

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

S K E P T I C I S M

Edited by

JOHN GRECO

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

2008

CHAPTER 25

VIRTUE-THEORETIC
RESPONSES TO
SKEPTICISM

GUY AXTELL

VIRTUE theory concerns philosophical evaluation of human agents in their interaction with the world. Because human agents are embedded in a world, both natural and social, their interactions give rise to ethical and to epistemic contexts, which in turn become the primary locus for the descriptive, explanatory, and normative tasks with which philosophy concerns itself. The central focus in virtue theory on understanding agents and the habits and dispositions through which their interactions in the world unfold allows for the acknowledgment of analogies between epistemic and ethical evaluation, but for the acknowledgment of disanalogies as well.

Virtue theory has been applied to numerous domains of philosophic study, and its roots arguably go back to some of the earliest Greek discussions of the motivations to philosophize. Its resurgence over the past four decades has taken place first in the subfield of ethics and since the 1980s in the subfield of epistemology as well.¹ Questions about how to proceed in the study of core epistemic concepts like justification, knowledge, and understanding are ones that contemporary virtue epistemologists quite often engage. Skeptical arguments are another and indeed are closely caught up in discussion of the core epistemic concepts and the problems that surround them. Even where no "true skeptics" are present to support them, skeptical arguments, whether those of "global" (radical) or "local" (domain-specific) import, help uncover the depth in a conception of epistemic agency and allow us to reflect more carefully upon our human epistemic condition.

181/81

As John Greco puts it, the study of skeptical arguments “drives positive epistemology” (2000, 51).

This chapter focuses on the responses that proponents of virtue epistemology (VE) make to radical skepticism and particularly to two related forms of it, Pyrrhonian skepticism and the “underdetermination-based” argument, both of which have been receiving widening attention in recent debate. Section 1 of the chapter briefly articulates these two skeptical arguments and their interrelationship, while section 2 explains the close connection between a virtue-theoretic and a neo-Moorean response to them. Because I cannot fully canvass the growing field of VE, the focus will primarily be on leading figures such as Ernest Sosa, who develops “virtue perspectivism” in a series of essays and in his 2004 John Locke Lectures, and John Greco, who develops “agent reliabilism” in *Putting Skeptics in Their Place* (2000) and recent essays. In sections 3 and 4, I advance my arguments for improving the prospects of virtue-theoretic responses, sketching a particular version of VE that seeks to recast somewhat how we understand the “externalist turn in epistemology” thereby suggesting ways of improving the adequacy of philosophical responses to skepticism. Section 5 concludes the chapter with some brief suggestions about the direction of future work and additional points about the kind of “expansion” in the theory of knowledge that I think a virtue-theoretic approach argues for.

1. PYRRHONIAN SKEPTICISM AND THE UNDERDETERMINATION ARGUMENT

One type of skepticism that current debate takes especially seriously is expressed in underdetermination-based arguments. According to such arguments, one’s total evidence, at least as considered internalistically from a first-person perspective, underdetermines one’s judgment in favor of commonsense realism over alternative “hypotheses” that depict us as victims of systematic deception. Here is how Pritchard (2005) more formally articulates UA, the “template underdetermination-based skeptical argument”:

- (U1) If my evidence does not favour my belief in everyday propositions over the known to be incompatible skeptical hypotheses, then I am not internalistically justified in believing everyday propositions.
- (U2) My evidence does not favour my belief in everyday propositions over the known to be incompatible skeptical hypotheses.
- (UC) I am not internalistically justified in believing everyday propositions (and thus I lack knowledge of everyday propositions). (2005, 205)

Pritchard takes the underdetermination argument to reflect especially well the motivations behind contemporary neo-Pyrrhonism (see also Sinnott-Armstrong, 2004). He rightly points out that (the explicit appeal to what is “internalistically justified” notwithstanding) we can find versions of this argument among the ancients as well. Indeed, I would connect the underdetermination principle² with the principle of the *equipollence* (roughly, “justificational equivalence”) of theoretical suppositions or “judgments” in the thought of the second-century A.D. skeptic Sextus Empiricus. In *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, his most basic characterization of skepticism is this:

Skepticism is an ability, or mental attitude, which opposes appearances to judgments in any way whatsoever, with the result that, owing to the equipollence of the objects and reasons thus opposed, we are brought firstly to a state of mental suspense and next to a state of “unperturbedness” or quietude [*ataraxia*].

(1, 8).

In Sextus and Agrippa’s Pyrrhonism, the attempt of antiskeptical philosophers to escape the equipollence of theoretical judgments is found to land them upon one or another point of a trilemma where the philosophic reconstruction of one’s ability to know (or, alternatively, one’s prerogative to claim rational justification for one’s belief) is (a) viciously circular, (b) endlessly regressive, or (c) ultimately arbitrary. “Agrippa’s trilemma” remains a matter of deep concern in contemporary epistemology. As Pritchard points out in *Epistemic Luck* (2005), it centrally supports the view “that any claim to know can be called into question via the skeptical techniques the Pyrrhonian skeptics have identified, and [that] this highlights the ultimately ‘brute’ nature of our epistemic position” (220).

Another reason why Pyrrhonian skepticism and the underdetermination argument are chosen as the focus of our examination is that they allow us to engage the issue of how “the externalist turn in epistemology” over the past several decades affects the prospects of the antiskeptical path in philosophy. It is clear that the externalist turn and the associated rejection of access internalism have recast the role of positive epistemologists in dialogue with skeptical challengers. But do externalist responses merely change the topic and avoid the real challenge of skepticism, as its critics allege? Or, as their proponents claim, are they highly advantageous by allowing us to see how arguments like UA can appear insurmountable when they are not? These questions are pertinent here because although it would be an overstatement to say that there is a single distinctive virtue-theoretic approach to skepticism, the best known proponents of virtue epistemology clearly take advantage of externalist responses to skepticism, believing that it provides strong resources both for diagnosing the motivations to skepticism and for responding to the skeptic’s strongest arguments. In the next section, we canvass some of their views.

Y. v.
18/19

2. NATURE AND REASON IN THE COMMONSENSE TRADITION

Philosophers as diverse as Pascal and Hume have seen the primary tension inclining us to radical skepticism as that between "nature" and "reason." "Who will unravel this tangle?" asks Pascal. "Nature confutes the skeptics, and reason confutes the dogmatists . . . [such that a person] can neither avoid these two sects, nor hold fast to either one of them!"³ Nature inclines us to commonsense beliefs (such as the existence of an external world, of other minds, and of causal regularities in nature), while reason inclines us to take seriously skeptical arguments that would impugn our capacity for knowledge even of these things. The underdetermination argument stated in section 1 expresses one key form of the skeptic's worry. Does not our apparent inability to eliminate known-to-be-incompatible radical skeptical hypotheses by reflectively good reasons demonstrate at least that our human condition is lacking in qualities that are epistemically desirable? Further, does it not impugn our ability to know and our epistemic responsibility in attributing justified belief to ourselves and others?

G. E. Moore's "commonsense realist" reply is to defend our natural confidence in our everyday knowledge and our ability to claim it for ourselves. But critics allege that his reply is question begging and therefore hangs upon the circularity horn of the previously mentioned skeptical trilemma. Contemporary "neo-Moorean" responses argue that Moore's response is actually quite illuminating, but only after it gets a retrofit to reflect a reliabilist stream in modern epistemological thought stretching back to Thomas Reid. Sosa (2000) and Greco (2002a) both discuss how Reid, too, is part of the commonsense tradition, and how certain aspects of his reliabilist orientation are subtly suggested in Moore's better known "defense of common sense" (1925).⁴

For the virtue epistemologists we are considering, developing a neo-Moorean argument with the kind of naturalized conception of reason that can take advantage of the resources of reliabilist externalism would be quite advantageous. Hence Greco finds it illuminating to study the substantive and methodological continuities between Reid and Moore. In his "How to Reid Moore" (2002a), Greco argues that neither was "simply insisting" that we know what the skeptic denies. Rather, both authors are astute critics of skeptical arguments who held that the evidence of sense is no less reasonable than that of demonstration, and for Reid at least, as for contemporary reliabilists and other epistemic externalists, introspective consciousness, perception, memory, testimony, and inductive reasoning are all possible sources of knowledge in addition to deductive or demonstrative reasoning.

In "How to Defeat Opposition to Moore,"⁵ Sosa's articulation of a key area of contemporary debate focuses upon the skeptical "argument from ignorance," hereafter AI. This begins with two definitions:

- h I am a handless brain in a vat being fed experiences as if I were normally embodied and situated.
- o I now have hands.

Then follows Sosa's version of the argument:

1. I don't know that not-h
2. If I don't know that not-h, then I don't know that o.

So,

- C. I don't know that o

Sosa characterizes the three main positions that have been adopted on AI:

Skeptic	1, 2; therefore C
Nozick et al.	1, Not C; therefore Not 2
Moore	2, Not C; therefore Not 1

The skeptic holds the Moorean escape from skeptical conclusion C to be viciously circular, but the neo-Moorean responds that the logic of the argument cuts in two directions, such that if I do know that I have hands, then I do know that skeptical hypotheses inconsistent with this knowledge are false, even if I have not directly considered them all.⁶

Sosa's basic description of knowledge is as "apt performance" in the way of belief. For a belief to be apt, as Sosa puts it in his *Locke Lectures, A Virtue Epistemology*, is for it to be correct in a way creditable to the believer, as determined by the role of the believer's competence in the explanation of his being right (see 2007; see also his 2002a and 2002b). On Sosa's view, epistemic competence is socially, as well as individually, seated, and virtue-theoretic terms better describe this competence than other approaches. Whether we are considering a correct belief due to intellectual virtue or a right action due to practical virtue, the competence and performance of agents are central to our explanations of virtuous success, and a virtuous performance will involve both the agent's constitution and situation.

Since the aptness of the agent's belief entails that its correctness is attributable to a competence exercised in appropriate conditions, the concept of aptness is an externalist one, and the condition is an externalist condition. Yet Sosa accommodates certain intuitions traditionally associated with epistemic internalism by retaining the importance of "reflective coherence" in the individual and a strong sense of human knowledge even at its lowest rungs as an achievement. These concerns with the lasting significance of reflective coherence are developed in the fuller account he describes as "virtue perspectivism," which requires that agents achieve a degree of epistemic "ascent": "reflective knowledge goes beyond animal knowledge, and requires also an apt meta-apprehension that the object-level perceptual belief is apt" (2007, 81).

It is important to point out at this juncture that none of the authors mentioned here see a need to "go internalist" in order to acknowledge and respect "the understanding and coherence dear to intellectuals."⁷ Sosa, Greco, Zagzebski, Riggs,

Axtell, and others each adopt what has been called a "compatibilist" view of the relationship between our internalist and externalist interests in explanation. They each articulate a distinction between personal and objective justification that they take to be miscast as a distinction between internalism and externalism conceived, as they typically are, as mutually exclusive and exhaustive accounts of epistemic justification. Epistemic compatibilism and incompatibilism will be more fully discussed later, but Greco's (2005, Sec. 5) description of VE as "mixed theory" is one expression of it, where he writes, "The main idea is that an adequate account of knowledge ought to contain both a responsibility condition and a reliability condition. Moreover, a virtue account can explain how the two are tied together. In cases of knowledge, objective reliability is grounded in epistemically responsible action."

Still, each has distinctive views in this area, and Greco (2004b) worries that Sosa's metarequirement of epistemic perspective makes broader concessions to internalism than are necessary, perhaps hampering rather than improving VE's antiskeptical force.⁸ The concern with an epistemically relevant distinction between reflective and animal knowledge and his stratified or "two-tiered" account of justification seems to be a recurring theme in contributors, including Greco, to the watershed volume *Ernest Sosa and His Critics* (Greco 2004a; see Kornblith 2004, for example). But Sosa's "Replies" there and his 2004 Locke Lectures, *A Virtue Epistemology*, engage these concerns quite directly.

In *Putting Skeptics in Their Place*, Greco examines a wide range of skeptical problems and argues that responding to them drives us to a form of reliabilist externalism centered on the cognitive abilities of epistemic agents (compare also Audi 2004). A key thesis in Greco's "agent reliabilism" is that the core "relevant-alternatives intuition" and this form of VE are mutually supportive. The relevant-alternatives intuition as Greco describes it is the commonsense suggestion that modally far-off error possibilities do not present relevant philosophical challenges to our ability to know most of the things we think we know. Philosophers can remain true to this intuition and harness its antiskeptical import by relating it to the settled dispositions and competencies through which agents strive for truth and effective agency in the world in which they find themselves. If the kinds of cognitive dispositions a person must manifest in order for her to meet a normative requirement of reliability are sustained by her thinking conscientiously, then this latter concept is important as well and shows us that issues of motivation and habituation remain important factors in any sound philosophic understanding of our epistemic agency.⁹

Greco thinks that agent reliabilism provides some unique resources for redressing the faulty assumption that for agents to have knowledge, they must be able to discriminate the truth of their beliefs from every alternative skeptical scenario regardless of its modal distance from the actual world. First, we need to understand relevant possibility in terms of the "possible-worlds" semantics of modal logic: A possibility is relevant if it is true in some close-by possible world, and closeness is to be understood in terms of overall world similarity (2000, 206). Second, it is virtue theory that best captures our reasoning about which possibilities are relevant: the very concept of knowledge, and therefore of the relevant possibilities that must be

excluded for its possession, involves reference to cognitive abilities and dispositions:

In the language of possible worlds, someone has an ability to achieve some result under relevant conditions only if the person is very likely to achieve that result across close possible worlds. But if knowledge essentially involves having cognitive abilities, and if abilities are dispositions to achieve results across close possible worlds, then this explains why possibilities are relevant only when they are true in some close possible world. Specifically, only such possibilities as these can undermine one's cognitive abilities. In an environment where deception by demons is actual or probable, I lack the ability to reliably form true beliefs and avoid false beliefs. But if no such demons exist in this world or similar ones, they do not affect my cognitive faculties and habits.

(207)

3. THREE COMPETING ANTISKEPTICAL STRATEGIES

We have focused primarily upon the work of Sosa and Greco because of the direct contributions each has made to a philosophically adequate response to radical skepticism. Turning in this section to points about VE made by its critics, we will describe and engage Sven Bernecker's objections, informed by a kind of austere externalism that rejects epistemic compatibilism, and Richard Foley's objections from an internalist perspective on justification that result in his proposal for "a trial separation between the theory of knowledge and the theory of justified belief." This serves my later purposes, since I want first to defend epistemic compatibilism in this general way before going on to develop philosophical support for its specifically virtue-theoretic versions.

A thoroughgoing externalist, Bernecker considers and rejects Sosa's and Greco's epistemologies as forms of what he characterizes more generally as epistemic compatibilism. This is a useful term but is defined only vaguely by the claim that it is possible to "combine satisfactorily internalist and externalist features in a single theory" (2006, 81). The target indicated by his critique is quite wide, but Bernecker's "Prospects for Epistemic Compatibilism" provides a useful taxonomy of different arguments in the literature supporting distinct versions of compatibilism. Sosa's and Greco's accounts are singled out for extended criticism (the latter in Bernecker 2007) for the reason that the virtue epistemologists offer some of the best sustained defenses in contemporary epistemology of views associated with epistemic compatibilism.

Of course, nobody could hold that what need to be reconciled are internalism and externalism as understood in the usual stipulative definitions of them. In-

ternalism about justification is standardly defined for introductory purposes as the thesis that all the elements that justify a belief must be accessible to the mind upon reflection, and externalism is defined as the negation of that thesis. Notice that this style of definition excludes a middle and leaves the terrain of theories of justification asymmetrically shaped: Internalism is a positive thesis of specified meaning, while externalism, by its purely negative character, is left to a wide parcel that might admit of a plurality of positions once developed as positive epistemologies.

Externalism invites "mixed" theory but does not necessitate it. Compatibilists are those who accept the invitation, while "incompatibilists" are what we can call those (at either end of the scale running from pure internalism to pure externalism) who spurn the invitation to mixed theory. Hence Bernecker's incompatibilist stance is not simply the rejection of internalism, something that is true of all forms of externalism by the definitions he employs. His stance, rather, is that externalists should reject any concerns about epistemic evaluation arising from the first-person perspective. Contrary to the thrust of VE, Bernecker's proposal is that we give up efforts at reconciliation and embrace instead a conception of naturalized epistemology on which only third-person concerns play a central explanatory role.

Besides being able to distinguish different kinds of compatibilism, we should also want a taxonomy that acknowledges as "incompatibilist" such eliminative forms of externalism as the one Bernecker maintains. In order to get a proper handle on the range of positions in the debate, I propose adopting the broadest taxonomy possible, which we might do by adapting the familiar trichotomy among theorists who view themselves as "enemies," "strangers," or "partners" in any given debate. More formally, we will describe these as the "conflict," "independence," and "integration" models of the interests in explanation engaged by the internalist/externalist debate. This threefold taxonomy allows us to see three quite distinct models of the relationship of internalist and externalist interests in explanation, each well represented in present-day debates in analytic epistemology. Moreover, when we extend this taxonomy to inform us specifically about divergent forms of VE, we find a confirmation that few, if any, existing forms of VE adopt the conflict model; instead, most or all support one or another form of epistemic compatibilism.¹⁰

Finally, we may further explore differences within the "compatibilist" camp. Here positions can be usefully divided between those who adopt the integration model and those who adopt the independence model. This choice between the two models supporting epistemic compatibilism overlaps with a fairly clear distinction between what I will term "strong" and "weak" forms of VE. First, let us refer to any analysis of knowledge that defends an *areteic* (i.e., virtue-theoretic) condition on knowledge as "strong VE." This term is broad enough to include Sosa, Greco, and Zagzebski as proponents despite their outstanding differences. The integrative model suggests that a correct account of knowledge is one that finds epistemic reliability and epistemic responsibility not as sources of antithetical third- and first-person "logics," but as normative concepts mutually presupposed in a proper understanding of self-reflective agents like us. Second, there are today quite a number of authors who can be described as virtue epistemologists because they

Ta
Me
Enc

Str

Par

ack
but
are
the
just
use
it c
mo
scripen
not
not
dire
ratl
tax
the
phi

skej

Table 1 Three Competing Antiskeptical Discursive Strategies

<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Description</i>
Enemies	Conflict (or incompatibilism)	Standard access internalism as excluding externalist elements; also "pure" or "eliminative" externalism, as in Bernecker's stance against all forms of compatibilism.
Strangers	Independence (or weak compatibilism)	Foley's compromising "separation proposal," which severs the link between knowledge and justification while maintaining that internalism remains correct when understood as something like a theory of personal justification tied to a general theory of rationality; includes "weak" VE where belief out of intellectual virtue is epistemically desirable, but is not studied for any connection to knowledge possession.
Partners	Integration (or strong compatibilism)	"Mixed theories" of justification that are externalist in character but maintain requirements for personal justification and proper motivation, as well as for agent reliability; includes "strong VE" where the requirement of successful belief out of intellectual virtue carries both kinds of demands.

acknowledge an epistemically central place for the study of the intellectual virtues but see its place lying entirely outside the analysis of knowledge proper.¹¹ These are, on our taxonomy, proponents of "weak VE," and they have sometimes been the most explicit critics of the preoccupation with analysis of knowledge and justification in epistemology and in strong VE in particular. When our taxonomy is used to illuminate differences within the family of virtue-theoretic epistemologies, it clarifies the point that proponents of strong VE typically maintain integrationist models for epistemic compatibilism, while proponents of weak VE typically subscribe to independence models.¹²

In summary thus far, our proposed taxonomy allows for the fact that independence and integration models are often employed by epistemologists who are not proponents of VE in either the strong or weak sense, but it also identifies under noticed sources of tension among epistemologists and a veiled debate with quite direct implications for how best to respond to radical skepticism. As "models" rather than "theories," conflict, independence, and integration represent in our taxonomy three different *discursive strategies* (table 1), and the choice between them demands that we think closely about which one best serves antiskeptical philosophy.

We can now use this taxonomy to state a stronger thesis: that as an antiskeptical strategy, adoption of the conflict model constitutes a dialectical misstep.

One reason for this that I have already suggested but will continue to develop is that a neo-Moorean argument well serves the interests of an externalist response to skepticism, yet the neo-Moorean approach thrives in an environment of epistemic compatibilism while withering apart from it. More specifically, when starting from incompatibilist assumptions, externalists are tempted to go beyond acknowledging instances of unreflective "brute" knowledge to supposing that most, if not all, human knowledge is merely of this nature. Here the concerns shared predominantly but not exclusively by internalists and skeptics, concerns about our cognitive responsibility in the human modes of inquiry we conduct and the evidence we use when we provide reflective reasons for our beliefs, appear lost or simply given up. The "brute nature" of the human epistemic condition is conceded as we learn to leave first-person perspectives out of the field of the theory of knowledge. Perhaps reflecting this austere form of externalism, Bernecker explicitly rejects Sosa's concern with "so-called reflective knowledge," denying that it amounts to a central concern of epistemology as he defines it and countering it with the suggestion that unreflective "brute" knowledge is simply paradigmatic of what we must take knowledge to be. According to our own compatibilist approach, however, contemporary neo-Pyrrhonists such as Barry Stroud (2004a, 2004b) are actually correct to see the kind of externalist response to skepticism afforded by "unmixed" or "eliminative" forms of externalism as philosophically unsatisfying.¹³

Having considered and briefly responded to eliminative externalist objections to VE, let us briefly look at the problem of the stability of epistemic compatibilism in light of certain objections stemming from an internalist conception of justification. Externalists and internalists are in agreement that questions about agent responsibility in inquiry are distinct from questions about the agent's internal access to reasons. Alvin Goldman (1999) an externalist, rightly points out that access internalism is quite compatible with the "epistemic sloth" of an agent who is subjectively justified only because she shirks her responsibility to carefully investigate or weigh potential counter-evidence to her belief. Laurence Bonjour, an internalist/coherentist, recently conceded that although he had earlier conflated these issues, "being epistemically responsible" is neither necessary nor sufficient for "internalist justification" as he continues to use that term (2003, 176). This broad agreement suggests that compatibilists can respond to Bonjour's internalism by drawing more fully on the distinction between VE's interest in concerns with epistemic responsibility in personal justification and the strong demand that Bonjour allows the skeptic to make, that there be available an "internalist justification" with which to respond to the underdetermination argument.¹⁴

Another related criticism of strong VE from an internalist perspective is captured by Foley's proposal for a "trial separation between the theory of knowledge and the theory of justified belief." Foley claims that externalism and internalism "need not be competitors at all." He finds their conflict to be due to a major false assumption they share, "that the properties which make a belief justified are by definition such that when a true belief has those properties, it is a good candidate to be an instance of knowledge" (2005, 314). It was this assumption of

logic
pro:
justi
tern

and
have
pro:
justi
the :
this,
the
and
the :
justi
pen

sho:
not
the
reta:
resp
alec:
ther
of th
resp
rega
shov
com:
thin
to r:

.....

Edn
"sta:
wha

logical connection between knowing and having justified belief, Foley charges, that prompted many externalists who until fairly recently were only reacting against justification-driven accounts of knowledge to seek to reconceive justification externalistically as well.

Foley does indeed provide an interesting reading of the debate by articulating and questioning what he simply calls "the unfortunate assumption" that would have us assess the satisfactoriness of a theory of justification by the service it provides in improving one's analysis of knowledge. The adequacy of an account of justification, at the very least, certainly need not be *restricted* to its contribution to the analysis of propositional knowledge; but Foley's proposal demands more than this, a full (though trial) separation of the two theories. Sosa, he thinks, still makes the unfortunate assumption. But Foley overstates his argument that externalists and internalists "are principally concerned with different issues" by claiming that the one is concerned with the theory of knowledge and the other with the theory of justified belief (2004, 60). It is this division that I take as providing Foley's independence model for epistemic compatibilism.¹⁵

Although Bernecker's and Foley's objections are both directed against Sosa, it should be clear that they reflect some otherwise quite antagonistic philosophical motivations. In contrast to the stance against strong VE that both authors exhibit, the position for which I will argue in section 5 remains conservative enough to retain a conceptual connection between knowledge and personal justification. In response to Bernecker, I hold that adoption of the conflict model constitutes a dialectical misstep for antiskeptical philosophy; in response to Foley, I point out that there are numerous such "separation proposals" in epistemology today, and many of them upon closer inspection also undermine rather than improve our ability to respond to radical skepticism. The advantage of the integrationist stance in this regard should be readily apparent, and though I have yet to make a positive case to show its philosophical stability in the face of the skeptical challenge, we can at least conclude thus far that the "prospects" for epistemic compatibilism are not something that should be easily dismissed, at least if a philosophically satisfying response to radical skepticism is part of what any theory of knowledge should strive for.

4. IMPROVING THE PROSPECTS OF EXTERNALIST RESPONSES TO SKEPTICISM

Edmund Gettier's objections in "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" (1963) to the "standard" or justified-true-belief (JTB) analysis of knowledge provided a spur to what has since come to be termed the "externalist turn in epistemology." But the

received view of what I will call Gettier's challenge, wherein the task is to produce an analysis of knowledge with true belief and justification as conditions, plus some further condition specifically to handle Gettier cases, is multiply ambiguous. It presupposes that the justification condition remains in place unaffected through the externalist turn in epistemology, with an externalist "Gettier condition" coming only by way of simple addition—as "fourth condition" suggests. It also seems to push at every instance toward "infallibilism," the view that for the challenge to be met, the other conditions in our analysis will not suffice unless they actually *entail* the truth of the target belief.

If this is the way matters stand, they can easily be seen to motivate just the kinds of radical or eliminative externalism that we previously identified and found wanting. But fortunately, this motivation for infallibilism in epistemology depends on a dubious conception of Gettier's challenge. On my view, the externalist turn does not spell the end of the legitimate concern of epistemologists with personal justification but does necessitate its thorough reconceptualization. To help motivate this claim, I want to suggest an alternative construal of Gettier's challenge that accepts its impetus to externalism as a correct implication but provides a quite different understanding of how epistemology needs to change on account of it. On this construal, we can affirm that infallibilism is no part of Gettier's legacy, and we can take the impetus to externalism as genuinely empowering a new mode of response to radical skepticism.

The argument in support of these claims will proceed in three steps. First, contrary to the demand that the received view triggers, a statement of "thick" conditions to inform us what will be sufficient for knowledge in any case whatever, I argue that we need only include "thin" or deflated conditions in our analysis, conditions capable of being flexible enough to take on very different content in response to different cases at hand. This first step is best exemplified in the literature in the proposal made by virtue epistemologist Heather Battaly (2001) in "Thin Concepts to the Rescue: Thinning the Concepts of Epistemic Justification and Intellectual Virtue."

Second, our claim that personal justification remains important but cannot retain its original, internalist construal through the course of the externalist turn will be supported through the work of Michael Williams (2001, 2005). I construe Williams as an integrationist whose form of strong epistemic compatibilism is embodied in his proposal that the "prior-grounding" model of our dialogical obligations (assumed by the skeptic and informing the Agrippan trilemma) be traded in favor of a "default and challenge" model (DCM). The default and challenge model of justification is most evidently responsive to Agrippan concerns, but if the problem of radical scepticism turns on the extreme internalism we will trace to the prior grounding model, then the DCM helps us respond to both, "though in the case of the latter, more by way of showing how we can legitimately set sceptical problems aside than by way of a direct solution" (Williams 2008, 26; see also Axtell 2008)

Third and finally, we develop the symmetries between these two proposals: we spell out the philosophical advantages of "marrying" the thin concept of an epi-

stemic v
analysis
tradition
the read-
tates of 1
consiste
response

In h
cumvent
tion and
applicati
nations i
and exte
unsuppo
concepts
exchange
an analys
ciency of
"no shar
that are r

To av
cation an
is a condi
highly fle
it into on
rogator w

If thi
through t
trum.¹⁶ L
several di
justificati
only the f
sitivity to
flective in
methods.

But c
suggesting
to meet a r
sufficient c
If so, how
simply ign
point of th
arguments
lose their

stemic virtue as a condition on knowledge to the DCM as embodying the kind of analysis that should be sought once we have fully eschewed attachment to the traditional, internalistically motivated prior-grounding model. I hope to persuade the reader that it is this third step, our “trial-marriage” proposal of VE to the dictates of the DCM, that provides epistemology with new resources for a more self-consistent form of compatibilism, and through it a more philosophically satisfying response to radical skepticism.

In her essay “Thin Concepts to the Rescue,” Battaly argues that we can circumvent much ill-motivated debate “by recognizing that the concepts of justification and intellectual virtue are thin. Each is thin because it has multiple conditions of application . . . [such that] there is no definite answer as to which of these combinations is necessary, or which is sufficient, for its application” (2001, 99). Internalists and externalists (and, sadly, to some extent, virtue epistemologists too) drag out unsupported debates by “picking the poisoned apple” of tacitly thickening these thin concepts in different ways. A “combinatorial vagueness” ensues that spurs heated exchanges and seems to invite still further thickening of a condition as a way to make an analysis more precise and to avoid counterexamples to the necessity and sufficiency of its stated conditions. But just what is this debate over, she asks, if there is “no sharp distinction between the combinations of conditions that are, and those that are not, necessary and sufficient for its application” (104)?

To avoid picking the apple, Battaly prescribes leaving the concepts of justification and intellectual virtue with little pre-given meaning. A thin *areteic* condition is a condition that remains largely formal in character but is for that same reason highly flexible, being able to take on different meanings in different contexts. To place it into one’s analysis of knowledge is thereby merely to present the skeptical interrogator with “a roughly drawn sketch that can be completed in different ways” (107).

If this proposal is useful, it is because what epistemologists want to analyze through terms like “justified” and “knows” actually occurs along a range or spectrum.¹⁶ Left in a formal or deflated manner, an *areteic* condition can be “bent” in several directions, allowing it to stand in for a diverse list of possible meanings of justification—items ranging from simple “aptness” that might invite reference to only the faculty virtues in some instances to the complex reason giving and sensitivity to counterevidence that we associate with the application of critical reflective intelligence and with sound reflective intellectual habits and inquisitive methods.

But can this first step of the argument lead us anywhere worth going? By suggesting that we can treat justification this way, are we not conceding that we fail to meet a reasonable demand by the skeptic for a single set of “thick” necessary and sufficient conditions that define knowledge across its entire knowledge spectrum? If so, how can we hold that positive epistemology effectively sidesteps rather than simply ignores the thrust of skeptical arguments? We remain still as if upon the point of the trident and must balance on its edge, explaining both why skeptical arguments have the initial plausibility to deserve serious attention and why they lose their force or do not arise in the same way when we proceed by our own

premises. In order to meet this burden, we will need to take a second step involving a more direct examination of just what our dialogical obligations to the skeptic actually are.

Williams's form of epistemic compatibilism makes a crucial contrast between the prior-grounding model of knowledge (hereafter PGM) and the DCM:

[T]o take account of externalist insights, we have to detach the idea that knowledge is essentially connected with justification, not only from the classical demonstrative ideal and its infallibilist descendants, but also from all conceptions of justification that insist on respecting the Prior Grounding [model]. Effecting this detachment leads us to see justification as exhibiting a Default and Challenge structure, where constraints on the reasonableness of challenges and the appropriateness of justifications are contextually variable along several dimensions.¹⁷

Not only the Agrippan trilemma but also the traditional internalist conception of justification builds in the PGM, which Williams characterizes as composed of four interrelated theses of an internalist and evidentialist orientation.¹⁸ If we implicitly adopt the PGM from the outset, then we accept an asymmetry of justificational obligations and an unrestricted commitment on the part of claimants to demonstrate entitlement to opinion: "If all reasonable believing is believing-on-evidence, the skeptic is entitled to ask for the evidence to be produced," which generates a vicious regress. But absent this requirement, the skeptic holds no right to issue such "naked challenges" (2001, 150).

Many authors have noticed substantial connections between epistemic internalism and motivations to skepticism. Williams explains this connection by noting that the PGM "both generates the threat of skepticism and constrains our responses to that threat" (2001, 188). On the DCM, by contrast, "questions of justification arise in a definite justificational context, constituted by a complex and in general largely tacit background of entitlements, some of which will be default" (158). What Williams calls our default entitlements are not "mere assumptions" because they are always provisional and backed up by a defense commitment. The most important point of Williams's approach for us to develop is that he thinks that the DCM instantiates a different conception of our discursive obligations, one that "saddles challengers, as well as claimants" to knowledge. Adopting the DCM means that challengers and claimants share justificational responsibilities, and hence that one need not concede the gross asymmetry that the PGM instantiates: "no move in the game of giving and asking for reasons is presuppositionless. On a default and challenge conception of justification, there is no room for either the skeptic's global doubts or the traditional epistemologist's global reassurances" (150).

I think of Williams as proposing a very different reading of Gettier's challenge to the standard analysis of knowledge and a correspondingly different task for the practice of epistemic evaluation in light of it. Williams wants to "preserve the link between knowledge and justification without accepting the prior grounding requirement" (2001, 148). This is what we have called the "integration" position, and it suggests that a shift away from the PGM to the DCM is necessary if we are to find

the mor
adoptio
ternalist
and whi
preserve
tion is t

Fro
for its c
default
particul
DCM v
"default
philoso
sophic
attribut

In 1
so one
ditions
needed
cogniti
terms,
ground
liams v
us that
in tern
tions o
of anal
their d
context
agent's
context
a differ
and ac
of exp.

Ac
gies. P
tageou
that tl
form o
the cc
the P
natur:
nectic
and lu
of kno

the more stable form of epistemic compatibilism that we seek. But interpreting adoption of the DCM not as optional but as something any self-consistent externalist must do still provides only a partial resolution. What I will insist upon, and what constitutes the third step of my argument, is that what is needed to preserve a conceptual link between knowledge possession and personal justification is to show clearly how our two proposals can be fitted together.

From the one side, the DCM is not only compatible with but seems to require for its completion two distinct functions for philosophical analysis, one for the default mode of inquiry and the other for particular motivated challenges in particular cases. The thin and thick descriptions of intellectual virtues supply the DCM with just the kind of explanations one might intuitively think that the "default" and "challenge" contexts call for: thin descriptions for our default philosophical mode of life and thick descriptions for our more skeptical philosophical mode of life, or simply whenever a defense commitment is engaged for the attributor of knowledge to a particular agent.¹⁹

In the default situation, by contrast, no particular challenge is set before us, and so one or more "thin" conditions on knowledge suffice; *areteic* and antiluck conditions (one or both) are good candidates for this since they aim to provide what is needed while keeping the focus on naturalistically grounded talk of the agent's cognitive habits and dispositions. "Thin-concept analysis" featuring virtue-theoretic terms, in particular, underscores a naturalistic approach to knowledge (one grounded in our habits and dispositions) that nevertheless preserves the link Williams wants with issues of personal justification (or responsibility). If Battaly shows us that virtue theory is naturally interpreted as providing an analysis of justification in terms of thin, flexible conditions that is not concerned to state sufficient conditions on knowledge in any substantial way, her proposal is just showing us the form of analysis we should expect between antiskeptical and skeptical philosophers were their debate to revolve around the DCM rather than the PGM. In the Default context, a thin *areteic* condition suffices for the expectation that the truth of the agent's belief will be of epistemic credit to her as an agent. By contrast, the dialectical context in which there has arisen a motivated challenge over a particular case calls for a different function for analysis, and in this context, thickly describable dispositions and acquired virtues again seem to provide adherents of the DCM with just the kind of explanation their model calls for.

Adoption of the DCM may also improve the prospects of virtue epistemologies. Proponents of the latter might come to see adoption of the DCM as advantageous if they find that it helps them clarify the very different explanatory roles that thick and thin concepts play in our field. If the DCM supports a more stable form of epistemic compatibilism, as Williams clearly holds, then its adoption and the consequent relinquishing of preconceptions about justification bound up in the PGM may aid inquiries into the relationship between our normative and naturalistic posits and into what Riggs (2007) describes as "the conceptual connections among a family of concepts that include credit, responsibility, attribution, and luck." For in responding to a particular motivated challenge to our attribution of knowledge to an agent, we are essentially responding to concerns that the agent

either has a false belief despite her best cognitive effort or else to concerns that the agent should not be accorded the epistemic credit that we normally *would* accord her for her cognitive success—that is, for the truth of her belief (for Greco's account of epistemic credit, see his 2003a and 2003b).

Adoption of the DCM also aids VE by providing another way of understanding the importance of the relevant-alternatives intuition. "It is easy to miss the fact that the practice of justifying is only activated by finding oneself in the context of a properly motivated challenge," and when we miss this, we allow the skeptic "to transform the ever-present possibility of contextually appropriate demands for evidence into an unrestricted insistence on grounds, encouraging us to move from fallibilism to radical skepticism" (Williams 2001, 150). By first accepting the DCM and then tying our obligations under it to a "thin-concept" analysis of knowledge, we still take skepticism seriously but encourage a quite different conception of what was wrong with the standard or JTB analysis of knowledge to which Gettier framed his objections. We avoid altogether what I call the *paradox of general sufficiency* to which debate in the post-Gettier era has apparently led. On the DCM, the demand to provide the skeptic with a set of thick conditions sufficient for knowledge at any point along the spectrum becomes paradoxical. After Williams's proposed dialectical repositioning, the antiskeptical philosopher's inability to answer the skeptic premised upon conditions set forth by the PGM can be acknowledged, but the demand itself can be reasonably set aside.²⁰

If the DCM is consistently applied, philosophers should not feel tempted to invoke the PGM even when studying cases from the "high end" of the knowledge spectrum. Nor should they be tempted to reify first- and third-person perspectives of epistemic evaluation into antithetical "logics," as if what is being evaluated were not an agent-inquirer but merely some reasoning-like process "in" him or her.²¹ But until our third step is taken, we will likely remain subject to both temptations. Concern over reflective knowledge in particular leads to problems over traditional coherentism, which, according to Williams, accepts the PGM and "is committed to a purely internalist conception of knowledge and justification" (2001, 177).²² The advice for any who want to pursue the development of a form of VE that takes advantage of Williams's proposal is that they are correct to pursue the importance of personal justification for knowledge possession, but they must at the same time disqualify their special concerns with reflective coherence from leading them to presuppose internalism by building in the PGM.

The view we have arrived at through our three-step argument underlines the pragmatic wisdom behind Battaly's proposal for harnessing the resources of thin-concept analyses of central epistemic terms and acknowledges the force of Williams's demand that self-consistent externalists stop answering to demands whose rationale lies only in the prior-grounding model of our discursive obligations to the skeptic. Epistemological externalists, I now conclude, including the proponents of strong VE on whose work we have focused, would be well served in the future to heed two key points of Williams's account: first, that an analysis of knowledge is only able self-consistently to involve elements of externalism "because it embodies

the
plu
mi
(20

me
in t
mu
arg
virt
izin
skej
reas
pre:
tior
of (C
tem

.....

con
of o
thes
theo
seric
adoj
of th
plac
pon
conf
conc
ahea
norr
moti
over

|
c

the default and challenge conception" (2001, 177); and second, that if there is a plurality of valuable epistemic aims, or a diverse list of ways in which justification might arise, then "the skeptic's hyper-general questions may be deeply flawed" (2005, 214).²³

Although we have used Battaly and Williams to illustrate clear lines of argument supporting each of our two proposals, we have taken a step somewhat unique in the literature by intentionally tying them closely together, arguing that doing so multiplies the antiskeptical force of each taken separately. In summary of the arguments in sections 3 and 4, my intention has been to point out how the force of virtue-theoretic responses to skepticism might be substantially enhanced by realizing their symmetries with the DCM of the discursive obligations holding between skeptical interrogators and antiskeptical interlocutors. It is not merely circular reasoning or arbitrary assumption to hold that modally far-off possibilities do not present philosophical objections to our ordinary practices of knowledge attribution. Adoption of the DCM allows us to see this while leading to an understanding of Gettier's challenge that shows the force of neo-Moorean VE and other epistemologies that draw upon the core relevant-alternatives intuition.

5. POSTSCRIPT ON SKEPTICISM AND VIRTUE THEORY.

In canvassing recent work in VE early in this chapter, we found a serious concern with questions about both local and radical skepticism, but also a diversity of opinions about how the resources of virtue theory are best harnessed to address these questions. Much work remains ahead on these and related problems in the theory of knowledge. Indeed, if I have been successful in making the reader take seriously Williams's claim that to be self-consistent, epistemic externalists must adopt the DCM and restate their position accordingly, then the overall implication of this chapter is that there is still a profound dialectical shift that needs to take place before externalist responses to radical skepticism hold the force their proponents so often allege for them even today. Since the issues debated by the conflict, independence, and integration models of section 3 involve diverging conceptions of epistemic normativity, virtue epistemologists also have much work ahead in articulating their own distinctive conceptions of the natural and the normative, and how the rocky relationship between them can also appear to motivate radical skepticism (Stroud). That VE brings unique resources to smooth over these tensions is, I think, well articulated by Greco when he writes:

[E]pistemology is a normative discipline, and a central task of epistemology is to explicate and explain the sort of normativity that is at work in cognitive evalu-

ation... [but] we should not expect to solve epistemology's different problems in a piecemeal fashion. Rather, we need a detailed and systematic account of the sort of normativity that is involved in cognitive evaluations.²⁴

Finally, in approaching the topic of this chapter, we have had recourse to speaking about "discursive strategies," "dialogical obligations," and "dialectical missteps" and "shifts." This is not (or not merely) an authorial idiosyncrasy; part of any sound response to skepticism is a diagnosis of its driving motivations. When Pyrrhonist arguments are discussed only as logical arguments, and "skeptical hypotheses" inconsistent with our commonsense beliefs are introduced as a potent barrier to those beliefs constituting knowledge despite there being no explanatory *research program* behind them (a usual requirement for describing something as a "hypothesis"), then the more important contrast between the prescribed or implicit associated patterns of living of the philosopher and Pyrrhonian skeptic are neglected. The cost of this neglect is potentially severe, for by it we tacitly assent to a key contention of the skeptic: that her arguments can be raised without committing her to philosophical assumptions of her own.

On the contrary, as Pascal once noted, "to criticize philosophy is already to philosophize," and we have tried to detail by reference to the PGM how contemporary Pyrrhonism and its underdetermination argument stand on unacknowledged and problematic theoretical preconceptions. I want to suggest that future work on radical skepticism needs to display considerably more of that character that authors such as Williams and Pritchard describe as diagnostic, having the intention of exposing to critical evaluation the philosophical presuppositions underlying skeptical arguments. This ties directly into our ability to respond, for as Williams nicely puts it, "We cannot simply confront the skeptic with an externalist reply. We must earn the right to make use of externalist insights by embedding them in a deeper diagnosis of the skeptic's epistemological presuppositions."²⁵ By ignoring this diagnostic task, we do ourselves the disservice of undermining the crucial interest it has been argued that we have in distancing ourselves from the skeptic's assumptions about the positive philosopher's discursive obligations. Perhaps it also explains why we so often turn a blind eye, though the commonsense tradition from Reid onward advises us we must not, to another related assumption on which the Pyrrhonist deftly plays: the assumption that for us humans to be capable of knowledge and intellectually responsible in attributing it to ourselves, our philosophers must first prove that reason is its own foundation.²⁶

NOTES

1. For a fuller account of the emergence of virtue epistemologies, see the introduction to Axtell (2000).

hy
in i
"sk

phe
alle
wit

whi
unc
oler

"str
"ext
vers
catic

emp

four
justi
emp
men
locat
(that
epist
argu
track
betw
"thic
"The
stem
addr
inter
that e
for th
1
Kvan
Reed
(Fole
for th
are of
1
a resp

2. "For all S, ϕ , ψ , if S's evidence for believing ϕ does not favour ϕ over some hypothesis ψ that S knows to be incompatible with ϕ , then S is not internalistically justified in believing ϕ " (Pritchard 2005, 108). Throughout this chapter, I change "scepticism" to "skepticism" for the sake of continuity.

3. Pascal's *Pensees* 434, my translation.

4. Perhaps the earliest of the virtue epistemologists to draw from Reid was Christopher Hookway in *Skepticism* (1990; see also 2003), where he argues that Reid's approach allows us to recognize the contingency of our confidence in our commonsense beliefs, without denying the legitimacy of that confidence (240).

5. Sosa 1999; compare his "Replies," Sosa 2004a, 276.

6. Sosa 2000. He allows that his virtue perspectivism is thus "structurally" Cartesian while pointing out that "in content it is not" (281), for the agent's epistemic ascent can be understood naturalistically, without Descartes' invocation of a creator-God who benevolently guarantees the truth of what we most clearly and distinctly conceive.

7. Sosa 2004a, 290–291.

8. Sosa's virtue perspectivism has been characterized over the years by its two-tiered or "stratified" conception of justification (1991, 189), where a key distinction is between "externalist, reliability-bound aptness and internalist, rationality-bound justification." The version of strong VE I will sketch is partly intended to show that a troublesome stratification need not be posited.

9. As Sherman and White (2002) put the point somewhat more generally, Aristotle's emphasis on the emotions remains a resource for contemporary VE.

10. For example, Sosa (2004b) argues that internalism/externalism and coherentism/foundationalism are "two false dichotomies" overcome by taking the agent as the "seat of justification," while Greco and Linda Zagzebski, whatever their other differences, both emphasize that the "mixed" character of VE is philosophically crucial rather than detrimental to its ability to respond to the skeptical challenge. James Montmarquet (2007) locates internalist concerns as reflecting interest in "pragmatic epistemic justification" (that is, in acting in a morally satisfactory way on our beliefs) rather than in "pure epistemic justification" and the question of the simple possession of knowledge. Others argue that externalist intuitions track "doxastic justification," while internalist intuitions track "propositional justification." Heather Battaly (2001, 109) argues that the debate between internalists and externalists is misguided insofar as authors fail to see that they are "thickening" a naturally "thin" concept of justification. Wayne Riggs (1998, 453) writes, "The responsibilist and truth-conducivist conceptions of justification define distinct epistemic evaluations, and so are not in any interesting sense rival notions" because each is addressed to a different kind of epistemic luck. Axtell (2001) argues that the truck that internalists and externalists have with filtering out different kinds of epistemic luck shows that each holds an incomplete account, reflecting in part divergent value-charged demands for the intelligibility of all knowledge.

11. These authors are engaged in such projects as the study of "understanding" (Elgin, Kvanvig, Riggs), explanatory stories about the acquisition of knowledge (Eflin, Pritchard, Reed), or theories of pragmatic rationality as contrasted with purely epistemic rationality (Foley, Montmarquet). Alternatively, they describe themselves as "agnostic" about a role for the virtues in analysis of knowledge and simply turn their attention to what they think are other interesting roles that the virtues can play (Roberts and Wood, 2007).

12. On my earlier taxonomic distinction between "reliabilist" and "responsibilist" VE, a responsibilist is free to advocate either weak or strong VE. Kvanvig can be highly critical

of those he says betray “remnants of skeptical shackles that have plagued the history of epistemology” by maintaining a privileged place for the study of knowledge. This includes proponents of (strong) VE who try to locate the place for virtues in epistemology “by defining knowledge or justification in terms of the virtues” (2003, 187). But while on my taxonomy Kvanvig is a weak VE critic of strong VE, it should be noted that he also criticizes Foley’s separation proposal as “abandoning the Gettier tradition entirely” (2003, 199).

13. For a fuller defense of this claim and presentation of Stroud’s challenge to what he terms “scientific externalism,” see Axtell 2006a.

14. Having made his concession, why does BonJour go on to embrace “internalist justification” as the one of epistemic centrality? If BonJour allows that internalist justification and personal justification (qua responsibility) can come apart, “responsibilists” in epistemology might be taken as those who instead choose epistemic responsibility, with its ties to natural dispositions and to acquired habits of inquiry (*hexis* for the Greeks), as the more epistemologically interesting concept. This makes it most plausible to hold that issues of personal justification and of distinctively reflective knowledge and reflective intellectual virtues maintain a continuing importance even after the externalist turn and indeed partly because of it. For responsibilist approaches to problems about religious belief and religious skepticism, see Axtell (2006a) and Roberts and Wood (2007). For more on “responsibilist VE,” see Baehr (2006a, 2006b) and the work of other editors of *JanusBlog* at <http://janusblog.squarespace.com>.

15. Foley and Montmarquet both adopt such an independence model, and with it the weak VE concessionary strategy of endorsing the austere externalist account of knowledge as merely true belief reliably produced. Foley says that he sees no reason “to read back into the account of knowledge some duly externalized notion of justified belief” but rather locates reason-giving explanations elsewhere, in a “general theory of rationality” (2005, 315). Montmarquet (2007) alternatively relocates *his* role for the intellectual virtues in the study of “pragmatic epistemic justification,” distinct from “pure epistemic justification”; this makes it a study about *action*, or more specifically about how to evaluate agents with respect to their *acting* in morally satisfactory or unsatisfactory ways on their beliefs. Montmarquet argues that Sosa’s influential distinction between animal and reflective knowledge should give way to a distinction between knowledge (animal, mechanical, or human) and the distinctively human form of responsibility (epistemic, as well as moral) involved in acting on one’s beliefs.

16. Zagzebski reflects this idea of thin-concept analysis in writing that she wants to construct a virtue-theoretic approach that takes *knowledge* broadly enough “to cover a multitude of states, from the simplest case of ordinary perceptual contact with the physical world, requiring no cognitive effort or skill wherever, to the most impressive cognitive achievements” (1996, 264).

17. Williams 2001, 245. There is “contextualism” in Williams’s thought, but it distinguishes between *two different philosophical contexts* for dialogue rather than between an “everyday” and a “skeptical” context, as self-described contextualists typically do.

18. Williams (2001, 147) analyzes the PGM into four interconnected theses: “(PG1) *No Free Lunch Principle*. Epistemic entitlement—personal justification—does not just accrue to us: it must be earned by epistemically responsible behavior. (PG2) *Priority Principle*. It is never epistemically responsible to believe a proposition true when one’s grounds for believing it true are less than adequate. (PG3) *Evidentialism*. Grounds are evidence: propositions that count in favour of the truth of the proposition believed. (PG4) *Possession Principle*. For a person’s belief to be adequately grounded . . . the believer himself or herself

must possess (and make proper use of) evidence that makes the proposition believed (very) likely to be true."

19. My form of VE is opposed to those who hold that we need to either endorse infallibilism (Zagzebski) or reject the epistemic closure principle. This adds more substance to the claim that we are offering a genuine reinterpretation of Gettier's challenge.

20. Compare this strategy with that of Greco, who until recently has proposed only a "partial" account of knowledge, restricted to stating necessary conditions, but who more recently strengthened his requirements in order to be able to maintain their general sufficiency as well. The present proposal responds to many of the same tensions that previously made Greco reluctant to assert the general sufficiency of his conditions, but it does so by the quite different approach of adopting the DCM and rejecting as unmotivated the claim that an adequate analysis is one that states "general sufficient" conditions on knowledge.

21. Externalist proponents of the conflict model typically insist that personal justification is epistemologically irrelevant because the reflective actions of reason giving are aimed at showing that one possesses a status *fully independent* of this activity. On the present view, however, this objection leans upon the grossest form of what Whitehead called the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" (see Leite 2004, 231). I am paraphrasing his claim that "basing relations must be attributable to the person and not merely to some process which takes place 'in' him or her."

22. Note that a "Sellarsian" coherentism seems to contrast with rather than exemplify "traditional" coherentism; Williams indeed sites Sellars as a source for the change of venue associated with adoption of the DCM, so there is interesting work to be done in articulating the differences.

23. Williams also expresses doubts about the expectation of providing very precise necessary and sufficient conditions of knowing, but he affirms that subject to that qualification, the account still defends "the standard analysis, which links knowledge with justification"; he therefore, as a defender of integration and like my own form of VE, stands sternly in opposition to "purely reliabilist, purely externalist, and thus radically non-justificational accounts of knowledge" (2001, 244).

24. John Greco, "Seminar on Virtue Epistemology," <http://www.helsinki.fi/filosofia/k2004/Greco.htm>.

25. Skepticism, Williams argues, is best approached not by "the more familiar kinds of positive epistemological theory" but rather by a "more roundabout, diagnostic approach" that refuses to take the arguments at face value, "accepting the skeptic's options while trying to put a better face on one of them" (2001, 122, 124).

26. Special thanks go to Jason Baehr, Sven Bernecker, Juli Eflin, John Greco, and Ernest Sosa for useful and helpful suggestions on this chapter, and to participants of *JanusBlog: The Virtue Theory Discussion Group* for extended discussion of many of the pertinent issues.

REFERENCES

- Audi, R. 2004. "Intellectual Virtue and Epistemic Power." In J. Greco (ed.), *Ernest Sosa and His Critics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 3-16.

- Axtell, G. 2000. *Knowledge, Belief and Character: Readings in Virtue Epistemology*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield.
- . 2001. "Epistemic Luck in Light of the Virtues." In A. Fairweather and L. Zagzebski (eds.), *Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 158–77.
- . 2003. "Felix Culpa: Luck in Ethics and Epistemology." In M. S. Brady and D. H. Pritchard (eds.), *Moral and Epistemic Virtues*. Oxford: Blackwell, 235–57.
- . 2006a. "Blind Man's Bluff: The Basic Belief Apologetic as Anti-skeptical Strategem." *Philosophical Studies* 30, no. 1: 131–52.
- . 2006b. "The Present Dilemma in Philosophy." *Contemporary Pragmatism* 3, No.1: 15–35.
- . 2007. "Two for the Show: Anti-luck and Virtue Epistemologies in Consonance." *Synthese* 158: 263–383.
- . 2008. "Expanding Epistemology: A Responsibilist Approach." *Philosophical Papers* 37, no. 1: 57–87.
- Baehr, J. 2006a. "Character in Epistemology." *Philosophical Studies*, 128: 479–514.
- . 2006b. "Character, Reliability, and Virtue Epistemology." *Philosophical Quarterly*, 56: 193–212.
- Battaly, H. 2001. "Thin Concepts to the Rescue: Thinning the Concepts of Epistemic Justification and Intellectual Virtue." In A. Fairweather and L. Zagzebski (eds.), *Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 98–116.
- Bernecker, S. 2006. "Prospects for Epistemic Compatibilism." *Philosophical Studies* 20, no. 1: 81–104.
- . 2007. "Agent Reliabilism and the Problem of Clairvoyance." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 76, no. 1: 164–172.
- BonJour, L. 2003. "Reply to Sosa." In L. BonJour and E. Sosa (eds.), *Epistemic Justification*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 173–200.
- DePaul, M., and Zagzebski, L., (eds.). 2003. *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eftin, J. 2003. "Epistemic Presuppositions and their Consequences." *Metaphilosophy* 34, no. 1–2: 48–68.
- Elgin, Catherine. 1996. *Considered Judgment*. Princeton University Press.
- Foley, R. 2004. "A Trial Separation between the Theory of Knowledge and the Theory of Justified Belief." In J. Greco (ed.), *Ernest Sosa and His Critics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 59–72.
- . 2005. "Justified Belief as Responsible Belief." In Matthias Steup and Ernest Sosa (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 313–26.
- Gettier, E. 1963. "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis* 23: 121–23.
- Goldman, A. 1999. "Internalism Exposed." *Journal of Philosophy* 96: 271–293.
- Greco, J. 2000. *Putting Sceptics in Their Place: The Nature of Skeptical Arguments and Their Role in Philosophical Inquiry*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2002a. "How to Reid Moore." *Philosophical Quarterly* 52, 544–63.
- . 2002b. "Virtues in Epistemology." In Paul Moser (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 287–315.
- . 2003a. "Knowledge as Credit for True Belief." In M. DePaul and L. Zagzebski (eds.), *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 111–34.
- . 2003b. "Virtue and Luck, Epistemic and Otherwise." *Metaphilosophy* 34: 353–66.

- , (ed.). 2004a. *Ernest Sosa and His Critics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 2004b. "How to Preserve Your Virtue While Losing Your Perspective." In J. Greco (ed.), *Ernest Sosa and His Critics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 86–95.
- . 2005. "Virtue Epistemology." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology-virtue/>.
- Hookway, C. 1990. *Skepticism*. London: Routledge.
- . 2003. "How to be a Virtue Epistemologist." In M. DePaul and L. Zagzebski (eds.), *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 183–202.
- Kornblith, H. 2004. "Sosa on Human and Animal Knowledge." In J. Greco (ed.), *Ernest Sosa and His Critics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 126–34.
- Kvanvig, J. 2003. *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leite, A. 2004. "On Justifying and Being Justified." *Philosophical Issues* 14: 219–53.
- Montmarquet, James. 2007. "Pure vs. Practical Epistemic Justification." *Metaphilosophy* 38, 1: 71–87.
- Moore, G. E. 1925. "A Defence of Common Sense." In J. H. Muirhead (ed.), *Contemporary British Philosophy* (2nd series). London: Allen and Unwin.
- . 1939. "Proof of an External World." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 25, 273–300.
- Pritchard, D. 2005. *Epistemic Luck*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2006. "Greco on Reliabilism and Epistemic Luck." *Philosophical Studies* 30, no. 1: 35–45.
- . 2007. "Anti-luck Epistemology." *Synthese*, 158: 277–97.
- Reed, B. 2001. "Epistemic Agency and the Intellectual Virtues." *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 39: 507–26.
- Riggs, W. 1998. "What Are the 'Chances' of Being Justified?" *Monist* 81: 452–72.
- . 2002. "Reliability and the Value of Knowledge." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 64, no. 1: 79–96.
- . 2007. "Why Epistemologists Are So Down on Their Luck." *Synthese* 158: 329–344.
- Roberts, R. and J. W. Wood. *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology*. Oxford University Press.
- Sextus Empiricus. 1933–1939. *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Trans. R. G. Bury. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sinnott-Armstrong. 2004. *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sosa, E. 1991. *Knowledge in Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1999. "How to Defeat Opposition to Moore." *Philosophical Perspectives* 13: 141–53.
- . 2000. "Reflective Knowledge in the Best Circles." In E. Sosa and J. Kim (eds.), *Epistemology: An Anthology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 274–87.
- Sosa, E., and J. Van Cleve. 2000. "Thomas Reid." In S. Emmanuel (ed.), *The Modern Philosophers*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 2002. "Tracking, Competence, and Knowledge." In Paul Moser (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook on Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2003. "The Place of Truth in Epistemology." In M. DePaul and L. Zagzebski (eds.), *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 155–80.
- . 2004a. "Replies." In J. Greco (ed.), *Ernest Sosa and His Critics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 275–325.

- . 2004b. "Two False Dichotomies: Foundationalism/Coherentism and Internalism/Externalism." In W. Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.), *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 146–60.
- . 2007. *A Virtue Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stroud, B. 2004a. "Contemporary Pyrrhonism." In W. Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.), *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 174–87.
- . 2004b. "Perceptual Knowledge and Epistemological Satisfaction." In J. Greco (ed.), *Ernest Sosa and His Critics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 165–73.
- Williams, M. 2001. *Problems of Knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2008. "Responsibility and Reliability." *Philosophical Papers* 37, no. 1: 1–26.
- . 2005. "The Agrippan Argument and Two Forms of Skepticism." In W. Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.), *Pyrrhonian Skepticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 121–45.
- Zagzebski, L. 1996. *Virtues of the Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.