THE DEBATE ON EPISTEMIC AND ETHICAL NORMATIVITY

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Epistemology uses some concepts which are usually understood as normative and evaluative. We talk about what a person should or should not believe or judge in certain epistemic circumstances. We evaluate beliefs or judgments with respect not only to whether they are true, but also to whether they are justified. We evaluate the person's intellectual qualities and motivations with respect to whether she is reasonable, rational, wise, impartial, and epistemically responsible in general. In certain ways this is comparable to the way we evaluate persons and their actions in ethics. It is true that we cannot simply take it for granted that the epistemic evaluation of beliefs and subjects is one case of ethical evaluation, but they seem to be, at least, analogous. Whether or not epistemic normativity is a case of ethical normativity, there are good reasons to assume that notions like ethics of belief, ethics of inquiry or truth–ethos, which we often come across in epistemology, are relevant for understanding epistemic normativity.

The question of ethical factors in epistemology has historically underlain Western epistemology, even if it was not always the main focus of attention. The interest for that topic has been revived in recent years in an unexpected settingthat of analytic epistemology. The debate has reached such a degree of liveliness that some commentators speak of a "value turn" in epistemology.[1] The issues discussed are mainly the question of the validity of the traditional deontological concept of epistemic normativity, either in itself or in contrast to its consequentialist alternative, and the question of the relevance of virtue ethics in epistemology (virtue epistemology). Epistemologists try to assess which of these perspectives offer the soundest explanation of epistemic normativity as we ordinarily conceive it, and how they cope with the general problems involved in the issue, such as voluntariness of belief and the relationship between theoretical and practical reasoning.

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1   See Wayne Riggs, "The Value Turn in Epistemology," in *New Waves in Epistemology*, ed. Vincent Hendricks and Duncan Pritchard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 300; and Duncan Pritchard, "Recent Work on Epistemic Value," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 44 (2007): 85.

It is important to notice that the topic of the recent debate on the nature of epistemic normativity is narrower than the more traditional (and less controversial) topic of the ethics of inquiry. The recent debate has its roots in the conceptual analysis of knowledge and its related concepts. Thus, the debate around the issue of epistemic normativity has started as a debate on whether normative knowledge–related concepts, like epistemic justification and warrant, imply a kind of normativity that can be characterized as ethical. Nevertheless, since various models of epistemic justification and warrant incorporate the notions of epistemic duty, virtue and value, there has arisen the question whether these notions can be understood without a reference to the broader ethics of inquiry.

My aim in this article is to clarify some basic terms used in the recent debate on epistemic normativity (including the very term "epistemic normativity"), to present the basic positions in that debate regarding the relationship between epistemic and ethical normativity, with their respective problems, and to indicate the plausibility of the directives the debate suggested for the future development of epistemology in general.

1. *Terminological Clarifications*

1.1 Epistemic Normativity

We designate sciences or disciplines as descriptive when they follow their methods to describe, understand and explain phenomena, or briefly, to acquire knowledge of phenomena. We designate disciplines as normative when they prescribe norms, standards and rules that we ought to respect in order to achieve knowledge. The terms "normative" and "normativity," however, do not refer only to norms and rules. In addition to norms and rules, they can refer to all properties indicated by ought–concepts, value–concepts, and the practice of instruction and evaluation. Here we will use the term "normative" in that broader sense that includes values as well as norms, the good as well as the right.

Epistemology has traditionally been regarded as a normative discipline. Although most epistemologists of old first tried to describe how our cognition functions, this descriptive analysis was just an initial step in their project of instructing us how our cognition should function, or what we should do in order to achieve the best possible cognitive results.[2] Their aspirations were to

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2   Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, and Kant, for example, offered clearly normative epistemologies, but whoever wants to study their epistemologies has to disentangle them first from their psychological and/or metaphysical models of cognition.

determine what the ultimate standard of our cognitive results should be, to enable us to evaluate our cognitive results in the light of that standard, and to provide us with the regulations for our cognitive undertakings oriented towards their objective. Thus, when we speak of epistemic normativity we have in mind the totality of the properties which make epistemic standards (norms, rules, ideals, goals) such that we value and follow them.

Epistemic normativity is often linked with the evaluation of beliefs with respect to whether they reach the status of knowledge. "Knowledge" refers here to propositional knowledge, understood as a special case of true belief. Ernest Sosa, for example, represents the mainstream idea of epistemic normativity when he specifies, "Epistemic normativity is a status by having which a true belief constitutes knowledge."[3] Several concepts have been proposed as appropriate articulations of that epistemic normative status of true belief. So we will come across suggestions that in order to obtain the status of knowledge true belief ought to be justified, warranted, virtuous, reasonable, and so on. However, to say that we are studying epistemic normativity does not mean that we aim at assessing which one of these normative concepts is correct or the most suitable for the definition of knowledge. We are interested in the nature of epistemic normativity itself, that is to say, in the structure and sources of the normativeness of the normative epistemic concepts.

Let us clarify one more thing. Most epistemologists agree that there is a specific epistemic normativity, that it has to do with the demand that claims to knowledge be objectively justified or warranted, and that it supposes the truth as the fundamental or, at least, one of the fundamental epistemic values. Let us call the norms and values that pertain to the specific epistemic normativity "internal" epistemic norms and values.

It is also a fact that our cognitive behaviour and cognitive results can be evaluated from the point of view of pragmatic interests. These pragmatic interests dictate what should be the object of inquiry, why some true beliefs are better than other true beliefs, or why false beliefs may be better than their correspondent true beliefs in a particular situation. For example, such pragmatic interests determine the choice whether we should invest our intellectual energy and resources in the search for the cure of a terrible disease, or rather in the search for the precise number of sand grains at the local beach. Or, suppose that a patient has a disease which scientists believe is incurable. The patient's unjustified belief that her disease is curable may be more helpful for her recovery and, thus, more pragmatically justified than the scientists' epistemically justified belief that her disease is not curable. The normativity these examples deal with is not representative of the specific epistemic

3   Ernest Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge,* vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 88.

normativity. In fact, the history of philosophy has seen it as a potential danger for the objectivity that the accounts of the specific epistemic normativity try to preserve. We will characterise such pragmatic concerns as "external" to epistemic normativity.[4]

But what if there are some ethical norms and values, and in that sense non–epistemic, the aim of which is precisely to protect the objectivity of supposedly pure epistemic norms and values? If there are such ethical norms and values, then they should be considered "internal" to the specific epistemic normativity.

Another term that we will sometimes encounter is "meta–epistemology." Since there is no great agreement about its usage and it is hard to find in philosophical dictionaries, it requires some clarification. By meta–epistemology we mean, first, the question of the programmatic and methodological approach to epistemology, whether epistemology should be an analysis of the common sense concept of knowledge, a study of cognitive behaviour and cognitive physiology, a metaphysics of the rational soul, or something else. The recent debate I am writing about is not meta–epistemological in that sense. Nonetheless, we have to be aware that these different approaches do influence a study of epistemic normativity.

Second, meta–epistemology sometimes refers to the study of the possible social, cultural, psychological, and political influences on our ideas about knowledge and rationality. In this sense, meta–epistemology is a section of sociological, cultural, political, or psychoanalytical hermeneutics. The results of these studies have implications for epistemology, but epistemologists usually hold that epistemic concepts and principles imply a specific normativity that defies social and cultural influences.

In a third sense, meta–epistemology is the study of the nature and the sources of the specific internal epistemic normativity. The meta–epistemology we are primarily interested in is the inquiry into what kind of evaluation is implied in our epistemic regulative practice and in concepts like justification, warrant, objectivity, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

1.2 Epistemology and Other Normative Disciplines

One of the main questions a study of epistemic normativity has to tackle is whether the "internal" epistemic normativity is *merely* epistemic, or whether it is possible that epistemology depends on, or overlaps with, similar normative disciplines in the matter of normativity.

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4   Such pragmatic interests may be, nonetheless, relevant for the degree of epistemic justification or warrant required in a situation.

Logic is a normative discipline and its normativity is intertwined with epistemic normativity. In the past logic and epistemology were not always clearly distinguished. Today we agree that logic is about the formal correctness of reasoning, while epistemology is about the correctness of believing particular propositions in regard to their logical form as well as to their content. That makes epistemic normativity wider than the logical one.

Aesthetics is another philosophical discipline that tends to be normative when looking for the standards of beauty and artistic quality. The ancient and medieval philosophers used to take seriously the idea of the fundamental unity of the true, the good, and even the beautiful. Intellectual desire and aesthetical desire have much in common. We will see later that Sosa notices a similarity between how we evaluate the cognitive performance and the performance in different skills and arts.[5] Anyway, studying the possible connection between the true and the beautiful is too wide to be in our aim.

More than with any other philosophical discipline, we associate normative concepts with ethics. Normativity in matters of human conduct and character is the proper object of ethical studies. Yet, ethics is not interested in every sort of normativity of human conduct, but only in the one that has to do with the specific moral quality of a person and her actions, i.e., whether they are good or bad, to praise or to blame, right or wrong in the moral sense. Moral appraisal in the strict sense is possible only where we find morally conscious, willing and responsible subjects of actions, at least *in potentia*. As some of our oughts and goods do not imply direct moral appraisal, they must be regulated by other normativities, like epistemic, aesthetical, sociological, psychological… or simple prudential normativity. However, the border between these different sorts of normativity is not clear and leaves room for important interconnections. One such interconnection that stands in the centre of this research is the one between ethics and epistemology.

Some philosophers distinguish between the terms "ethical" and "moral," although not always for the same reason. In some circles "moral" refers to the concrete norms of human behaviour, while "ethical" refers to the general study of the concepts and rules involved (i.e., meta–ethics). Elsewhere "moral" refers to the right, while "ethical" is about the good. The distinction goes so far as to associate the moral with the deontological appraisal (sometimes specifically with Kantian ethics), while the other ways of appraisal are qualified as ethical. In other opinions the moral concerns specifically sexual behaviour, or what affects other people, or what relates to the commandments of God, or what has to do with the sense of guilt, and so on, while the ethical

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5   See Sosa, *Virtue Epistemology*, 23, 70, 91. The aim of his comparisons is, however, to show the autonomy of these different forms of evaluations in respect to their specific underlying values.

concerns the good in general. Anyway, there is not much agreement about the usage of the terms "moral" and "ethical."

In our context, the terms "moral" and "ethical" will generally be treated as synonyms. They refer to what we admire and promote, praise and blame in human acts, character, and their resulting state of affairs, supposing that such acts, traits, and their consequences are under some kind of person's voluntary control, or could become (more) voluntary in a normal human being through maturation and education. Hence, when I speak of "ethical" elements in epistemology, it comprises both the traditional terminology of objective and subjective moral value. But we can speak of the objective moral value of an act or state of affairs only if that act or its resulting state of affairs can in a realistic scenario be a result of the person's free agency. To put it roughly, in the context of this research "ethical" refers to any sort of evaluation which does not make what we normally call personal moral goodness irrelevant.

1.3 Ethics of Belief and Intellectual Ethics

The study of the epistemological issues that apparently overlap with ethics is often called ethics of belief. Thanks to W. Clifford's article with the same title,[6] the expression "ethics of belief" has been traditionally reserved for the question of the relation between evidence and assent in a judgment, i.e., what level of evidence (or epistemic justification) for a belief a subject should have to be justified in assenting to (or holding) that belief. The roots of the expression and of the debate on the ethics of belief are in Christian theological epistemology.[7] The ethics of belief today is not limited to the issue of assent to religious beliefs, nor to the relation between evidence and belief. More and more frequently it refers to the question of the relationship between epistemic and ethical normativity in general.

Some epistemologists find the expression "ethics of belief" problematic because of problems with the voluntariness of belief. They suggest that we should replace that expression with the similar, but less problematic "ethics of inquiry."[8] They usually argue that most epistemic norms concern the activ-

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6   See William K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief" (1877), in *Lectures and Essays*, eds. Leslie Stephen and Frederick Pollock (London: Macmillan, 1886), 339–363.

7   The target of the previously mentioned Clifford's article was religious belief. Locke's ethics of belief was formed in the context of the assent to religious faith too. See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, IV, 17, 24 (1690), ed. Peter Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 687–688.

8   See Christopher Hookway, "Cognitive Virtues and Epistemic Evaluations," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 2 (1994): 211–212; Linda Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4; and Robert Audi, "Doxastic Voluntarism and the Ethics of

ity of acquiring knowledge rather than the state of belief and that inquiry is, in any case, more obviously an activity than belief. Eventually, justification may be a function of the quality of processes and abilities in inquiry rather than a function of evidence alone. So the shift from the ethics of belief to the ethics of inquiry may encourage the shift in the choice of the paradigmatic activity in epistemology from isolated beliefs to inquiry. Such change would be welcomed especially among virtue epistemologists, who maintain that the belief–focused epistemology has neglected much of the dynamism of our intellectual life.

Nonetheless, I do not think that we should switch our attention from belief to inquiry too quickly. It is not at all unreasonable to expect that voluntary involvement and ethical appraisal can be found at the level of singular epistemic units such as belief and judgment. Epistemological tradition abounds with voluntarist and moral terminology in reference to beliefs and judgments. Perhaps we will not have to switch from the ethics of belief to the ethics of inquiry at all.

Another designation for the study of common issues in epistemology and ethics is intellectual ethics. There is no doubt that our intellectual life has its moral aspects but, as in the case of the ethics of inquiry, the problem is that the domain of intellectual ethics may be too broad. Intellectual ethics sometimes comprises the issues that obviously do not have much to do with internal epistemic normativity. Intellectual rights in authorship, some issues in the ethics of communication and in the ethics of research, for example, are often considered a concern of intellectual ethics. We will find authors that consign some issues to the domain of intellectual ethics precisely with the intention to show that they are not necessary for the explanation of the specific epistemic normativity.[9]

The debate on epistemic normativity could also be presented in terms of the ancient distinction between practical and theoretical reasoning. In very simple words, practical reasoning is the reasoning that guides our actions.[10] By contrast, theoretical reasoning guides our thoughts, especially our beliefs. It cannot pass unobserved, however, that our thoughts and beliefs have their ends—the truth, for example. We may say, then, that our inquiry into

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Belief," in *Knowledge, Truth and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility, and Virtue*, ed. Matthias Steup (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 105.

9   See Sosa, *Virtue Epistemology*, 88–91; and Alvin Goldman, "The Unity of Epistemic Virtues," in *Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility*, ed. Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 31.

10 Practical reasoning can be seen as merely instrumental, i.e., it guides the subject *how* to reach the end of his action without determining what that end is. A broader notion of practical reason incorporates the ability to determine the end of action.

epistemic normativity is the study of the role of practical reasoning in theoretical reasoning.

Again, caution is necessary. The study of practical reasoning is a huge project—it involves all sorts of decision–making and goal–oriented reasoning. It is even wider than ethics. It aims at a general theory of rationality. We do not want to dissolve epistemic normativity in that sea of different types of normative reasoning. Practical reasoning operates in our choices about pragmatic ends and some of them refer to our intellectual activity, but we have warned earlier that pragmatic goals and norms are normally considered external to epistemic normativity. We are not interested in all decision–making in our intellectual life, but only in the one that is relevant for the specific epistemic normativity.

2. *Analogies between Epistemic and Ethical Normativity*

There are significant indications of analogy between epistemic and ethical normativity. The first and most visible indication is the presence of some typically ethical normative concepts in epistemology. We talk about epistemic evaluation/appraisal, epistemic justification, epistemic responsibility, epistemic motivation, epistemic value, epistemic duty, epistemic obligation, epistemic permissibility, epistemic rights, epistemic rules, epistemic imperatives. The concept of intellectual or epistemic virtue has been in use from ancient Greek times. Moreover, from ancient times epistemologists have been using the language of cognitive acts when speaking about judgments, assents, decisions to believe, and the language of intellectual desires and drives. Some new concepts, like epistemic freedom, epistemic *akrasia*, and intellectual conversion, have been introduced into recent debates.

Second indication of the analogy between epistemic and ethical normativity is the fact that we actually evaluate in epistemology and we do it in a way that very much—whether rightly or wrongly—resembles moral evaluation (see below 2.1).

Third indication of the analogy between epistemic and ethical normativity, one which is not so obvious but has been noticed and studied more intensively in recent times, is that the principal theories of epistemic normativity share similar structures with the principal ethical theories and with the accounts of practical reasoning in ethics. When epistemologists try to answer the question how and why we evaluate in epistemology, they simply use the conceptual frameworks of main ethical theories. Ethical deontologism, consequentialism, utilitarianism, eudemonism, relativism, conventionalism, all have their counterparts among epistemological theo-

ries—not equally popular, not necessarily successful, and not always explicit.[11]

The question is whether the relationship between ethical and epistemic normativity or appraisal is purely terminological, illusory, even misleading, or whether there is a deeper mutual dependence, especially whether the origin and efficacy of epistemic normativity depends on ethical normativity. Several positions are possible.[12] (1) Epistemic appraisal can be a special case of ethical appraisal; (2) there can be a partial overlap between them; (3) they can be merely analogous; (4) they can be completely independent or irrelevant for each other; (5) they can be identical; (6) ethical appraisal can be a special case of epistemic appraisal; (7) they can be deeply associated in an unknown way.

Although one might regard some of these options as barely plausible, they have all had supporters in the history of philosophy. For instance, ancient Gnostic and Neoplatonic ethics presupposed (6). Socrates' identification of knowledge and virtue would probably imply (5). Radical empiricism would support (4). The option (7) may be true, of course, but it isn't much help. A few epistemologists today defend (1). Many epistemologists would rather choose a cautious *via media* and try to find the answer between (2) and (3), though it is not easy to clarify what it means for epistemic and ethical appraisal to be analogous, where they overlap, and is the overlap a major or a minor one.

For the moment, the aim in this article is to show that the elements of ethical normativity are indeed relevant for the understanding of epistemic normativity, though I do not intend to reach a authoritative judgment on whether the relationship between the epistemic and the ethical normativity is more than just analogous.

2.1 The Fact of Epistemic Evaluation

First, do we evaluate in epistemology? No doubt. Not only is knowledge better than ignorance, and true belief better than false, but also knowledge is better than accidentally true belief. We give credit for knowledge, but not for a lucky guess that happens to be true (though we do not hide our liking for those who seem to be particularly lucky guessers). Justified belief is better than unjustified. Warranted belief is better than unwarranted. Responsible believing is praiseworthy, irresponsible believing is blameworthy. Reliable cognitive

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11   See William P. Alston, "The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification," *Philosophical Perspectives* 2 (1988): 257–299; Linda Zagzebski, "Virtue in Ethics and Epistemology," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 71 (1997): 3–5; and Philip Percival, "Epistemic Consequentialism I," *Supplement to the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 76 (2002): 121–151.

abilities are desirable, and better than the provisional ones. We admire a person of intellectual fairness and integrity, while we deplore foolishness and condemn bias. We disapprove of blind certainty, but we do not like hard–line sceptics either.

What do we evaluate in epistemology? We evaluate beliefs as to whether they are true or false, but also whether they are justified, warranted, responsible. We evaluate theories as to whether they are coherent or not, and inferences as to whether they are sound or not. We evaluate some cognitive capacities as to whether they are functioning properly. We praise intellectual talents, though we do not blame their absence. We evaluate cognitive subjects, as to whether they have developed their cognitive abilities enough, as to whether they are intellectually virtuous in a particular respect or in general. In many cases we also praise and blame the subjects for their beliefs, judgments, acceptances, assents. We blame them for believing a proposition without sufficient evidence, for trusting an unreliable source, or for not believing a reliable source, in particular when an important thing is at stake. We blame a person for allowing other motivations to interfere with her inquiry and for not permitting the motivation of "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" to hold sway, though we will not praise the same person if she becomes exaggeratedly doubtful. Hence, cognitive subjects, cognitive abilities and intellectual character traits, single and combined beliefs, judgments, assents and acceptances, are all subject to some kind of epistemic evaluation.

When do we evaluate in epistemology? It seems that we evaluate both when the subject seems to have control over his cognitive behaviour, and when he does not have such control (e.g., in the case of natural abilities and talents). Epistemic evaluation operates both from a subjective and an objective point of view, in proportion to the degree of the responsibility expected and actually exercised, but also in proportion to the degree in which the desired goal has been realized, whether or not there has been any responsibility on the part of the subject.

Does epistemic evaluation in all these cases come close to how we evaluate in ethics? Yes and no. No, if we presuppose that moral appraisal always requires a high degree of voluntary involvement. Yes, if we allow that moral appraisal applies to a fair range of low–degree voluntary actions and qualities. The distinction between the objective and the subjective point of view that is common in ethical appraisal is one way how to deal with the variety of the types and degrees of voluntariness in human behaviour. Epistemic appraisal also distinguishes these two points of view and operates from both of them. It may seem that epistemology tends to emphasise the objective pole of evaluation, while it is more typical for ethics to emphasise the subjective pole. Nonetheless, epistemic appraisal does operate at the subjective level of evaluation, and that is enough to take the possibility of connection between epistemic and moral responsibility seriously.

102

2.2 Epistemic Duty

Every evaluation happens in view of something, in a perspective or horizon of normativity. What is the horizon of epistemic evaluation? We can approach this question from two different positions, which also indicate the two major directions in the theories of ethical normativity. First, we can understand it as a question about the values and ends that underlie epistemic appraisal. Epistemic operations, processes, states and faculties aim at some ends. Hence, the study of epistemic appraisal should start with the study of these valuable ends. We can call this approach teleological.

However, a more typical approach in modern epistemology is not to ask about epistemic values and ends, but to try to explain epistemic appraisal in terms of an *a priori* epistemic duty or obligation from which all epistemic norms emanate in the forms of imperatives, permissions and prohibitions. Hence, epistemic operations and states are evaluated in view of their respect or disrespect of the epistemic duty. Following the now established epistemic terminology, we will call this approach deontological. Note that "deontological" is not the same as "deontic."[13] The concepts like duty, obligation, permission, prohibition, right, wrong, and justification itself, are all deontic, but that does not mean they necessarily imply a deontological model of normativity. Instead of an *a priori* obligation, they can be understood in personalist and eudemonist terms of good life, for example.

Somewhat anachronistically, the roots of epistemic deontologism have been traced back to Descartes and Locke because of the appearance of deontic terms in their epistemologies.[14] A clearly deontological approach is more evident, though not yet worked out as a theory, in some nineteenth century epistemologies, such as the aforementioned Clifford's ethics of belief. Clifford argued that it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence. Accepting beliefs on insufficient evidence is, in his terms, "sinful" because it is a defiance of the "duty to mankind" that we have as rational beings.[15]

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12   Here I partially follow the division and terminology of Susan Haack. See Susan Haack, "'The Ethics of Belief' Reconsidered," in *Knowledge, Truth and Duty,* ed. Steup, 21.

13   Some epistemologists do not make this distinction. For example, when Alston argues against the deontological concept of justification he actually attacks all deontic concepts of justification. On the other hand, Zagzebski rejects deontological explanation of epistemic normativity, but she keeps deontic concepts like epistemic duty and obligation, and proposes a eudemonist explanation for them. See Alston, "The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification," 257–260; and Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 232–255.

14   For an account of the history of the deontological tradition in epistemology, see Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), Ch.1.

15   See Clifford, "Ethics of Belief," 344. Because of its history, the ethics of belief is often associated with the deontological approach in epistemic normativity. It is not uncommon for the

Epistemic deontologism had been, however, more a matter of presupposition than conclusion until its role was clearly recognized in the post–Gettier debates on the theory of knowledge.[16] Since then it has been frequently associated with the classical internalist theories of justification, such as that of Roderick Chisholm. It still has supporters, mainly among the representatives of the various new versions of internalism.[17]

The starting point of the deontologist account of epistemic justification is the fact that knowledge is a form of the positive appraisal of belief and that positive appraisal is not given gratuitously. The claim to knowledge must be justified somehow. It has come almost naturally to think of epistemic justification as a compliance with the obligation that is imposed on us in virtue of our being rational creatures. For a belief to be epistemically justified means to meet the requirements of epistemic duty. Hence, a subject is justified in believing a proposition as long as he does not violate the epistemic obligations required for believing that proposition, or as long as believing that proposition is permissible for him.[18]

Do epistemic deontologists hold that epistemic justification is a sort of ethical appraisal? It seems that most older–generation epistemic deontologists have understood that respect for epistemic obligation is praiseworthy in a moral sense, while its violation is morally blameworthy. That is certainly true of Clifford's and Chisholm's versions of epistemic deontologism. Chisholm explicitly defended the position that epistemic duty is a moral duty and, consequently, epistemic normativity is a sort of ethical normativity.[19] It is possible, however, to argue for the analogy between epistemic and moral duty without subordinating the former to the latter, and without even implying their deeper connection.[20]

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supporters of the teleological approach to sometimes describe themselves as opponents of the ethics of belief, even if they may basically agree that there are ethical factors in epistemic justification.

16 See Edmund L. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis* 23 (1963): 121–123.

17 See Roderick M. Chisholm, *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1957), 6–7, 9–10, 13–14; "Firth and the Ethics of Belief," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 51 (1991): 119–128, and *Theory of Knowledge*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), 57–58; Carl Ginet, "Deciding to Believe," in *Knowledge, Truth and Duty*, ed. Steup, 63–76; Matthias Steup, "Doxastic Voluntarism and Epistemic Deontology," *Acta Analytica* 15 (2000): 25–56; John Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1986), 7–8.

18 "A justified belief is one that it is 'epistemologically permissible' to hold." Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*, 7. See also Ginet, "Deciding to Believe," 75.

19 See Clifford, "Ethics of Belief," 344; and Chisholm, "Firth and the Ethics of Belief," 119. Compare with Roderick Firth, "Chisholm and the Ethics of Belief" (1959), in In Defense of Radical Empiricism: Essays and Lectures by Roderick Firth, ed. John Troyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 143–155.

20 See Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*, 7–8.

2.3 Epistemic Teleology

A different approach to the question of the source of epistemic normativity is the one that states that epistemic norms and standards owe their normativity to the value of the epistemic end that is to be achieved. Because it defines epistemic normativity in terms of the epistemic end, we will call that approach teleological. We are aware, however, that the term "teleological" in ethics refers to some very different and often contrary theories. Both Aristotelian virtue ethics and utilitarian consequentialism are categorised as teleological ethical theories, but they propose different ideas about what the primary object of evaluation is and what the end is.

In the Aristotelian virtue ethics the primary object of evaluation is the character of the person, or simply the person as good or bad. The end in view of which the person is praised or blamed is the perfection of human nature, or eudemonia, traditionally understood as a life of virtue. In utilitarian consequentialism the primary object of evaluation are the consequences of actions. The end in view of which the consequences are evaluated is the best possible state of affairs, often understood as quantitatively measurable. Consequentialism has its own account of virtue, but virtue is defined as a trait or capacity that makes the person habitually successful in producing good states of affairs. The supposed intrinsic moral goodness or virtuousness of the person has a marginal role, if any. As we will see in the following sections, something similar happens in the accounts of epistemic teleology proposed by epistemic consequentialism and responsibilist virtue epistemology.

Epistemic consequentialism evaluates cognitive acts in respect to the value of their cognitive results.[21] Now, consequentialism in matters of cognition does not have to be committed to the objectivity of epistemic norms. It may have some other goals in view. For instance, an evolutionary theory of epistemic value may propose the survival of species as the measure of epistemic normativity. Epistemic consequentialists, however, usually defend the specificity of epistemic normativity and reject the idea that the justification of each belief is a function of that very belief's pragmatic consequences. What they see as the primary epistemic goal and the critical value for epistemic justification is true belief, or simply the truth. Hence, according to typical epistemic consequentialist accounts, a belief–producing act, process, or faculty is justified only if it produces a sufficiently high ratio of true beliefs over false beliefs.[22]

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21   See Alvin Goldman, *Epistemology and Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 95, 97–103; and Percival, "Epistemic Consequentialism I," 121, 129, 132.

22   See Goldman, *Epistemology and Cognition*, 3, 26.

Epistemic consequentialism is a theory of epistemic normativity typical of reliabilist theories of justification.[23] Reliabilism comes in the forms of process–reliabilism and faculty or virtue reliabilism. An example of process reliabilism is Alvin Goldman's theory of justification. He argues that for a belief to count as knowledge it must be caused by a generally reliable process.[24] Faculty reliabilism, analogously, argues that the crucial role in epistemic justification belongs to reliable intellectual faculties, virtues, capacities, or competence. An example of faculty or virtue reliabilism is Ernest Sosa's epistemology, which will be one of our principal partners in dialogue in this research. Both in process and faculty reliabilism, reliability means high expectancy of successful truth–conduciveness.

True beliefs are a counterpart of states of affairs in ethical consequentialism. But the fact that epistemic consequentialism uses a model of epistemic normativity that has roots in one ethical theory does not mean that epistemic consequentialism sees epistemic appraisal as a sort of moral appraisal. As a matter of fact, it typically does not. Goldman and Sosa, for example, recognize the importance of intellectual ethics as discipline, but deny the relevance of moral appraisal for epistemic normativity.[25] There is, of course, the general problem in consequentialist ethical theories of finding a place for a specifically moral value that is not explainable in terms of pragmatic utility.

2.4 Virtue Epistemology

Before I delineate the responsibilist virtue ethical understanding of epistemic teleology and epistemic value, I have to say a few words about the development of recent virtue epistemology. Virtue epistemology can be broadly defined as an approach to epistemology that applies the elements of virtue theories to epistemological problems. It is a contemporary approach in analytic epistemology, but virtue epistemologists often find similarities between their project and the epistemologies of Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, Reid, Dewey, Pierce.

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23   There is a significant agreement among epistemologists about that. See Goldman, *Epistemology and Cognition*, 103; Jonathan Dancy, "Supervenience, Virtues and Consequences," in *Knowledge, Belief, and Character: Readings in Virtue Epistemology*, ed. Guy Axtell (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 78, 83; Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 8–10; Percival, "Epistemic Consequentialism I," 125.

24   See Goldman, *Epistemology and Cognition*, 51. In a later article Goldman also favours faculty–reliabilism. See Alvin Goldman, "Epistemic Folkways and Scientific Epistemology," in *Knowledge, Belief, and Character*, ed. Axtell, 10.

What unites the variety of virtue epistemologies is their belief that crucial to all these issues is the role of the cognitive abilities of the knowing subject. They fundamentally agree, as J. Greco puts it, "that the normative properties of beliefs are to be defined in terms of the normative properties of agents, rather than the other way around."[26] What distinguishes different virtue epistemologies is, principally, how they understand intellectual virtue, whether it is an excellence of reliable cognitive faculties (E. Sosa), or an intellectual and moral character trait (L. Zagzebski). The former view is often called virtue reliabilism, while the latter is called virtue responsibilism. Consequently, these virtue epistemologies differ in regard to whether there is a weak or a strong connection between ethics and epistemic normativity.

Virtue epistemology was first proposed by Sosa as a reliabilist theory of knowledge, a faculty reliabilist theory, to be precise.[27] Essentially, faculty reliabilism maintains that true belief is justified or warranted when it is acquired through an apt exercise of the subject's reliable cognitive faculties in their suitable environment. Sosa calls his version of faculty reliabilism a virtue epistemology and argues that for a belief to qualify as knowledge "it requires the belief to derive from an intellectual virtue or faculty."[28] The term "intellectual virtue" in Sosa's usage refers to all cognitive faculties and skills, innate or acquired (e.g., perception, introspection, memory, logical reasoning), which prove to be reliable in acquiring a high ratio of true beliefs. Note that virtues in this context do not have much to do with moral virtues and virtue ethics.[29] Sosa's intellectual virtues are defined and unified exclusively by their successful truth–conduciveness. He puts the emphasis on reliability rather than on virtuousness. His approach has been rightly called virtue reliabilism.[30]

Reliabilism is in general an externalist theory of justification. Externalism maintains that justificatory grounds or reasons do not have to be accessible to the subject's consciousness. The subject can have knowledge without being

25   See Sosa, *Virtue Epistemology*, 88–91; and Goldman, "The Unity of Epistemic Virtues," 31.

26   John Greco, "Virtue Epistemology," http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology-virtue/#Scop (accessed June 22, 2009).

27   See Ernest Sosa, "The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge" (1980), in *Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 165-191. Plantinga's proper function theory has many characteristics of a virtue reliabilist theory, but he does not accept virtue terminology. See Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1993); and "Why We Need Proper Function," *Nous* 27 (1993): 78–81.

28   Ernest Sosa, "Reliabilism and Intellectual Virtue," in *Knowledge, Belief, and Character*, ed. Axtell, 31.

29   When Sosa proposed his virtue epistemology first time he suggested that there may be a parallelism between intellectual and moral virtues, but he did not follow that path later. See Sosa, "The Raft and the Pyramid," 189–190.

able to give reasons why his belief is justified or warranted, nor is he obliged to do that. It is, therefore, much easier for externalists to explain why we do not have to be all epistemologists in order to have knowledge, and why little children and perhaps animals can have knowledge. It is not easy, however, for virtue reliabilists to explain why we give so much importance to epistemic responsibility in justification of our beliefs and in our cognitive behaviour generally.[31]

One group of virtue epistemologists finds the neglect of epistemic responsibility a major problem with virtue reliabilism. Lorraine Code argues that it is actually epistemic responsibility that should have the status of the central epistemic virtue from which all other intellectual virtues radiate. She also suggests that the best way to explain epistemic responsibility is in terms of ethical virtue theory. Accordingly, she christens her vision of virtue epistemology "virtue responsibilism." That name now refers to all virtue epistemologies that make similar suggestions.[32]

Code does not, however, apply her virtue responsibilism to the traditional problems of the analytic theory of knowledge and justification. Hers is a program for a more radical reorientation in epistemology. She objects that the traditional analytic epistemology has become too narrow and has neglected the areas of cognitive life that deserve priority. She emphasises that the individ-

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30   Sosa usually calls his theory of knowledge "virtue perspectivism." The terminological distinction between virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism was introduced first by Guy Axtell and has been accepted by many other authors afterwards. See Guy Axtell, "Recent Work on Virtue Epistemology," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (1997): 410–430.

31   John Greco's "agent reliabilism" proposes a definition of knowledge that incorporates epistemic responsibility, i.e., conscientiousness, while remaining a form of virtue reliabilism. See John Greco, "Agent Reliabilism," *Philosophical Perspectives* 13 (1999): 273–296; "Virtues in Epistemology," in *Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*, ed. Paul K. Moser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 287–315, and "Knowledge as Credit for True Belief," in Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology, eds. Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 111–134.

32   See Lorraine Code, "Toward a 'Responsibilist' Epistemology," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 45 (1984): 29–50, and *Epistemic Responsibility* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1987); James A. Montmarquet, "Epistemic Virtue," *Mind* 96 (1987): 482–497, and *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993); Linda Zagzebski, "Intellectual Virtue and Religious Epistemology," in *Faith in Theory and Practice: Essays on Justifying Religious Belief*, eds. Elizabeth S. Radcliffe and Carol J. White (Chicago: Open Court, 1993), 171–187; Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind* (1996); W. Jay Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998); Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007). Jonathan Kvanvig proposes a version of virtue epistemology which emphasizes the social aspect of intellectual virtue, but his theory cannot be called responsibilist. See Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *The Intellectual Virtues and the Life of the Mind: On the Place of the Virtues in Epistemology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992).

ual cognitive subject is a part of a community, with all the moral requirements that fact entails, and that the appropriate context for epistemological analysis is the descriptive narrative, rather than exchange of abstract examples and counter–examples, which is so typical for analytic epistemology.[33]

James Montmarquet also argues that epistemic responsibility, or epistemic conscientiousness, is the principal intellectual virtue. We need epistemic responsibility for understanding normativity in epistemology. Epistemic normativity presupposes that the person is responsible for making a reasonable effort in regard to truth at the motivational and practical level.[34] He goes a step further towards virtue ethics by modelling intellectual virtue after Aristotle's notion of moral virtue. Montmarquet defines intellectual virtues as acquired character traits defined by their specific motivation, which is the desire for truth. Intellectual virtues are the qualities that a person who desires truth would want to have.[35] The motivational component is necessary for the intellectual virtue while, in his specific view, truth–conduciveness is not. His examples of intellectual virtues are impartiality, intellectual courage, intellectual sobriety, open–mindedness, perseverance, and so on. By contrast, memory and perception are not virtues, but simply cognitive faculties.

Montmarquet maintains that the acquisition and exercise of intellectual virtue is sufficiently under the control of the person that the person can be praised or blamed for having or not having them, and that appraisal is of the sort we find in ethics. Epistemic virtues, hence, involve a moral element. Responsibility in thinking is not separate from responsibility in acting. He believes that it is possible to form a unified normative science that connects ethics and epistemology.[36]

Linda Zagzebski's virtue responsibilism is considered the most systematic development of a unified theory of intellectual and moral virtue.[37] She argues that intellectual virtues are a subset of moral virtues, that epistemic evaluation is ultimately a special case of ethical evaluation and that normative epistemology is a branch of ethics.[38] Besides, she applies her model of intellectual virtue to the conventional issues in analytic theory of knowledge and justification. Though her success in the latter enterprise has been ques-

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33   See Code, "Toward a 'Responsibilist' Epistemology," 39–40, and *Epistemic Responsibility*, 201, 253–254.

34   See Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility*, 55.

35   See Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility*, 30.

36   See Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility*, ix–x, 108.

37   See Axtell, "Recent Work on Virtue Epistemology," 411; Jason Baehr, "Character in Epistemology," *Philosophical Studies* 128 (2006): 479; and John Greco, "Virtue Epistemology," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology–virtue/ (accessed May 1, 2009).

38   See Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 258.

tioned,[39] the issues she raised as well as the solutions she proposed in the theory of epistemic normativity, have had a notable impact on the successive debates.

2.5 Epistemic Value

Let us now return to the issue of epistemic teleology and value. As we have pointed out earlier, virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism both approach the issue of epistemic normativity from a teleological point of view, yet differ remarkably on the nature of epistemic value.

There are many epistemic values. Alvin Plantinga lists twenty one of them and says there are a thousand others.[40] In a broad sense, all epistemic states and results that we consider important can count as epistemic values. Among them, knowledge is the most interesting one for us, though some epistemologists, Jonathan Kvanvig most notably, would give priority to the value of understanding.[41] Anyway, when we ask about epistemic value, we want to know which one is *the* value, the end from which all other valuable epistemic norms and goods receive their status of being distinctively epistemic. The history of epistemology is unanimous in the view that the epistemic value and goal *par excellence* is the truth (and avoiding error as its obverse).[42] That is not, of course, the truth as a semantic or ontological issue. In the context of recent debates on epistemic value, "truth" usually means having true beliefs or true judgments. Older epistemologies often understood the truth as a value "in itself," "for its own sake," something more than a quality of belief.

Before we proceed, I have to point out that the question of the value of truth or true beliefs is different from the question of the value of knowledge. True beliefs may be valuable because of their usefulness, or in themselves, or because of their role in Aristotelian theoretical contemplation, or for some other reason. We do not have to deal with that issue here. For the moment, we

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39 See John Greco, "Two Kinds of Intellectual Virtue," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60 (2000): 179–184; William P. Alston, "Virtue and Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60 (2000): 185–189; Baehr, "Character in Epistemology," 495–496; Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 11–15.

40 See Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, 3; and Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues,* 33.

41 See Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); also Linda Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding," in *Knowledge, Truth and Duty*, ed. Steup, 237–243.

42 I do not intend to enter into the controversy whether the pursuit of the truth is a different value from avoiding falsehood. For more information about that, see Paul Horwich, "The Value of Truth," *Nous* 40 (2006): 347–360.

will simply follow our basic intuition that the truth is valuable, without further questions.

Why do we value knowledge? Our *prima facie* response is clear: because it provides us with true beliefs. There is a problem, however, with this spontaneous response. Knowledge is not mere true belief. For example, we can have a true belief by a lucky guess without having knowledge. Knowledge must be more valuable than true belief. But why? Does this mean that there is an extra epistemic value in knowledge added to the value of true belief? This is the point where different notions of epistemic teleology come to light.

The problem of the higher value of knowledge over true belief was noticed rather early in the history of epistemology. It was first formulated in Plato's *Meno* where Socrates and Meno discuss "why knowledge is prized higher than correct opinion, and [why] knowledge differs from correct opinion."[43] If you have a correct opinion, i.e., true belief, about the way to Larissa, that true belief will bring you to Larissa anyway. Why bother about knowledge, then? The immediate, but not accepted response in Plato's dialogue was that knowledge is necessarily successful and safer than mere correct opinion (i.e., true belief). Socrates then gives a response to the question in the form of a definition: knowledge is different from correct opinion because it is "tied down" by giving "an account of the reason why," or as he puts it in *Theaetetus*, because knowledge is "true judgment with an account [with *lógos*]."[44]

In recent times the question of the value of knowledge has been revived in the context of the reliabilist theory of knowledge, more precisely in the debate between the reliabilist and responsibilist versions of virtue epistemology.[45] It was Zagzebski who suggested that a theory of knowledge should be able to give an account of the value of knowledge. She has been arguing ever since that the externalist theories of knowledge, virtue reliabilism included, do not give a satisfactory explanation of the nature of epistemic value.[46]

Zagzebski argues that the value of knowledge cannot be reduced to the value of true belief alone. If knowledge is true belief plus something, e.g., a factor that makes true belief justified or warranted, that something must have

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43   Plato, *Meno,* 98a6–8, in *Plato: Complete Works*, trans. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 895–896.

44   Plato, *Meno,* 98a3 (Cooper 895), and *Theatetus,* 201d (Cooper 223).

45   Duncan Pritchard maintains that the reasons for the increased interest in epistemic value should be looked for in the rise of virtue epistemology and in the dissatisfaction of some epistemologists with the way the work on the issue of Gettier problem has been developing. See Duncan Pritchard, "Recent Work on Epistemic Value," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 44 (2007): 85–86.

46   See Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 300, 312, and "From Reliabilism to Virtue Epistemology," in *Knowledge, Belief and Character*, ed. Axtell, 113–123.

its specific value that makes it worthy of pursuit. She finds that added element in the motivational component of the intellectual virtue, which is the desire of knowledge or the love of the truth and, ultimately, the intellectual eudemonia, which is an aspect of the holistic eudemonia conceived as "good life:" "An epistemic agent gets credit for getting a true belief when she arrives at true belief because of her virtuous intellectual acts motivated by the love of truth. She gets credit for a desirable true belief when she arrives at a desirable true belief because of acts motivated by love of true beliefs that are components of a good life."[47] Epistemic value is so an ethical value. Note that the claim that the ethical absorbs the epistemically normative altogether depends on how wide one extends the domain of ethics. Zagzebski's claims do not sound so exorbitant if that domain comprises everything that concerns the holistic well–being of human persons. In fact, that is what Zagzebski's neo–Aristotelian virtue ethics implies, and that was the mainstream position in Pre-modern ethics.

Since Zagzebski holds that the cognitive subject as agent is responsible (in a limited but sufficient degree) for his epistemic motivations and cognitive self–formation, he is also praiseworthy or blameworthy for that in a moral sense. Zagzebski accepts deontic moral evaluation in epistemology, though it is not based on an *a priori* deontology, but on an eudemonist virtue ethics. Also, she argues that hers is an agent–based model of epistemic normativity, which explains why knowledge is a credit given to the knower, rather than a praise of a single act of belief, or a praise of a cognitive ability separated from the knower. By contrast, epistemic deontologism and epistemic consequentialism are both act–based.

Zagzebski's virtue theory is Aristotelian, but her account of epistemic evaluation is not. Aristotle is reluctant to apply moral appraisal to intellectual virtues.[48] In his theory, moral and intellectual virtues have different functions, i.e., practical and theoretical, in relation to character and to knowledge, respectively. Zagzebski is aware of the differences and argues against Aristotle's strict separation between the realms of the theoretical and of the practical.[49]

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47 Zagzebski, "The Search for the Source of Epistemic Good," 24. See also Linda Zagzebski, "Epistemic Value and the Primacy of What We Care About," in *Philosophical Papers* 33 (2004): 368.

48 Aristotle writes, "We divide judgments into false and true, not into bad and good, whereas decisions we divide more in the latter way." Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.2.1111b33, trans. Christopher Rowe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 126. Aristotle is aware that judgment is also praised, but, "the judgment is praised by reference to how true it is." *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.2.1112a7 (Rowe 127).

49 See Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 137–164.

The position that the (internal) value of knowledge consists in something added to the value of the truth is often called epistemic value pluralism. The position that the truth is the value that underlies any other (internal) value of knowledge is called value monism.[50]

Sosa responded to Zagzebski's epistemic value–pluralist challenge by re-affirming his value monism. Though Sosa recognizes that different values are involved in the value of knowledge, in one way or another, they all depend on the value of truth, so that truth remains the fundamental epistemic value.[51] Whether the pursuit of truth has a moral value and how the value of truth relates to other values is a question that belongs to the domain of intellectual ethics, which means that it is not necessary for the explanation of the specific normativity which is implied in the concept of knowledge.[52]

Since it deals primarily with the relation between acts and consequences, assuming that they can be abstracted from their agents, epistemic consequentialism tends to be neutral regarding cognitive voluntarism and moral appraisal of cognitive activity.[53] Reliabilism is fairly successful in avoiding the issue of epistemic responsibility and so it can avoid the question of its relationship with moral responsibility. Virtue responsibilists' tendency to enter more deeply into the field of ethics makes it more entangled with the problems of what is and what is not a specific moral value (and whether there is one), with the problem of cultural and historical relativity of virtue, with different concepts of eudemonia, and with a bunch of other expected and unexpected thorny ethical issues. Of course, it's worth it, if virtue responsibilism is plausible.

3. *Difficulties for the Ethical Models of Epistemic Normativity*

3.1 Autonomy of Theoretical Reason

I have pointed to some similarities between ethical and epistemic evaluation which may support the case for a close connection between them. Let us now have a look at some difficulties for that position. First difficulty is the estab-

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50 See Michael DePaul, "Value Monism in Epistemology," in *Knowledge, Truth and Duty*, ed. Steup, 170–186.

51 See Ernest Sosa, "The Place of Truth in Epistemology," in *Intellectual Virtue*, eds. DePaul and Zagzebski, 177.

52 See Ernest Sosa, "For the Love of Truth?" in *Virtue Epistemology*, eds. Fairweather and Zagzebski, 49, 52–53; and *Virtue Epistemology*, 88–91.

53 See Percival, "Epistemic Consequentialism I," 121–122.

lished conviction in western thought that epistemology concerns theoretical reason while ethics concerns practical reason, and these two domains should be kept apart. At the base of this conviction is an ancient faculty psychology that distinguishes the intellect and the will as two different faculties of the soul, often as two different metaphysical parts of the soul. Many ancient and medieval philosophers (including Aristotle, who gave that faculty psychology a scientific format) warned that this distinction should not be regarded as a separation, but that did not remove a certain unease about mixing epistemic and ethical normativity together. The Enlightenment reaffirmed and strengthened the division between the will and the intellect, an important reason being the protection of the autonomy of science. Thus, although faculty psychology has been abandoned as a theory, it is still alive as a part of mentality and a common assumption.

Our commonsense reluctance to introduce ethical, and hence practical normativity into epistemology is not unfounded. We are suspicious that subordinating theoretical reasoning to practical normativity may weaken the objectivity of theoretical reason. The idea that theoretical reason has an objective aim seems more likely than the idea that practical reason as such does so. Whatever difficulties we have with reaching the agreement on what is the fact, reaching the agreement on what is good looks even trickier: Why risk it?

Of course, our common sense is no stranger to moral evaluation of cognitive activity either, and not without reason. One possible response to the aforementioned suspicion is that even if we accept that theoretical reason is more successful in obtaining objectivity in cognition, still theoretical reason alone cannot explain the imperative of epistemic objectivity for the subject. We may need ethical normativity in order to protect the objectivity of theoretical reasoning against the unjustified or harmful meddling of pragmatic subjective motivations.

But are ethical factors necessary for the understanding of knowledge and similar epistemic normative concepts? Does a proposition of the type "S knows that *p* (and not only truly believes that *p*)" contain moral praise for S? Is it necessary to be a good person to know that *p*? Our first intuition is that knowledge does not have to be a moral appraisal. First, it is true that we give a person credit for knowledge, but we give her the same credit for her intelligence and good memory, and this does not necessarily imply moral praise. Second, an excellent knower can be a bad person that lacks important virtues like intellectual honesty and integrity, and hardly shows any love for truth. The defenders of the moral nature of the epistemic appraisal of knowledge will have to show that a person who lacks virtuous motivation for her belief to be true and justified does not deserve credit for knowledge even if her true beliefs are produced in an otherwise reliable way. Put in that way, that does not look an easy task. It is not impossible, though. Our tendency to give the title of

knowledge too quickly in some areas rather than in the others, as well as our assumption of reliability of some forms of cognition might rightly be put in question. The history of scientific and philosophical discoveries tends to give more weight to the intellectual qualities of the subject and his virtuous motivation rather than to the automatism of cognitive functions.

3.2 Voluntariness of Belief

The next problem, though not separated from the previous ones, is that there seems to be a crucial difference between ethical and epistemic appraisal regarding the voluntariness of their respective objects of evaluation. Ethical "ought" implies "can." We will not blame a person (subjectively) for an action that was not sufficiently under her control. The counterpart of action in epistemology is belief. But it does not seem that our beliefs, nor any of relevant similar propositional attitudes (judgment, doubt, assent, withholding of assent, opinion, wish, fear, and hope that *p*), are wholly under our control. Perceptual beliefs, introspective beliefs, and simple inferences—which make up the largest part of our beliefs—do not seem to be under our control at all. Therefore, if we have control over our beliefs at all, its range must be rather restricted. If an epistemic "ought" contains a moral "ought" at all, it contains it in a quite limited sense.[54]

Furthermore, though in the history of epistemology beliefs and judgments were regularly referred to as cognitive or mental acts, that classification has been put in question.[55] The language of mental acts is not problematic in the case of judgment, but mid–twentieth century analytic epistemologists found it problematic in the case of belief, while at the same time judgment lost its popularity. It is true that we can begin to believe that *p* and cease to believe that *p*. The emphasis is on "we can," because it is not only possible but it is frequent to simply find yourself believing something. On the other hand, sometimes a belief unnoticeably evaporates. In the meanwhile the belief that *p* is somehow there. We know it is there because we can activate it every so often, and because it affects our behaviour even when we do not think about it explicitly. That is why belief is now usually categorized as a propositional disposition, i.e., a dispositional mental state or attitude in relation to the truth or falsity of a proposition.

Of course, this new understanding of belief does not prove that belief is involuntary. It does not exclude the assent or the decision to believe at the

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54 For this sort of argument against the moral evaluation in epistemology, see H.H. Price, "Belief and the Will," *Supplement to the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 28 (1954): 1–27.

55 See H.H. Price, *Belief: The Gifford Lectures* (London: George, Allen, Unwin, 1969), 20.

moment of its acquisition or reaffirmation. Actually, even if one acquires a belief without explicit conscious participation, one will be required to affirm it sooner or later. The recognition that belief is a dispositional state does, however, call attention to that foggy side of belief when it appears and vanishes without explicit decision of its "owner."

When we talk about deliberating on beliefs, deciding to believe, assenting to beliefs, we presume that our beliefs are voluntary and that we can choose to believe or not to believe in specific circumstances. The epistemological position that believing is voluntary is called doxastic voluntarism.[56] According to the type or level of voluntary control in beliefs, epistemologists usually distinguish direct and indirect doxastic voluntarism. A subject has direct voluntary control over an act if he can do it or not do it by a simple intention, at will. For instance, he can control his conduct as to raising his hand or not, according to his intention. A subject has indirect voluntary control over an act if he cannot do it at will, but can do it after a series of interventions in the process of its realization. For instance, he cannot directly control his weight, but can control it indirectly through a special diet.

The arguments against doxastic voluntarism point, first, to the problem with the concept of voluntary belief and, second, to the psychological difficulties with the voluntariness of belief. Regarding the concept of voluntary belief, Bernard Williams argues that belief by definition aims at truth. If voluntariness of belief means that we can believe any proposition irrespective of its truth, it seems that the concept of belief is irreconcilable with the concept of voluntariness.[57] This argument has got some support, but it has not been found as clear and strong as Williams intended it to be.[58] Nevertheless, there is always the psychological argument, suggested by Williams too, but older than that, and later more systematically exposed by William Alston.[59] That argument says that it is a psychological matter of fact that we do not and cannot acquire beliefs voluntarily. The evidence simply imposes a belief on us and we cannot not believe. We cannot just wish to believe and believe inde-

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56   The expression "doxastic" follows the (somewhat simplified) translation of the Greek *dóxa* as belief. Sometimes the term "volitionism" is used in epistemology to distinguish it from "voluntarism" in ethics. See Louis P. Pojman, *Religious Belief and the Will* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), xi–xii.

57   Bernard Williams, "Deciding to Believe," in *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 148.

58   See the criticisms of this argument in Ginet, "Deciding to Believe," 71–73; Richard Feldman, "Voluntary Belief and Epistemic Evaluation," in *Knowledge, Truth and Duty*, ed. Steup, 79–80; Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), 342–346.

59   See Williams, "Deciding to Believe," 148–149; Alston, "The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification," 277–279.

pendently of the evidence. This is obvious in perceptual and inferential beliefs.

Alston argues that we do not have direct control over any of our beliefs, not even in the case where, after weighing it up, the evidence remains uncertain or is completely lacking. One simply cannot "bring himself into a state of belief that *p*," not even in philosophical, political, religious, scientific matters, or other people's witness. The deliberation process did not mean that the belief which resulted was voluntary. The subject simply had to accept the result of the deliberation process. Alston allows some distant indirect voluntary influence on the process of belief forming, e.g., a voluntary selection of the directions and sources of evidence, or developing habits of inquiry, but he does not consider it strong enough to support an ethical model of epistemic evaluation.[60]

I must say that I have not found any epistemologist who defends direct doxastic voluntarism. Even those epistemologists from the past who are said to have held it (such as Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Newman, and Lonergan) probably would not agree with its most radical form. They believed that cognitive acts are human acts, and therefore acts of will, but for them an act *of* will was not necessarily an act *at* will.

Those epistemologists who defend a stronger connection between ethical and epistemic appraisal have found different strategies against the psychological counter–argument. One way is to argue that deciding to believe is indeed psychologically and conceptually possible.[61] The other way is to argue that even an indirect influence of the will in the belief–forming process is a sufficient reason to talk about an ethical appraisal in epistemology. So, instead of doxastic voluntarism, it may be more adequate to speak of cognitive agency. On this line virtue responsibilists (Zagzebski, Montmarquet) argue that the epistemic appraisal depends on the intellectual virtue, and the virtue is sufficiently under our control.[62] For this reason the debate about the ethical factors in epistemic normativity between virtue responsibilists and virtue reliabilist does not focus on the voluntariness of belief but on the nature of epistemic value. Both virtue reliabilists and responsibilists agree that knowledge is a form of credit given to the person for her virtuous belief, even if they do not agree as to whether that credit is of a moral nature or not. Giving credit implies some voluntary involvement of the subject in the acquisition of knowledge in both cases. When we give credit to an excellent ballerina we

60   See Alston, "The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification," 260.

61   See Ginet, "Deciding to Believe."

62   See Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 58–72; James A. Montmarquet, "The Voluntariness of Virtue—and Belief," *Philosophy* 83 (2008): 373–390.

premise that her excellence is in an important measure a result of her own hard work even if the appraisal of her excellence is not a moral one.

Henry Price and Jonathan Cohen are among those epistemologists who argue that belief cannot be voluntary, but still allow voluntariness in other cognitive attitudes, such as assent and acceptance.[63] Their concession, however, may not be necessary. Their notion of belief may have been too involuntary from the very beginning. For example, they define belief as a "cognitive feeling" (Price) or "credal feeling" (Cohen).[64] These terms would probably find little understanding anywhere outside the classical empiricist tradition.

Some epistemologists noticed that different positions regarding the freedom of the will and regarding the concept of responsibility in ethics result in different positions on the voluntariness of belief. Hence, if we show that a direct or strong libertarian voluntarism is not necessary for the ethical appraisal proper, we should not demand it for the ethical model of epistemic appraisal either.[65] Actually, it is the notion of epistemic responsibility and not the notion of voluntariness that we need to connect epistemic normativity with ethics.

4. *Nexus*

Rather than conclusion, it seems to be more suitable to speak of a nexus at the end of this article, in the sense that a nexus opens up the horizon of a topic – it creates new connections. There has been some dissatisfaction with analytic epistemology in the epistemological circles of continental philosophy, the former being accused of (too much) fixation at the conceptual analysis of knowledge. Without damaging the basic epistemological and metaphysical realism which is tacitly presupposed as the common ground for most of the participants in the mainstream epistemological debates, it could be fruitful to examine the role of the cognitive subject in knowledge precisely with the purpose to secure an ethical and metaphysical warrant for that common ground.

It has somehow happened that the debate on epistemic reliabilism reopened the question of the metaphysical foundations for the reliability of human cognitive functions. In a similar way, responsibilist virtue epistemology has reopened the question of the role of the subject, including the subject's moral and epistemic integrity, in the acquisition and the future developments

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63   See Price, *Belief,* 206–207, 298; and L. Jonathan Cohen, *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

64   See Price *Belief,* 291; and Cohen, *Belief and Acceptance*, 11.

65   See Stump, *Aquinas*, 342–349; and Steup, "Doxastic Voluntarism and Epistemic Deontology."

of knowledge. In an age of naturalization of philosophy, the whole debate on epistemic normativity may sound as a sort of epistemic romanticism, but we cannot deny that it has attracted a lot of interest among the older as well as the younger generation of epistemologists. Finally, it is us, human beings, cognitive subjects that acquire knowledge and do epistemology.