks the following questions:

... why should that second-order dimension matter for our first-order knowledge? Why does it matter whether one has merely animal knowledge or "ascends" rather to the more reflective levels? Why isn't reflective knowledge just *more* knowledge, animal knowledge on top of animal knowledge? And why should the second-order animal knowledge *improve* the knowledge on the first order, raising *it* to a *better* level of knowledge? (SOSA, 2015, pp. 84-5)

3 "…we highlight that full aptness of performance requires guidance through the agent's knowledge that their performance would be apt. Through that fact we then explain why knowing full well is not just animal knowledge on top of animal knowledge... It is crucial to this further explanatory benefit that in order to know full well the subject must be aptly aware that their affirmation would be apt." (SOSA, 2015, p. 87).

4 For more on the notion of "achievement", see Gwen Bradford's excellent book (2015).

Thus, reflection is important because, through it, the agent has the competency to develop some perspective about his epistemic position: the aptness of the agent's cognitive performance at the first-order level is achieved *under the guidance* of second-order consciousness, since the agent has the competence to avoid excessive risk of failure (SOSA, 2015, p. 85)⁵.

The main idea is: reflection makes us better epistemic agents. The reason is that:

Opting for such rational guidance does involve judgment and risk in any given case, and a faith in reason as our best guide. When research reveals the hidden influences that move us, moreover, that may just help us to enhance the competence of our management. Those revelations may lead us to avoid certain situations, competently, *virtuously* so, and to undergo relevant therapy over time, thus counteracting inappropriate influences. (SOSA, 2015, p. 87)

This opens up the possibility of a resumption of the Aristotelian idea of *eudaimonia*, since the meaning of knowing full well is directly linked to the realization of the ideals of a complete human life.

5. SOSA ON HUMAN FLOURISHING

In Sosa's recent epistemology (SOSA, 2011; 2015), the idea of *human flourishing* plays an important role in his framework, since it explains why knowledge is important. Furthermore, it explains not only why knowledge is better than true belief, but also why *knowing full well* is better than knowing aptly. In this section, we will analyze exactly what Sosa means by 'human flourishing' and how this explains the value of knowledge in Sosa's theory.

Sosa begins his explanation of human flourishing (SOSA, 2015, p. 133) by quoting Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*:

5 Sosa's complete argument is that reflection is important for four basic reasons: (a) "because of the nature of judgment and how it differs from guessing"; (b) "because of the nature of suspension"; (c) "because of how competence must avoid negligence and insensitivity to defeaters"; and "as a bonus, (d) we also gain insight into the special status of the Cartesian *cogito* (SOSA, 2015, p. 85). Moreover, reflection allows us to explain Gettier's family cases (SOSA, 2015, p. 85).

It is possible to do something that is in accordance with the laws of grammar, either by chance or at the suggestion of another. A man will be a grammarian, then, only when he has both done something grammatical and done it grammatically; and this means doing it in accordance with the grammatical knowledge in himself. (EN II 4, 1105a22–6)

Here Sosa is trying to demonstrate that by “doing it *in accordance with* knowledge,” Aristotle is ruling out any kind of accidental success or coincidence. This is a key point, since later on Sosa quotes Aristotle to demonstrate how this relates to human good and a flourishing life (SOSA, 2015, p. 134). This perspective seems to be clearer in the following fragment (EN I 7, 1098a16–17): “... human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete”.

Human good is the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, meaning that any kind of luck or coincidence must be ruled out. That is why “Aristotelian flourishing involves the exercise of one’s virtues, moral and intellectual” (SOSA, 2015, p. 134). What does this mean exactly? What are the necessary elements for such flourishing?

According to Sosa (2015, p.141), what is necessary for human flourishing on Aristotle’s view is the aptness of the agent’s performance. Luck success is not sufficient but rather, an aptness that manifest the agent relevant competence. That is why flourishing requires not only a means-end successful action, but also an aptness success. In other words, in order to be an action in accordance with virtue, it is important to avoid luck or success by chance.

However, why a means-end successful action is necessary to flourishing? Because according to Sosa, Aristotelian action involves “choice based on a resultant favoring of one’s implementing a plan to attain a goal at which one thereby aims” (SOSA, 2014, p.140). That is why a competent choice is a choice in accordance with virtue, excluding any kind of lucky choice or success.

What we have now is the following: in order for an action to constitute flourishing, it must be an action based on a competent choice. One must have a plan to achieve a goal, and act based on this plan. The action must be in accordance with one’s virtues, which means that it must be successful and apt. It cannot constitute success by luck, coincidence or chance. It means that when a successful apt action occurs, it constitutes a flourishing life, on Sosa’s sense.

How does this explain the value of knowledge and how does it solve the value problem? In Plato's *Meno*, the value problem is explained as follows: there are two travelers that want to go to Larissa. One of them knows the way to Larissa, while the other has a true belief about the way to Larissa, but does not really know the way. Both of them reach Larissa successfully. The questions we can ask now is: Why is knowledge better than mere true belief? Why do we think that knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief, since both travelers will successfully reach Larissa, demonstrating that knowledge and mere true belief can both achieve success?

Sosa's answer to the value problem is that one of the travelers reaches Larissa through competence in accordance with virtue while the ignorant traveler does not deserve full credit for his success, since it was not a virtuous competence action. As Sosa says, "to reach Larissa through ignorant luck is not to flourish" (SOSA, 2015, p.142), and that is the difference between the two travelers.

The solution proposed by Sosa to the value problem is to demonstrate that there is a difference between the two travelers: one acts in accordance with virtue because he successfully and aptly reaches Larissa, while the other does not. In addition, because the "ignorant traveler" reaches Larissa by luck, albeit successfully, *his success is not to flourish*. This solution appears to demonstrate that knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief, because it is a constituent of human flourishing. For Sosa, the value of knowledge is not an instrumental value, but rather a kind of constituent value. Using communications as an example, Sosa explains:

Human communication is important for human flourishing, for the flourishing of individuals and for the flourishing of groups. This does not require that there be any distinctive communicative final value. [...] Moreover, communication enables flourishing not only instrumentally, but even constitutively, as shown by the place of communication in human relationships. [...] But from this it hardly follows that so much as a single act of communication need have any final value distinctively its own, or indeed any final value of its own at all. Much less does it follow that all successful acts of communication must have some such final value.

Just so, human knowledge is at least as important for human flourishing as is communication, both for the flourishing of individual lives, and for the collective flourishing of groups. But this no more requires any distinctive epistemic final value than does the importance of

communication require any distinctive communicative final value. It is required at most that knowledge be an important component of enough human ways of flourishing, which can take many and various forms. (SOSA, 2015, p.189)

Sosa's solution does not state that knowledge has a final value⁶, nor is this an instrumental value. It is a distinct kind of value, *the value of being an important component of human flourishing*. Human flourishing, which, according to Sosa, means, "a life of accomplishment, while activity of soul relevantly avoids luck to the extent that it is in accordance with virtue" (SOSA, 2015, p.156). Bearing this in mind, Sosa explains that knowledge is not only better than mere true belief, but that what is required for full human flourishing – and by this we believe he means full human knowledge – is better than mere knowledge (SOSA, 2015, p.189-190).

Human flourishing is a central plank of Sosa's solution to the value problem. If our understanding of Sosa's framework is correct, we can summarize his solution as follows: Human flourishing in Aristotle is a fundamental ethical value; it means a life of accomplishment in accordance with virtue, which means a life of achievements, apt success; knowledge is a fundamental part of human flourishing. As Sosa says, "it is hard to imagine a flourishing human life or society deprived entirely of knowledge" (2015, p.189). The value of knowledge is neither a final value, nor an instrumental one: it is a distinct kind of value, a constituent value, since knowledge is a constituent of human flourishing. That is why knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief: both can lead to success, but only knowledge is flourishing. Reflective knowledge is also more valuable than animal knowledge, since "[even] better ... [is] what is required for the full human flourishing of that life" (SOSA, 2015, p. 190).

6. CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING SOSA'S SOLUTION

Although Sosa's new virtue epistemology appears to be very promising in explaining different epistemology intuitions and demonstrating that it is possible to join both a reliabilist and a responsibilist account of virtue epistemology, we believe that solving the value problem requires further clarification, in order to really explain the value of knowledge. In this section,

6 Duncan Pritchard (2010b, pp. 25-47) offers the thesis that there is a final epistemic value.

we are going to put forward certain considerations and attempt to demonstrate that without this clarification, Sosa's solution of the value problem fails to explain why knowledge is better than mere true belief.

As demonstrated in the last section, the idea of human flourishing is central to the value of knowledge. Sosa is not saying that knowledge has either final or instrumental value. The value of knowledge is the value of being a component of human flourishing. What kind of value is this? Take hydrogen, for example. Hydrogen is an important element in water. Without hydrogen, there is no water. Does this mean that hydrogen is valuable because it is a constituent of water? Only if water has some kind of value. Thus, hydrogen is valuable because of the relative value of water. But imagine a universe without any form of life, and only one planet with some oceans and rivers made up of H₂O. Does hydrogen have any value in this universe? Since it would be hard to say that water has any kind of value, it is also hard to say whether hydrogen has any kind of value. The point here is that being an important element in something does not confer value.

The first point Sosa needs to explain, then, is this: *why is human flourishing – that requires necessarily success plus aptness – valuable?* What kind of value does human flourishing have? In Aristotle, what gives value to the idea of human flourishing is *eudaimonia*, since Aristotle defines *eudaimonia* as the highest human good:

Now happiness [*eudaimonia*], more than anything else, seems complete without qualification. For we always choose it because of itself, never because of something else. Honor, pleasure, understanding, and every virtue we certainly choose because of themselves, since we would choose each of them even if it had no further result; but we also choose them for the sake of happiness, supposing that through them we shall be happy. Happiness, by contrast, no one ever chooses for their sake, or for the sake of anything else at all. (ARISTOTLE, NE, 1097b5)

For Aristotle, everything in human life only has value because of *eudaimonia*, the highest human good. Book X provides more information about what exactly *eudaimonia* is:

If happiness is activity in accord with virtue, it is reasonable for it to accord with the supreme virtue, which will be the virtue of the best thing. The best is understanding, or whatever

else seems to be the natural ruler and leader, and to understand what is fine and divine, by being itself either divine or the most divine element in us. Hence, complete happiness will be its activity in accord with its proper virtue; and we have said that this activity is the activity of study. (ARISTOTLE, NE, 1177a15)

If *eudaimonia* is the highest good, and knowledge is part of it, then knowledge is better than mere true belief, since it is an important part of this highest human good. In addition, this explains why knowledge has a special value over mere true belief. Meanwhile, this does not seem to be what Sosa is trying to say. Sosa does not explain whether his concept of human flourishing is valuable because it is related to a unique supreme human good, as Aristotle does. If Sosa understands human flourishing as valuable because of the final value of *eudaimonia*, which leads us to pose the following questions: what reasons do we have for deciding that Aristotle's framework is the correct one? Is there any supreme virtue? Is *understanding* the supreme element in us, as Aristotle says? It seems that using the *eudaimonistic* framework for the value problem raises more questions than it answers⁷.

Sosa does not provide any evidence that he is using Aristotle's whole framework. If he does not assume that human flourishing has value because of some higher or supreme good, there appears to be a serious problem: What reasons do we have to accept that human flourishing requires success plus aptness, instead of any kind of success? And, more importantly: Why is human flourishing, as defined by Sosa, valuable? Suppose that human flourishing requires any kind of success and that we, as humans, want to flourish both individually and as a society. If flourishing – as requiring only any kind of success – is valuable to us, we can easily imagine a world controlled by some god or genius, who makes us hallucinate about what we perceive most of the time, and make things appear exactly as hallucinated. For example, I hallucinate that there is an apple in front of me and when I try to pick up the apple, the genius makes an apple appear and I am able to eat it. In this world, all we have is lucky success. Because we have success, we are able to flourish, both individually and socially. According to this point

7 As Christoph Kelp noted on a comment to the previous version of this paper, one way to try to resolve this tension might be by acknowledging that Aristotle's claim about what *eudaimonia* amounts to in particular might be a bit strong. We believe that this is correct. For an excellent analysis and critics about the *eudaimonistic* solution to the value problem and other solutions, as for example, the achievement solution, see Yunker (2014).

of view, knowledge does not need to be a constituent of flourishing and, because of this, has no extra value over mere true belief.

At this point it is possible to show Sosa's first problem: He has to explain why human flourishing has value. Sosa could accept Aristotle's *eudaimonistic* framework and say that knowledge has final value relative to the highest human good. However, Sosa explicitly says that knowledge has no final value, and makes no reference to *eudaimonia* or any supreme highest good. Further, it seems as if Sosa does not believe in any highest human good or any kind of unified good life, which will determine the value of human flourishing. Sosa says that "communication [is] a sufficiently important component of enough human ways of flourishing, *which can take many and various forms*" (SOSA, 2015, p. 189, our italics). That is why we assume that he does not accept Aristotle's whole framework⁸. However, Sosa then has to face a more serious question: What reason do we have for accepting that human flourishing requires apt success and not just success, for example? A human society can easily flourish on only lucky success, as we have suggested. Perhaps this is a different version of the value problem: why is flourishing with aptness better than "mere flourishing"? Sosa does not answer this question.

We can use the same strategy to emphasize another point about the value of knowledge, this time demonstrating that there is no difference in value between animal knowledge and knowing full well. At some point, Sosa asks why well-based happiness is better than the "equally subjectively pleasant tone of the subject in an experience machine victimized by a controlling demon" (2015, p.189). This question is a variation on the value problem. That is why we may add another question: Why is knowing full well better than animally knowing? Sosa's answer to this question is that the life of the victim of the demon's machine is not a flourishing human life, even though all his subjective pleasure and happiness is real (2015, p.189-190).

Nevertheless, the question is not solved. Why is the life of the demon's victim not a flourishing life? As we have argued before, we have no reason to say that human flourishing is success

8 If Sosa accepts the *eudaimonia* solution, then he has to address other problems. The *eudaimonia* solution assumes that there is a unified "good life", a unique way of full human flourishing, and that knowledge is a constituent of this. The problem is that it is possible to reject the idea of a unified good life and show that knowledge is not a part of some forms of good life. We will not enter into this strategy in detail, although part of it will be used in our second argument against Sosa.

plus aptness, since we are not using the *eudaimonistic* framework. For this reason, it is arbitrary to say that the life of the inhabitant of the Matrix or the hedonistic victim is not a flourishing human life. Especially if there are “many and various forms” of flourishing. The matrix dweller can have real pleasure, he can even have animal knowledge of various forms, such as knowledge about his pain or pleasure, and he can be successful (but without aptness) on his life goals, which could be, for example, a life of pleasure listening to classical music every day.⁹ What reasons do we have for saying that this is not a good life, a well lived life, and a flourishing life? We believe that the answer is “none”, if we assume that there are many and various forms of human flourishing.

Sosa answer is that in human life, it is better truth than falsity. He also writes that “better competence than incompetence, yes, but better yet what is required for the full human flourishing of that life” (SOSA, 2015, p.190). It seems here that Sosa actually begs the question. *Meno’s* question takes on exactly this form: why is x better than y ? Why is knowledge better than true belief? Why is reflective knowledge better than animal knowledge? Why is well-based happiness or pleasure better than the equally subjectively pleasant tone of the subject in an experience machine, victimized by a controlling demon? Sosa’s solution is that for a flourishing human life x is better than y .

9 Kelp made an interest comment about our argument at this point. He said that we often aim not only to succeed but also to achieve (which we believe, this is also how Sosa believe). If so, the person in the experience machine may not be able to even succeed in all of her life goals.

Kelp asked us to compare the following case: a very successful marathon runner (that won many marathons during her life) finds out at the end of her career that all the races she ever won a medal in were fixed in her favor. This would be very disappointing for her and might seriously undermine her evaluation of her professional life. Why? (i) Because she wanted not only to succeed but also to succeed by achievement, (ii) because achievements matter.

A reply to this argument would be the following: imagine the same case, but she never discover that the races were fixed in her favor. This is exactly the idea behind the Matrix or demon’s examples. Even if she wanted to achieve but only succeeded, why not to say that she had a flourishing life? Again: what about the people that does not want to achieve, but only succeed? We can imagine the same marathon runner but that had as a life goal win the maximum of marathon as possible, no matter what. When she discover that the races were fixed, probably she would not care. She succeeded on her life goals. Why not to say that she had a flourishing life?

Our point is: What are the arguments that shows that achievement is necessary for a flourishing life? That is what we believe Sosa needs to clarify, since it seems that he did not bring this argument on his book.

Nevertheless, for which form of flourishing human life, given that there are many? It is not hard to imagine a human life flourishing without any reflective knowledge. For example, a life of instincts where the only goal is to reproduce, find food and have pleasure. That kind of life could flourish very well, without any reflective knowledge. This means that, if “what is required for the full human flourishing of that life” is reflective knowledge, for those lives in which flourishing means only reproducing, finding food and having pleasure (even illusory pleasures), not only is reflective knowledge no better than mere animal knowledge, it has no use in making such a life flourish.

7. FINAL REMARKS

Sosa’s new virtue epistemology has many advantages, but we believe that in terms of the value problem, there is a need for clarification. The way the solution is presented appears to be unsatisfactory. Although the “human flourishing” solution appears to be a good solution, there is a need to explain why human flourishing has value. This is similar to the swamping problem: why does the reliabilism of a process give value to the product, if what matters in the end is a good product? Why does being a constituent part of flourishing give value to knowledge, if what matters is just success? We believe that, although Sosa’s solution is promising, it fails to explain either the value of knowledge or the value of reflective knowledge over animal knowledge.¹⁰

¹⁰ We would like to thank both to Ernest Sosa, that made valuable comments on our paper during the Book Symposium in Salvador, Brazil, and to Christoph Kelp, that also made valuable comments on the previous version of this paper.

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we discuss two recurring themes in Sosa's work, reexamined in Judgment and Agency (SOSA, 2015) from a new angle, i.e. the place and importance of reflection in the cognitive economy of the epistemic agent, and epistemic value. Regarding the latter, Sosa suggests that knowing full well, which necessarily involves reflection, has value because it contributes to human flourishing. Although Sosa's "new virtue epistemology" appears very promising in explaining different intuitions regarding epistemology and demonstrating that it is possible to join reliabilist and responsibilist accounts of virtue epistemology, we believe that solving the value problem requires further clarification in order to truly explain the value of knowledge.

Key-words: Human Flourishing, Reflective Knowledge, Virtue Epistemology.

RESUMO

Neste ensaio, nós discutimos dois temas recorrentes na obra de Ernest Sosa que são reexaminados em Judgment and Agency (SOSA, 2015) a partir de um novo ângulo, a saber, de um lado, o lugar e importância da reflexão na economia cognitiva de uma agente epistêmico e, do outro, o valor epistêmico. A cerca do último, Sosa sugere que knowing full well, que necessariamente envolve reflexão, tem valor porque contribui para o florescimento humano. Embora a "new virtue epistemology" de Sosa parece muito promissor para explicar diferentes intuições em epistemologia e demonstrando que é possível integrar as perspectivas confiabilista e responsibilista da epistemologia virtude, nós acreditamos que a solução do problema de valor requer uma maior clarificação a fim de realmente explicar o valor do conhecimento

Palavras-chaves: Conhecimento Reflexivo, Epistemologia das Virtudes, Florescimento Humano