

The Truth in Gnosticism

Clayton Littlejohn

King's College London

1. Introduction

Two assumptions about epistemic value guide most recent discussions of it.¹ The first is that there is something good about true belief.² The intuitions that underwrite this have been expressed in a number of ways. Some authors (e.g., Zagzebski (1996)) seem to defend the view that the state of affairs in which Agnes believes a true proposition is a good one, perhaps one that could be good for her. Other authors (e.g., Sosa (2007)) don't talk this way and discuss instead the idea that truth is a fundamental value in a specific kind of evaluative domain. Whether the realization of such goods makes the world a better place or makes our lives go better is left open. The essential idea seems to be that true beliefs all have a virtue and it is one that no false belief could have. The second assumption is that it's possible for two beliefs to differ in value even if both beliefs are equally accurate.³ If, say, Agnes knows that you need to take a left to get to Larissa and I believe but don't know that this is so, Agnes' belief compares favorably to mine. Similarly, if Agnes' beliefs about what Larissa is like this time of year are correct but aren't justified, my beliefs about Larissa's weather might be better than hers if mine are justified.

The *veritist* thinks there is one and only one fundamental epistemic good and that this good is true belief. Our first assumption about value is easy to explain on the veritist view. The veritist thinks that all and only the true beliefs realize the

¹ For helpful discussions, I would like to thank Maria Alvarez, Thomas Byrne, Charles Cote-Bouchard, Peter Dennis, Julien Dutant, David Owens, David Papineau, and Barnaby Walker.

² An intuition that figures prominently in Goldman (1999), Pritchard (forthcoming), Sylvan (2013), and Zagzebski's (1996) discussion of epistemic value. It is hard to say what Sosa makes of this assumption, but there are passages where we might find some sympathy for it. We might read Sosa's (2007) discussion of epistemic normativity as a development of this idea, but this reading is somewhat speculative and we might read this work as exploring the consequences of 'epistemic truth monism' without endorsing that view. In his (2001), he is explicit that this monism is only a working assumption.

³ For critical discussion of this intuition, see Dutant (2012), Pritchard (forthcoming), and Sartwell (1992).

fundamental epistemic good. They have a harder time explaining the second assumption. To explain it, the veritist needs to show that true beliefs can differ in value because they realize different derivative goods or values.

It's easy to think of lots of ways that beliefs might differ in value. As Charles likes to remind me, milk is the state beverage of Delaware. As I like to remind him, this is the least interesting fact in the world. Unlike Charles' fact, this one is interesting. Our beliefs differ in terms of how interesting they are, but such differences aren't very helpful to point to because (a) it isn't clear that the difference between the interesting and uninteresting is one that matters to the relevant evaluative domain and (b) this difference doesn't pattern with the differences we're trying to understand (e.g., the difference in value that explains why it's better to know p or justifiably believe p than simply have an accurate belief about p). As Firth (1981) and Pascal remind us, some beliefs differ in terms of their instrumental worth. As interesting as this is, it's hard to see how this could be relevant to our concerns because we don't think that knowledge is better than mere true belief because of how they might differ in terms of instrumental worth. What the veritist needs to tell us is some story about how it's possible for pairs of true beliefs to differ in their non-instrumental epistemic value.

The most promising form such an explanation can take, in my view, draws on Sosa's (2007) work on epistemic value and the nature of knowledge. On Sosa's view, knowledge is a kind of achievement, a success that is attributable to the subject and her abilities. These achievements, he suggests, are more valuable than a success that is down to luck and does not constitute an achievement. Our discussion begins with a treatment of the Meno Problem that draws inspiration from his work. With that in front of us, I'll raise some potential difficulties for his view and consider whether he has the resources to address them. I shall outline the details of an alternative view that avoids these difficulties. It retains Sosa's account of knowledge but requires us to revise some veritist proposals about epistemic value. The revised view provides us with some tools that will be useful in trying to offer a theory of adroit or rational belief.

2. The True, The Better, and the Aptly

Most discussions of epistemic value operate with two assumptions:

A1: True beliefs are epistemically good in such a way that they possess a good-making feature that no false belief possesses.

A2: Pairs of true beliefs can differ in their evaluative epistemic properties so that one possesses a good-making feature that the other lacks (e.g., a justified true belief about p is better than a true belief about p , knowing that p is better than believing p , etc.).

It is easy to see how a veritist would account for (A1) but how might they account for (A2)? Consider some specific pair of beliefs, such as my belief about the way to Larissa and Agnes' belief. We can stipulate that our beliefs are equally accurate but differ in that only Agnes knows that we need to take a left. This should give us a specific pair where one accurate belief is better than another. If we want to understand why this pair differs in value, we should start by considering two parts of Sosa's epistemological view, his theory of knowledge and his theory of epistemic value.

On Sosa's account of knowledge, Agnes' belief constitutes knowledge because the accuracy of her belief is attributable to her ability. Knowledge, on this view, is a kind of achievement. Clearly, Agnes and I can both have true beliefs about the way to Larissa, but there's something about the way that Agnes' belief was formed that would lead us to say that the accuracy of her belief is attributable to her and the way that she exercised her rational capacities whereas we wouldn't say something similar about my belief and my abilities, such as they are. Her belief is knowledge because it is accurate because *adroit*. My belief is not knowledge because it is accurate without being accurate because *adroit*.

How does this help us understand (A2)? If we assume, as we will for this discussion, that accurate or true beliefs constitute knowledge by virtue of being a specific kind of achievement, one in which accuracy is attributable to ability, we get the explanation we seek if we add the further assumption that achievements are valuable in ways that merely fortunate outcomes are not. If a success is an achievement, it is better than a success that cannot be thought of as any sort of achievement.

The guiding idea here is simple enough. When we have pairs of individuals who, let's say, endeavor to do the same thing (e.g., make a cup of coffee, maintain an

accurate record of events, roast a pig) something good might result if these individuals are fortunate enough to succeed in their endeavors *but* there's something better to succeeding in these endeavors from ability than there is to simply being fortunate enough to succeed in the relevant endeavor. The value of the excellent performance *derives* from the good realized by the success of the endeavor, so the account is compatible with the kind of monistic assumptions that veritists take on board, but the value of the excellent performance does not *reduce* to the good realized by the success of the endeavor.⁴

In this general framework of value, then, we can think of one kind of basic good as the good realized by mere aim-fulfillment (truth (perhaps) in the case of belief or accuracy in the case of pitched horseshoes) and another derivative good as realized whenever the realization of the aim is attributable to an individual's excellent use of their abilities. Since we've identified knowledge with a kind of achievement, we've explained why the relevant pair of true beliefs can differ in value in a way that's consistent with (A1) and with veritism.⁵ In the hierarchy, accurate or true belief occupies the role occupied by successes and knowledge occupies the role of success attributable to ability. We want to remember that there can be disagreements about the things that occupy these roles that are somewhat orthogonal to debates about whether successes from ability are better than mere successes that are due to luck or good fortune. We can think of these as the *substantive* and *structural* assumptions respectively.

The account does a nice job handling a challenge related to the Meno Problem. If we choose a different pair of beliefs, say, a belief that is true but not

⁴ For an interesting version of this, one that nicely handles the swamping objection, see Sylvan (2013).

⁵ It is hard to say whether Sosa buys into the standard veritist views. For a start, he disagrees with veritists like Kvanvig (2003) and Lynch (2004) about the value of trivial and uninteresting truths. For another, there are passages where he suggests that apt belief or knowledge is itself a fundamental value, perhaps in addition to the value of true belief (Sosa (2007: 88)). There are also passages where he takes the aim of belief and judgment to be apt belief or knowledge. (See Sosa's (2015: 55) discussion of guessing and judgment.) This might suggest that apt belief or (animal) knowledge should displace true belief as the fundamental good in the hierarchy, but in (2015) he also suggests that there are states of mind that aim at only truth that can constitute animal knowledge, so he does not totally abandon the idea that truth could be a kind of success.

justified and one that is both true and justified, we might again think that there is an important difference in the value of these beliefs that we'd want our value theory to account for. If the relevant belief is not a case of success that is attributable to ability, it might nevertheless be a case in which the subject's abilities were properly exercised or exercised well. This, in turn, might account for the fact that it's better to have a true belief that is justified than one that is not. In such cases, we would account for (A2) by appeal to adroitness rather than aptness.

Critics have pointed to potential problems with this account, but none of the criticisms that I've seen thus far strike me as being fatal.⁶ In the next section I shall raise two challenges that have not been widely discussed in the literature to see if Sosa's account can meet them.

3. Two Challenges

In the discussions of epistemic value there seems to be a third assumption that enjoys widespread acceptance without receiving much attention at all:

A3. The beliefs that are epistemically good are *distinctively* valuable.

The idea behind (A3) is simple enough. Belief isn't just potentially valuable, it has the potential to be valuable in ways non-beliefs cannot be.⁷ If (A3) were false, there should be non-doxastic mental states or events that could make belief otiose. We could get all the goods of good belief without belief. It would then be a mystery as to why it would matter whether we had any beliefs at all as we could presumably realize the same goods without them.

If we follow Sosa's lead it seems that the properties that the epistemically desirable beliefs might have are these. They can be *accurate*, they can be *adroit*, and

⁶ The most serious challenge, in my view, comes from Hacker's (2013) discussion of the relationship between knowledge and achievement but I'm bracketing these concerns for the purpose of our discussion. I am sympathetic to Hacker's suggestion that an apt attitude needn't be an achievement. For a helpful response to worries about achievement, however, see Ho (forthcoming). See Bradford (2015) for an excellent guide to the nature and value of achievements generally.

⁷ The kind of belief I have in mind is full belief or binary belief. Some philosophers think that binary belief might not bring anything interesting to the table that doesn't come with partial belief, but we shall see below one reason to think that it does.

they can be *apt*. Accuracy is easy enough to get a grip on. A belief is accurate iff it is a true belief. A belief will be *adroit* if it is produced by the right kind of abilities. Sosa characterizes these abilities by reference to the aim of accuracy. A belief will be *apt* if it is accurate because *adroit*. Spelling this idea out is difficult, but the idea is that the accuracy somehow manifests the ability so that we attribute the accuracy to the agent and/or her relevant cognitive abilities. This requires more than simply that the abilities are exercised and an accurate belief is the result just as digestion requires more than simply that you stuff yourself with leftovers and somehow later food finds its way to your cells.

Here's a worry about this general approach. On many views of perceptual experience, experience is similar to belief in that it can be both accurate and *apt*.⁸ In cases of illusion, people say, experience is taken to be inaccurate. In cases of veridical hallucination, they add, it is taken to be accurate even though the experience's accuracy is not attributable to ability. Once we have these possibilities on the table, it seems it should be possible for there to be a kind of *adroitness* that is either absent or present in the case of perception. If it visually seems to you that some visible object is an F and the representation of this object in vision as an F is triggered by the wrong thing, we would have accuracy without *aptness*. If an example is needed, the easiest cases are cases of visual experience that represents something as instancing some high-level property. In seeing a dog, someone who thinks that experience can involve the presentation of high-level properties might say that a child can see the dog as dangerous. If that representation is triggered, say, by just the features distinctive of dogs so that the child is primed to see every dog as dangerous, we can imagine cases where a child is presented with a cute, cuddly, fluffy killer. The dog might be dangerous but wouldn't be seen that way by anyone who knew anything about dogs because it didn't present any of the properties that would indicate that it was dangerous. Here the child's experience would be accurate but neither *apt* nor *adroit*. The *apt* perception, if there is such a thing, requires that representations are triggered

⁸ See Byrne (2009), Logue (2014) McDowell (1994), Schellenberg (2014), and Siegel (2011) and for defenses of representational accounts of perceptual experience. For arguments to the contrary, see Brewer (2011) and Travis (2004). I'm persuaded by the arguments to the contrary.

by the right kinds of things and that suggests, in turn, a role for adroitness in understanding the difference between apt and merely accurate visual representation.

In short, many views of perceptual experience imply that experiences could be like beliefs in being *apt* (i.e., accurate because adroit) and not merely accurate. Granted, we do not say that experiences can be *knowledge*, but this is neither here nor there. A state of knowledge, on Sosa's view, is supposed to be good because it is apt. Thus, the observation that both experience and visual experience might be apt points to a real problem for (A3). The good-making features that account for the value of knowledge and explain why knowledge is better than true belief are common to knowledge and some forms of perception.

The second challenge has to do with the veritist treatment of Gettier cases. If you share the intuitions that support (A1) and (A2) and take the presence/absence of knowledge to be something that ensures a corresponding difference in epistemic value, you can certainly use Sosa's value theory to explain why it's better to know p than to simply believe p when p happens to be true. There is a further problem that Gettier cases cause and it isn't the challenge to explain (A2) but to defend (A1). Gettier cases can be used to challenge just the intuitions that support (A1).

Let's look at these two challenges more closely. We'll start with the sufficiency challenge and turn to the distinctiveness challenge.

3.1 The Sufficiency Challenge

It is generally recognized by those sympathetic to veritism that we don't value truth, *per se*. We attach value only to things like *having the truth, being in touch with the truth, or keeping track of reality*:

In loving the truth, then, what we value is not the being true of the truths. What we value in pursuing truth is rather our grasping it, our having it. What does this mean? Only through believing it does one relevantly have a truth: We have the truth that snow is white by believing that snow is white. In pursuing the truth what we want is (at least) true beliefs (Sosa 2001: 49).

This is taken by some writers to support the view that, "it is good to believe what is true" (Lynch 2004: 12). As I read this, Lynch seems to be suggesting that every true belief realizes some sort of value. We can call this thesis the *sufficiency thesis*.

The intuition that there's something good about having the truth only supports (A1) on the assumption that having a true belief is, *inter alia*, having the truth. I'm skeptical. Think about the notion of keeping track of reality or keeping in touch with reality. If we think that these things are basically equivalent to having the truth, we can ask whether it's true that a subject is in touch with reality iff they have a true belief. When we think about the various ways in which a subject might have a true belief without having knowledge, it seems that true belief isn't sufficient for being in touch with reality *precisely* because true belief is not sufficient for knowledge.

This is one of the lessons we should take from Gettier cases. Consider a variant on Nozick's experience machine.⁹ The machine induces experiences that predictably lead Agnes to believe various things about the world external to her. It is part of the story that the experiences produced in that machine are not produced because of what's happening in Agnes' surroundings, so there's a sense in which she's lost touch with an important part of reality as a consequence of plugging into the machine. She doesn't regain contact if, owing to the kind of luck we find in Gettier cases, she happens to have the odd true belief. She might believe, correctly, that her sister is doing well because she believes, correctly again, that her sister just handed in her thesis. If such beliefs are produced in the experience machine because the programmers believed that hallucinations that induced these beliefs would make Agnes happy, Agnes isn't in touch with the facts just because there's this amazing coincidence in how things are thousands of miles away from the machine and how things are in Agnes' delusion.

If we endorse veritism and accept (A1), we have to say that there's something good about Agnes' beliefs, but I'm skeptical that there's anything particularly good about accuracy or truth when we're dealing with cases in which the believer isn't in

⁹ See Hyman (2015) for related points about the relationship between knowledge and reasons.

touch with the relevant parts of reality.¹⁰ Once we're skeptical about (A1), we should equally be skeptical of views that propose to explain (A2) by proposing that start from the assumption of the sufficiency thesis and try to show that there's some further derivative epistemic value that explains why some true beliefs are better than others. An alternative explanation, one that I prefer, explains (A2) by showing that some true beliefs are better than others by showing that some are good and some are either worthless or bad.

To understand the motivation for this kind of view, we can start by asking *why* we value the truth. Is there anything that the veritist can say that would explain their love of the truth? The explanation that I would offer, if someone were to ask, would start from the idea, presented in the previous section, that a full account of the value realized by belief would appeal to something distinctive about belief. The two things that come to mind are these. Belief is unique in having the potential to be knowledge. Belief is unique in having the potential to provide us with propositionally specified reason¹¹s, reasons that are potential motivating reasons. These two points are linked if, as I suggested above, the belief in p puts the subject in a position to ϕ for the reason that p iff the subject knows p or aptly believes p .

Starting from this idea, we can argue against the sufficiency thesis as follows. The fundamental good that a belief can realize is realized iff the belief puts a truth into our possession in the sense that it enables us to ϕ for the reason that p . While no false belief could do this (because all propositionally specified reasons are true), not every true belief could do this. If a subject believes p without knowing p , her belief doesn't put her in a position to ϕ for the reason that p because that requires that the fact that p could rationally guide the subject in ϕ -ing and this requires a kind of non-accidental connection to the fact that, in turn, requires knowledge.

An argument against the sufficiency thesis is an argument against veritism since the veritist believes that the truth of a belief is necessary and sufficient for the

¹⁰ In place of (A1), I would defend (A1*): False beliefs are epistemically bad in such a way that they possess a bad-making feature that some true beliefs lack. In keeping with gnosticism, I would say that the only beliefs that lack this defect are those that constitute knowledge.

¹¹ For a helpful discussion of reasons in general and a defense of the view that motivating reasons are facts, see Alvarez (2010). For arguments for the possibility of false reasons, see Comesana and McGrath (2014).

realization of the fundamental epistemic good. The alternative view I'd offer in place of veritism is *gnosticism*, the view that there is one and only one fundamental epistemic good and that that good is knowledge.¹² On this view, the beliefs that realize the fundamental good are the ones that constitute knowledge. Once we see why someone might be moved to embrace the view, we can start to see why some people have been misled into accepting veritism. There is something good about having the truth in your possession and being in touch with the facts so that you can be guided by them, but this only seems to support veritism when we don't take account of the fact that there is more to having the facts than having a true belief. Once we see that (A1) is actually false, we can see that it's much easier to explain (A2) than the veritists have thought. There is something good about knowledge and nothing good about believing without knowing. Any belief that fails to constitute knowledge is a bad state to be in because such a state purports to put you in touch with realities when it doesn't. In being in such a state, you are misled into thinking that you can be guided by the facts when in actuality the facts are not within your reach.

3.2 The Distinctiveness Challenge

To solve or dissolve the distinctiveness problem we should either challenge the assumption that perceptual experiences can be apt or by identify some feature of belief that distinguishes it from perceptual experience and helps us to explain (A3). While I do think that perceptual experiences are not representational, I don't think that we'll find a satisfactory response to the distinctiveness challenge by arguing that perceptual experiences could not be apt. I don't think there is any particularly good reason to deny that there could be creatures that had non-doxastic states that could be assessed for accuracy and that could potentially be accurate because adroit. Perhaps there could be or could have been propositional appearances (the things that the

¹² Readers interested in the gnostic gospels should consult Hyman (2015) and Williamson (2000). Because of some muddled thinking about fake barn cases and propositional seeing, I rejected gnosticism in my (2012) but I've seen the light and have tried to correct past mistakes about fake barns in my (2014). I owe the term 'gnosticism' to Margot Strohming. Matt Benton suggested 'knoicism' as an alternative. In my view, that's a close second.

phenomenal conservatives call 'seemings').¹³ If such things are possible, some of them might be apt and none of them might be beliefs. The challenge would remain even if we reject the representational accounts of perceptual experience.

A more promising strategy would be to identify a feature distinctive of belief, something that distinguishes it from other potentially apt representational states of mind. One suggestion that builds on Sosa's (2013, 2015) work on belief and judgment would be to start from the idea that belief or judgment could be thought of as a performance. Perceptual experience is a passion, something that a perceiver suffers. While a perceptual experience or a seeming might be apt, neither could be an excellent performance on the part of an agent.

By bringing agency into the picture, we could either argue that the presence of agency is the additional feature that explains why, say, apt belief is better than apt experience or by arguing that the additional feature is itself a necessary condition for the realization of some kind of value. To get a feel for the contrast, consider a familiar line about moral worth. Some see actions that have moral worth as better than those that are merely rightly done or permissibly done. We might see the factors that distinguish worthy right action from mere right action as something that brings an additional value to the table. Consider, instead, assessment of human and animal action. The cow and the farmer can perform actions that are optimific, but presumably only the farmer's actions could count as morally right. The presence of a certain kind of agency might be thought of as a precondition for the realization of a kind of value (i.e., rightness) but not a feature that adds value to that which realizes the value.

One difficulty we face if we try to explain (A3) by appeal to belief or judgment's relation to agency is that we distinguish apt belief from apt perceiving but don't seem to do a very good job distinguishing the apt belief from the apt guess. We remove one problem for (A3) but a new one emerges. A guess, like a belief, can be evaluated in terms of accuracy. Some guesses are better than others and we'd want to say that some guesses are adroit while others are not. Some guesses might be accurate because adroit, so it seems there could be an apt guess. Moreover, it seems that a guess could involve agency in all the ways belief or judgment does, so we wouldn't

¹³ See Huemer (2007), Tucker (2010), and Reiland (2015).

want to say that our agency isn't involved in guessing. If we see guesses and judgments or beliefs as differing in kind and don't see the potential for good guessing as a threat to (A3), I think that agency can only be part of the explanation of (A3).

Instead of thinking about a distinctive *feature* that distinguishes some apt attitudes from others (e.g., relation to agency), I would suggest that playing a distinctive *role* is crucial for responding to the our distinctiveness and sufficiency challenges. The roles that belief and perception play in our psychological lives and epistemological theories differ and I'd like to suggest that the best approach to explaining (A3) is one that focuses on these different roles.

Even if belief is like a perceptual experience or guess in being assessable in terms of accuracy and potentially apt, belief differs from these things in being a potential source of propositionally specified reasons. If there is something that is the subject's reason for believing, feeling, or doing, the propositionally specified reason has to be something that the subject *takes* to be the case. This is because the specification of the subject's reason captures the light in which the subject believed, felt, or acted, something that captures the thing or things that, from the subject's perspective, made the belief, emotion, or action good, fitting, appropriate, etc. The subject's reason for believing, feeling, or thinking couldn't be that the relevant response had some feature F if the subject didn't believe that the thing had this feature. Non-doxastic states or events such as experiences or seemings differ from belief precisely in that they do not involve a commitment on the subject's part to the truth of the relevant content and thus such contents (if not also endorsed because believed) could not specify the subject's reason.

A guess can motivate. If you guess that the way to get to safety is to climb a tree, you might climb a tree as a consequence. A guess, however, cannot give you a motivating reason in the way that a belief can. Like a guess, a belief can get you out of the water, but you don't leave the pond *for the reason that there is an angry swan heading your way* if you only guess this but do not believe this. In guessing, you don't have to take p to be true, but p cannot be your reason for ϕ -ing unless taken to be true. In guessing, you probably are not non-accidentally right about whether p , but such a non-accidental connection to the fact is required for you to be guided by it.

It doesn't just matter what you do, it also matters why you do what you do. To punish someone for a misdeed, you have to take it that they were responsible for the deed in question. If you just guess that someone was responsible and impose some sanction or punishment, this would be objectionable for this very reason. Maybe Austin was right that lovers do not kiss mistresses with an eye towards the common good and maybe he was also right that utilitarians should have no problem with these kisses, but mistresses should object if their lovers kiss them just because the lovers guessed that it was their mistresses that would receive their kisses.

As it happens, we can use the notion of apt belief to give us an account of potential motivating reasons, things that could be the subject's reason for believing things, feeling things, or doing things without first having to change her mind about the relevant target proposition. For a subject to ϕ for the reason that p or for the subject's reason for ϕ -ing to be that p , it has to be that p . It also has to be the case that the subject takes it that p . Apt belief involves an accurate belief so the accuracy and the taking is built in. For a subject's reason for ϕ -ing to have been that p , they would have to be guided by the fact that p . This guidance requires a non-accidental connection. Apt belief provides this. A subject can ϕ for the reason that p iff she aptly believes p , and *this* explains (A3).¹⁴ Since a subject's belief is apt iff it constitutes knowledge, we can now explain some of the crucial intuitions that underwrite (A2).

Notice that when we develop this view to distinguish beliefs from guesses and perceptions, it's quite tempting to say that the point or purpose of belief is to do something that neither perceiving nor guessing can do, which is to put the subject in a position to be guided by a fact that she takes to be the case. I've suggested (and argued elsewhere) that this involves more than accurate belief and adroit belief. This requires apt belief, something that I take to be knowledge. Perhaps, then, we should consider the possibility that the aim of belief is not just accuracy.¹⁵ Perhaps the aim or purpose

¹⁴ This second approach is available to someone who offers the first sort of response to the distinctiveness problem, but it isn't clear that this response requires us to take on board any particularly controversial assumptions about the relationship between belief and agency, not unless there is some further argument that shows that the acquisition and possession of potential motivating reasons itself requires the kind of agential control and involvement Sosa takes to be involved in belief.

¹⁵ This seems to be in the spirit of Sosa's (2015) suggestions about the respective aims of guesses and judgments. For further helpful discussions of the relationship between

of belief is to be knowledge. Only beliefs that constitute knowledge can do what beliefs are supposed to do if beliefs are supposed to provide us with potential motivating reasons and such reasons consist of facts.

If we approach the distinctiveness problem in this way and try to explain (A3) in terms of the distinctive *role* that belief plays and thus appeal to this role to distinguish one kind of apt attitude from others, where does this leave us? It looks like the account of the value of belief requires us to import considerations beyond those that determine whether the attitude is apt and draw on further considerations about the function or role that belief occupies. Does this suggest that the performance normative framework is incomplete? This is most unclear. On the one hand, it might seem that it does insofar as it suggests that the full account of the value of apt belief or judgment requires more than aptness and thus requires us to think about something other than whether the accuracy is attributable to ability. On the other hand, it might seem not insofar as we cannot really evaluate a performance like judgment without any sense of the point or purpose of it. The lesson that I would take from this, however, is that we won't have a complete explanation of (A3) unless we think about the distinctive role that belief plays, a role that I've suggested involves providing us with a grasp of the truth so that these truths might serve as our reasons for thinking, feeling, and doing things.¹⁶

believing and guessing, see Carter (MS), Owens (2003), Sorensen (1984), and Walker (MS). One interesting divide in these discussions is between people who think that guesses cannot turn out to be cases of knowledge and those who think that they can be. While I find many of Sorensen's observations suggestive, I am not wholly convinced that it isn't possible to both guess that p and come to know that p because of the cases that Sosa discusses. On the one hand, it seems that there's no irrationality on my part if having expressed a guess by saying, 'It is raining out' I hastened to add that I couldn't know that it is, but it would be irrational to fully believe this while acknowledging that I don't know if it's raining out. This suggests that Sorensen might be right that one cannot guess and know. On the other, I think Sosa is right that his case is one in which something that 'feels' like a guess and might still turn out to be knowledge or something close to it.

¹⁶ For further arguments that belief is distinctive in occupying this role and that perception does not by itself put us in a position to think, feel, or do things for propositionally specified reasons, see Littlejohn (forthcoming b, forthcoming c). In embracing this view, we have to reject the view, defended by McDowell (1994) and the recent wave of reasons-first theorists (e.g., Schroeder (2015)) in thinking that both perception and belief could enable a subject to not only ϕ but to in such a way

4. Kinds of Goodness

One difficulty that we face when we try to get a grip on the literature on epistemic value and the intuitions that move the discussions is that it is not at all clear what kind of good or value the discussants are interested in. In some places it seems that veritism is understood as the view that true belief is good *simpliciter*, a bearer of intrinsic goodness. Veritism doesn't have to be interpreted this way because talk of a 'good' can be taken in different ways. Such talk, for example, might be taken as talk about what's good-for a thinker, something that has to do with how well things are going for this thinker.

I don't think veritism would be a very plausible view if understood as a claim about the kinds of things that are good simpliciter or good for a thinker. The cases above cause difficulty for veritism on every reading, but there are further problems with these ideas. For a start, I simply fail to see why two worlds would differ in value if they were as similar as possible save for the fact that one contained one additional true belief the other lacked. For another, I fail to see that two lives would differ in terms of how good they were if they differed only in this way.

When talking about the good, we needn't take such talk to be talk about the things that are good simpliciter or the things that are good for a thinker and make a difference to well-being. Some talk about the good should be understood as talk about *attributive* goodness. Some should be understood as talk about *normative* goodness. If we're interested the notion of attributive goodness, it is the kind of good at issue when we talk about good toasters, assassins, or arguments. They are instances of a kind that have the good-making features that make them good for certain purposes. If we're interested in normative goodness, this is the kind of good that is at issue when we're talking about things that are good *because* appropriate. On some views of keeping

that her reason for ϕ -ing was that p . We can see that such views run into trouble for two reasons. First, as Unger (1975) notes, *all* ascriptions of propositionally specified reasons entail knowledge ascriptions but it is crucial to the views that treat perception as a potential source of reasons that it is possible to perceive without knowing. Second, it is pretty clear that if someone is upset that p they wouldn't have been upset that p if their experiences had been just the same but they didn't believe p . If perceptual experience can provide reasons in the way that belief can, this is a mystery. If experience cannot play that reason-providing role, there is no mystery here at all.

promises, it is good to keep promises *because* it is right to do so, not right because doing so promotes some independent notion of goodness.

I don't think veritism is a terribly plausible proposal about these kinds of goodness either. Suppose Agnes irrationally believes that there is a plot against her and suppose that her belief is correct. I don't think there's any sense in which it Agnes' belief that she irrationally believes there is a plot against her is good. It isn't appropriate to believe and such irrational beliefs cannot do what beliefs are supposed to do (i.e., keep us in touch with realities). Gnosticism here seems the better option. It is plausible that any belief that constitutes knowledge does what beliefs are supposed to do and should count as attributively good. It is also plausible that any such belief is appropriately held and good for that reason.

Once we see this, we should see why epistemic norms are not concerned with maximizing the epistemically good. We can also make sense of one of Sosa's observations about epistemic goodness and value, one that seems to receive too little discussion:

Paradoxically, one can be an adept critic within ... a domain even while discerning in it no domain-transcendent value. Thus, someone knowledgeable about guns and their use for hunting, for military ends, and so on may undergo a conversion that makes the use of guns abhorrent. The good shot is thus drained of any real value that he can discern. Nevertheless, his critical judgment within that domain may outstrip anyone else's, whether gun lover or not. Critical domains can be viewed as thus *insulated*, in ways suggested by our example (2007: 74).

We don't want to read veritism or gnosticism as claims about kinds of values that we cannot take this detached attitude towards so that it would be impossible for our evaluations to be insulated in these ways. When we judge that something is attributively or normatively good, we can take these detached attitudes, provided that we're not rationally compelled to care about whether the relevant good items can perform the specified function or whether someone conforms to the relevant norms.

(Here it is helpful to think about the norms of etiquette or the law, norms that a person can be rationally indifferent towards.¹⁷)

If there is anything to this line of thought, then the job of our theory of epistemic value is *not* to identify some good or value that calls for promotion that we then use to assess candidate norms. Instead, our theory of the epistemic good might simply register our views about what kinds of belief perform their function well or answer to normative standards. Once this is made explicit, it is easy to see that the worries about consequentialism simply never get off the ground.¹⁸ Our theory of adroit belief allows us to see that the adroit belief is adroit because how *it* is, not by thinking about its larger role in causally contributing to epistemically good states of affairs.

5. Adroitness

When a performance is adroit, this has to do with the role of some competence resident in the agent. If we think of the aim of belief as having to do with truth, it is tempting to think that a belief is adroit because it results from the exercise of a competence that reliably produces true beliefs (under suitable circumstances) (Sosa 2009: 38). There are some reasons to think that we should resist the temptation to think of adroitness in this way, particularly if we're worried about lotteries and related cases. Because readers might be tired of lottery cases, I'll focus on a related kind of case:

Prisoners. One hundred prisoners are exercising in the prison yard. Ninety-nine of them suddenly join in a planned attack on a prison guard; the hundredth prisoner plays no part. There is no [further] evidence available to

¹⁷ It might be that there are important differences between epistemic norms and legal norms precisely because it might seem that they have different implications for rationality. The point that I want to make here is that the differences will *not* be explained by appeal to claims about what's good simpliciter or good for a thinker. For helpful discussions of where epistemic norms might (and might not) get their force, see Cote-Bouchard (forthcoming) and Maguire and Woods (MS).

¹⁸ For critical discussions of consequentialist approaches to epistemic norms, see Berker (2013), Firth (1981), Jenkins (1997), and Littlejohn (2012, 2016).

show who joined in and who did not (Redmayne 2008: 282).

Knowing what we know, we should have very high credence that any prisoner drawn at random from the yard participated in the assault, but the question isn't whether we should have this high credence but what this tells us about belief, judgment, punishment, blame, and, in turn, adroit belief.

Many feel quite strongly that it wouldn't be appropriate to punish a prisoner drawn at random from this population. This isn't (necessarily) because these people are 'soft on crime' but because they think that we shouldn't punish the guilty for their crimes unless their guilt is beyond reasonable doubt. I don't think the doubts become unreasonable if we increase the prison population so that there were 1000 prisoners and 999 assailants.

If we characterize justified belief or rational belief as adroit belief and characterize that, in turn, along reliabilist lines, it is hard to see how we could avoid the result that someone sitting on a jury could justifiably judge that a prisoner chosen at random was involved in the attack. The belief, if justified, would rationalize blame and reactive attitudes that would also presumably be justified. In turn, it would be hard to resist the conclusion that punishment would likewise be justified. (If it helps, focus first on the case where the accused was involved.) Speaking just for myself, I cannot help but think that something has gone wrong. It seems wrong to punish, wrong to blame, and it seems that these facts are pretty solid evidence that it would be wrong to judge that the prisoner was involved in the assault.

One way to press the intuition here would be to note that it would *certainly* be wrong to punish 100 prisoners in the case described.¹⁹ The grounds for judging that some particular prisoner was involved, however, are present in each case. If it isn't wrong or inappropriate to judge that some prisoner was involved and deserves punishment, it seems at least reasonable to convict and punish, so the fact that it wouldn't be reasonable to issue 100 convictions should concern those who think that

¹⁹ Thanks to Peter Dennis for this point. For a helpful discussion of an alternative approach to these issues, see Steele (MS). Blome-Tillman (2015) offers an attractive knowledge-first approach to evidence in civil trials.

this should be settled by the probabilities and the values we attach to sentencing the guilty and sentencing the innocent.

There is an easy way to vindicate these intuitions and various hard ways to do so. Let's start with the easy way.²⁰ Suppose we thought that belief and judgment aimed at *knowledge*, not just accuracy or truth. Suppose, further, that we know *apriori* that the judgments based on probabilities in cases like this cannot constitute knowledge. If we characterize adroit belief as belief that is produced by a competence that reliably produces *knowledge*, not just true belief, in suitable circumstances, the belief in the guilt of the accused wouldn't be adroit, couldn't be apt, and we would have no reason to think that the subsequent reactive attitudes and sentencing would be justified. (If your belief in p isn't justified and it 'rationalizes' some reactive attitude, it would most likely be unjustified, too.) Since we couldn't be justified in judging that we should punish in one case or be justified in punishing in this case, the worry about punishing the 100 does not arise.

If readers want to vindicate the relevant intuitions without treating knowledge as the aim of full belief and judgment and characterizing adroit belief in terms of competencies that generate knowledge in suitable circumstances, there are ways of trying to vindicate the intuitions about blame, punishment, and the like, but they are complicated and difficult to defend. Perhaps the easiest way to see the problem that you would face is to consider this remark from Sophie Horowitz:

... a rational agent should be doing well by her own lights, in a particular way: roughly speaking, she should follow the epistemic rule that she rationally takes to be most truth-conducive. It would be irrational, the thought goes, to regard some epistemic rule as more truth-conducive than one's own, but not adopt it (Horowitz 2014: 43).

²⁰ While I defend the view that a justified belief is an apt belief (i.e., one that constitutes knowledge because it is accurate because adroit), most epistemologists who develop an account of adroit belief along these lines want views on which there can be false, justified beliefs provided that the false beliefs could have been, in some sense, good candidates for knowledge. See Bird (2007), Miracchi (2015), and Kelp (forthcoming) for different ways of developing such views. In (2012), I argued that these views make the mistake of taking rational excellence to be the mark of justification when in fact such excellence is required for an excuse, but this disagreement doesn't matter for our purposes here.

If the aim of belief is just truth and we're considering a rule that, say, prohibits belief in cases like Prisoners, it isn't hard to imagine a rival rule that is more permissive that permits belief in such cases and it isn't hard to see that believing in accordance with the more permissive rule would be more truth-conducive. To forbid belief in cases like Prisoners, then, one would either need to introduce some block that would forbid following a truth-conducive rule that would maximize expected epistemic goodness *or* adopt an attitude towards the values of true and false belief that would justify risk-aversion in the relevant range of cases. The first option looks as if it would lead to rather arbitrary restrictions on when it is appropriate to believe. The second option requires an aversion to error that looks rather pathological, particularly when we reflect on our own habits of relying on testimonial sources that, upon reflection, seem less reliable than the judgments we'd form in cases like Prisoners.

Once we move to a revised view of competence and adroit belief, one that characterizes the aim of belief and judgment as knowledge, we find natural solutions to otherwise puzzling cases. I'll briefly mention three puzzles that we easily dissolve by revising our account of adroit belief. First, there is the problem of squaring our intuitions with lotteries with our intuitions about preface-cases. From the perspective of a veritist account of epistemic norms, one that cares primarily about acquiring true beliefs and avoiding false beliefs, it is incredibly difficult to deliver an account on which it is (a) improper to believe lottery propositions but (b) proper to believe each entry in a book that contains the preface assertion (i.e., the assertion that the book contains an error). To get the first intuition right, we need arbitrary restrictions that we know *apriori* stand in the way of maximizing expected epistemic goodness (as the veritist conceives of it) or we need to think of false belief as some unspeakable epistemic evil, one that would justify pathological levels of risk-aversion. If we make either move to vindicate the intuitions that favor (a), it becomes nearly impossible to vindicate the intuitions that favor (b). If, however, we adopt a gnostic approach to epistemic norms, the asymmetry is easy to account for. Each entry in a carefully researched book might be a potential case of knowledge even if the set of beliefs is

inconsistent. Thus, the entries in the book could all pair off with adroit beliefs but none of the beliefs in the lottery case would be potential cases of knowledge.²¹

Second, there is the problem posed by Moorean absurdities such as, 'The accused is guilty but I don't know that he is'. Suppose that I'm right and we cannot know in Prisoners that some randomly chosen prisoner was involved. If so, we should have essentially the same credence in this conjunction as we have in the first conjunct. (This is because we form the conjunction by combining an *apriori* truth about the first conjunct with it.) From the veritist point of view, then, we would not do a good job maximizing expected epistemic goodness if we did not believe such things. From the gnostic point of view, however, it is obvious why we should not believe such things. The conjunction is not a potential object of knowledge and we know this *apriori*. Thus, there is nothing that should entice belief.

Third, think about the difficulty we face in understanding the descriptive and normative connections between credence and full belief. Notice that there is something that warrants guessing and warrants having high-credence in cases like Prisoners. This is some evidence that such things are under different rational pressures than full belief. Once we see credence and full belief as being under different rational pressures, we should see that there is little reason to adopt the kind of Lockean view that sees rational full belief as nothing but a case of rational credence.²² If we think of credences as tracking strength of evidential support, we can see them as rationalizing belief in the cases where the subject is in no position to see that she couldn't know and as rationalizing a guess (but not a belief) in the cases where the subject recognizes that she's not in a position to know.²³ There is no problem of identifying a threshold of sufficiently strong credence because when the subject recognizes that she's not in a position to know whether *p*, she recognizes that

²¹ This judgment does not accord with Sosa's (2015) own treatment of the lottery case.

²² In Littlejohn (2016), I argue that the rational pressures that should lead us to suspend judgment on whether *p* do not automatically do so by giving us a reason to decrease our confidence in *p*. The recognition that you're not in a position to know whether *p*, for example, gives you a decisive reason to suspend but needn't thereby give you any reason to decrease your confidence.

²³ For an interesting discussion of the relationship between credence and guesses, see Horowitz (forthcoming).

she cannot make a judgment about whether p , not even if her rational credence becomes arbitrarily strong.

6. Conclusion

In an indirect way, I have tried to defend a position about the relationship between belief and knowledge that might be agreeable to Sosa given his recent discussion of the relationship between judgment and guessing. In judging, he suggests, we endeavor for aptness, not mere accuracy. In guessing, by contrast, he thinks we might just aim at accuracy. This position, if taken seriously, might force us to rethink the veritist assumptions that are prominent in the literature. In turn, it might force us to revise our account of adroit or rational belief in such a way that cases that initially seemed puzzling no longer seem all that difficult to understand. This might require revisions to the value theory initially set out §2, but I don't think that it would pain Sosa terribly to make these changes.

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