

Knowledge, Virtue, and Action

Essays on Putting Epistemic Virtues to Work

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Introduction

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This volume brings together new essays on epistemology. They discuss a range of topics that have been prominent in recent epistemology: testimony, peer disagreement, pragmatic encroachment, epistemic virtues, and epistemic value. But these essays do not only present a snapshot of current trends in epistemology. Taken together, they give an impression a new overall picture of knowledge that seems to emerge in recent debates, and they explore the central themes and concepts in this new picture as well as their interrelations. In this introduction, we describe the aims of the volume in more detail and present the individual contributions.

Recent epistemology has seen a tendency to broaden the scope that has characterized much traditional work. Roughly, the core of this tendency is this: Recent authors have increasingly focused on the role knowledge plays in our lives as agents and on the related questions of what makes knowledge important, of what it enables us to do, and of how it can be shared. To use a metaphor by John Hyman, there has been a major interest in the *work* that knowledge does.

Traditional approaches to epistemology, by contrast, were mainly concerned with analyses of the concept of knowledge, narrowly conceived as attempts to fill in the blank in the equation *knowledge = true belief + ___*. The rationale behind these attempts was the idea that knowledge is a kind of state that is adequately approached by investigating its internal structure. To approach other topics, like the social transmission or the practical role of knowledge, was thought to be feasible only after an adequate analysis of knowledge is achieved. As is well known today, this traditional project has faced persistent problems—not the least of which was that no satisfactory analysis of the internal nature of knowledge was forthcoming. Consequently, this lack of consensus about analyses of knowledge seemed to make it difficult to address further matters that should be of interest to epistemologists—that is, matters concerning testimony, the pragmatics of knowledge, the value of knowledge, and so on.

It was only in recent times that some authors have proposed to change the priorities that characterized the traditional enterprise, thus broadening its scope significantly. Instead of analyzing knowledge in an isolated fashion

and then proceeding to further matters, they began from the opposite end. Recent work in epistemology quite often starts from the ways in which information is actively taken in by subjects, how it is shared with others, and how it is ultimately used in processes of reasoning and action. The concept of knowledge is then understood as designating the successful cases in this active practice. As John Greco puts it in his contribution to this volume, knowledge is approached as a concept that essentially “governs the social flow of actionable information” (see chapter 1, this volume). The question is no longer just: What must a subject’s state be like, as a matter of its internal structure, to qualify as a state of knowledge? Rather, it is this: How do we have to acquire, share, and reason with information in such a way as to count as acquiring, sharing, and reasoning from knowledge?

More specifically, this reversal of the traditional priorities took place in the context of debates about topics such as testimony, the significance of peer disagreement, the value of knowledge, and pragmatic aspects of knowledge.¹ For instance, in the work of certain virtue epistemologists like Sosa (2007) and Greco (2010), it is regarded as essential to knowledge that it is *actively achieved* in a certain way.² Reliabilist accounts of knowledge had already introduced the idea that what is distinctive of knowledge is a particular kind of history or genesis. But according to the authors just mentioned, this still misses an important part of the truth. Epistemic subjects are not just subjects of a certain kind of state with a certain kind of history. Rather, they actively *pursue* knowledge by exercising specific capacities for searching and processing information. The crucial difference between more orthodox reliabilist accounts and these new approaches lies in the essential role they assign to notions of competence, activity, and achievement. Theorists should not, it is argued, analyze knowledge first and think about how to achieve it once we have the independent analysis in hand. Knowledge is *essentially* something that is actively achieved in certain ways. This focus on epistemic agency and competence is an important aspect of the new picture of knowledge that emerges.

Similarly, in his influential book *Knowledge and the State of Nature* (1991), E. Craig proposed that knowledge is not just some kind of state that *happens* to be helpful when we ask people for information. His proposal is that knowledge is *essentially* whatever it is that we are looking for in good sources of information. Instead of defining knowledge first and then tailoring our account of testimony to fit the former definition, we should understand knowledge as whatever it is that good informants provide. In a nutshell, the theory of knowledge is approached against the background of the question as to what it is to provide and share information in a way that we value.

Other authors, most notably Hyman (1999), Fantl and McGrath (2002, 2007, 2009), and Stanley and Hawthorne (2008) approach the theory of knowledge from the use to which knowledge is put in reasoning. In a nutshell (and ignoring differences among the individual approaches), these

authors begin from the idea that it is appropriate to use a consideration that *P* as a reason, or as a premise in one's deliberation, only if one knows that *P*. They go on to argue that this connection should inform an adequate account of knowledge. Hyman directly proposes to define propositional knowledge as the ability to act for reasons that are facts. The other authors mentioned observe that the legitimacy of treating something as a reason varies with pragmatic factors, especially with questions concerning what is at stake in a decision. They conclude that an account of knowledge must allow that our concept of knowledge is crucially sensitive to these latter facts. Here, knowledge is explained as whatever it is that we can appropriately reason from.

Finally, a similar tendency is found in some contributions to recent debates about the value of knowledge (for an overview, see Prichard, Millar, and Haddock 2010). Some critics (for example, Kvanvig 2003) have observed that traditional theories of knowledge fail to account for the distinctive value that we ascribe to knowledge. Zagzebski (1996) and Greco (2010) have thus recently argued that considerations of value warrant a new orientation in epistemology. Instead of trying to identify a residue of intrinsic value in an independently motivated account of knowledge, they have claimed that the intuition that knowledge is valuable must be one of the starting points in an analysis.

The common rationale underlying these approaches is to understand knowledge as something that is implicitly defined by its role in a rich account of our lives as active gatherers, sharers, and users of information. As such, these approaches suggest a bigger picture, a picture in which knowledge is tied to a comprehensive conception of ourselves as competent handlers of information. The primary purpose of this collection is to present new work on topics that are discussed in the debates that constitute this broad trend. By collecting work from these debates, the volume may also serve to provide readers with a first impression of the larger picture that is about to evolve.

A subsidiary goal, which is explicitly addressed in many of the contributions and which also motivates the volume as a whole, is exposed in the subtitle. Although not all of the contributions are explicitly about virtue, all of them are about 'putting epistemic virtues to work' in the general sense that they are about conditions for virtuous performance, or lack thereof, in various areas of our epistemic lives. How is information properly sought, shared, and used in reasoning and action—how, that is, will the epistemically virtuous agent perform in these areas? In discussing issues of testimony, disagreement, the value of knowledge, the pragmatics of knowledge, and so on, the chapters in this volume contribute to a fuller understanding of the ways information should be handled, and thus to a fuller picture of what excellence in handling information involves and of the kinds of work this kind of excellence is required to do in our epistemic lives.

But there is also a narrower sense in which many of the contributions—and also the collection as a whole—work toward putting epistemic virtues to work. This point needs to be elaborated.

The various strands that constitute the aforementioned general tendency in epistemology are still somewhat disconnected. This, we think, becomes especially evident when one turns to the relation between virtue epistemology on the one hand and other strands of recent epistemological inquiry on the other hand. Notions of virtue still play a relatively minor role within discussions in social epistemology, for example, in topics such as testimony and disagreement. Likewise, few discussions of pragmatic aspects of knowledge have drawn on the notion of virtue. Conversely, very often virtue-epistemological approaches are still concerned with the traditional topics of epistemology—such as solving the equation *knowledge = true belief + ___*, answering the skeptic, avoiding Gettier cases, and so forth.

This situation is unfortunate, for there seem to be important connections. More specifically, it seems that the various strands in recent epistemology could benefit from each other. In fact, they might even *need* each other. On the one hand, the complex debates about testimony, disagreement, the value of knowledge, pragmatic encroachment, and so on, might benefit from the introduction of notions of virtue. The reason for this is twofold. As we will explain in more detail shortly, concepts of virtue are important in being both *integrative* and *fine-grained* concepts. The aforementioned debates might, firstly, benefit from a unifying set of concepts, and concepts of virtue might have the integrative potentials to play this role, tying together aspects of excellence that are relevant in reflections on testimony, reasoning, and so on. Secondly, notions of virtue may also provide theoretical tools that are more fine-grained than the all-purpose concept of knowledge, and they may capture aspects of our epistemic practices that are lost if we stick to the more general concept. In other words, aretaic concepts may help both to pick out different aspects of our epistemic lives and to understand how these different aspects hang together.

On the other hand, recent work in virtue epistemology would in turn benefit from a broader view of the work that epistemic virtues would have to perform. As we said, virtue epistemology often still concentrates on traditional epistemological projects (such as analyzing knowledge, answering the skeptic, etc.), and this may leave the appeal to competence and excellence somewhat empty and sterile. Embedding virtues in a broader account of our epistemic practices may give more substance to our understanding of epistemic competence and excellence.

In a nutshell: Attention to epistemic virtues may present us with a more differentiated and coherent understanding of the tasks that are involved in gathering, sharing, and using information; and conversely, a full account of the work that needs to be done in gathering, sharing, and using information may inform our understanding of what makes a virtuous epistemic agent. We will say more about each of these points, and about how this collection proposes to address them, in what follows.

The recent attention to epistemological problems other than the analysis of knowledge is very much to be welcomed. However, there is a danger

that looms. In the debates about the social transmission of knowledge; about knowledge as a norm of reasoning, action, and assertion; the value of knowledge; the epistemology of peer disagreement, and so on, the object of epistemological inquiry might threaten to dissolve into a heterogeneous plurality of concepts and ideas. Some authors discuss what we are looking for in good sources of information; some discuss what we normatively expect from someone when she relies on information in reasoning and action; some discuss what epistemic states could be bearers of intrinsic value—and so on and so forth. But do these discussions ever merge into a single unified idea, or do we have to live with a plurality of epistemic norms and values? It is not that the latter would necessarily be bad news. But we should at least ask whether there is something that unites these various notions.

One possible hope would be that the notion of an epistemic virtue might be a unifying element. All of the discussions about the role of knowledge in our active lives might converge on the picture of the virtuous agent who achieves excellence in handling information, such as in gathering, sharing, and acting on it. Once we put knowledge to work in accounts of practical reasoning, testimony, and so on, it becomes clear that knowledge is a matter of performing well in various areas of our lives. In other words, it is essentially a matter of a complex, multidimensional ability or competence. This suggests that notions of excellent competence might occupy a central practical place that is implicitly defined by the various strands of recent epistemological debates. Thus, virtue epistemology promises to be more than merely a further attempt to address the traditional problems of epistemology.

Why should the notion of virtue play this role? Its integrative potential is quite generally what makes “virtue” an attractive and theoretically powerful notion. There would be little interest in notions of virtues in ethics, for example, if the concept of virtue were merely the concept of *whatever it is that enables us to act well*. The considerable interest in virtues in ethics stems precisely from the fact that the notion of a virtue connects and integrates the dimensions of good individual actions, a good overall character, and a good—or flourishing—human life. The central idea is that accounts of good action must be informed by what we admire, encourage, and endorse in persons more generally, which in turn must be informed by an account of what makes human life go well (and, maybe, *vice versa*). It is by occupying a central role in an account of these diverse dimensions that virtues gain their theoretical interest and their explanatory potentials. (A point that has already been mentioned, and that will be picked up below, is that virtue concepts do not achieve this by being general and unspecific. On the contrary, it is precisely by distinguishing different aspects of ethical excellence that concepts like *courage*, *justice*, *temperance*, *truthfulness*, and so on, draw connections between morality and the good life.)

It seems to us that the appeal of aretaic notions in epistemology is, to a considerable degree, due to the fact that they promise to play a similar

integrative role. Since virtue is a multidimensional notion, one would expect that to explain knowledge in terms of epistemic virtue *is* to explain it in terms of the abilities that we seek in competent gatherers, sharers, and users of information. An epistemic virtue will, by definition, be something that makes its bearer *good* at handling information or good *qua* epistemic agent. So if we follow Craig in defining knowledge in terms of what we are looking for in sources of information, a notion of virtue enables us to make precisely this connection. To explain knowledge in terms of virtue *is* to explain it in terms of what makes a person someone to turn to when you look for trustworthy information. Similar things go for the pragmatics of knowledge. Virtue, as it is often put, is precisely the kind of trait that constitutes or contributes to an appropriate sensitivity to reasons. The epistemically virtuous agent is essentially someone who knows which information can be relied upon as a reason in a given context. So to explain knowledge in terms of epistemic virtue *is* to explain it in terms of an epistemic competence that informs an overall good practice and especially a state of reliably responding to reasons. In other words, to explain knowledge in terms of virtue is to connect knowledge to a virtuous character generally, especially to one that manifests *phronesis*. Finally, and maybe most obviously, virtues have been invoked by those authors who approach epistemology from considerations of the value of knowledge by authors like Greco (2002), Zagzebski (1996), Kvanvig (2003), and Hookway (2004).

In this way, virtue epistemology holds a promise of integrating and providing a systematic rationale for the various developments in recent epistemology. By bringing together work on the different topics mentioned, this volume is, in part, an invitation to explore such connections.

Some of the chapters in this volume explicitly suggest that the notion of virtue may unify the different strands. **John Greco's** contribution, for instance, tries to put virtue epistemology to work in a framework for testimony that puts central emphasis on the role of knowledge as the norm of practical reasoning and action. In doing so, he secures not only a central unifying role for notions of virtue but at the same time, he also achieves an important differentiation in our understanding of virtues by suggesting that epistemic virtues answer to two distinct practical needs: the origination of knowledge and the distribution of knowledge through a social community. Conversely, drawing on these two distinct roles of epistemic virtues is argued to solve problems in the theory of testimony. By putting virtues to work in an account of testimony of actionable information, Greco shows both what work virtues can do and what virtues have to be like to do this work.

Other contributions tackle the goal of putting virtues to work as unifying elements in other, sometimes less direct, ways. In this vein, **Frank Hofmann** focuses primarily on the theoretical work that virtues are supposed to do in an account of what makes knowledge valuable. However, in doing so he arrives at the conclusion that epistemic virtues must be structurally similar to ethical virtues to a degree that is higher than usually supposed. Thus, he

arrives at a new understanding of how epistemic virtues perform the work they do, an understanding that locates them more firmly in a unified account of the theoretically *and* practically virtuous agent.

Similarly, **Jason Baehr**'s contribution highlights respects in which epistemic virtues are precisely *virtues*—that is, not just hard-wired competences but more global character traits that inform what a kind of person the bearer is and that are grounds for admiration of this person. Such virtues, Baehr maintains, require a certain reflective accessibility. When engaging in an epistemic activity, a truly virtuous subject must have a belief that this activity furthers her epistemic goals, and this belief must partially explain the subject's engaging in this activity. One of Baehr's central arguments for this view appeals to *phronesis*, or to practical wisdom in the Aristotelian sense. Just like *phronesis* is, on the Aristotelian picture, a condition for the possession of moral virtues, Baehr claims that it is a condition for the possession of *epistemic* virtues. The reason for this claim is "that we are thinking of intellectual virtues as character traits, and thus as personal qualities that have a substantial active or practical dimension" (cf. chapter 5, this volume). On the resulting picture, the *phronimos* is able to weigh both practical goals and means and epistemic goals and means, "grasping which epistemic ends are most valuable, the comparative worth of these ends, which sorts of cognitive activities or undertakings are most likely to promote them, and so on" (cf. chapter 5, this volume). The appeal to epistemic virtue is seen as the crucial step toward a unified understanding of practical and theoretical wisdom. The work that epistemic virtues do is not just structurally similar to the work moral virtues do. At bottom, both kinds of virtue interlock, and the work they do is the same.

In her chapter, **Jennifer Lackey** describes cases of deficient testimonial knowledge. The puzzle raised by these cases is that they do not seem to be deficient due to factors that are commonly taken to stand in the way of successful knowledge transmission. What is common to Lackey's cases is that they start from a competent judgment and are transmitted via a piece of testimony made by someone who is in a position to judge the competence of the source and who is in a position to reflect on it and to understand it. Although Lackey does not present a full diagnosis in the chapter, it is tempting to think that the common flaw is that for the *receiver* (the third party in the chain of transmission), the information received is in a certain sense isolated from an ability to judge the competence of the original source. The resulting belief is, in a certain sense, not sensitive to the competence of the original judger. From this perspective, Lackey's cases might suggest that there are crucial cases in which successful testimony depends on an appreciation of competence or virtue to a degree that is higher than one might have thought. As we see it, Lackey's cases indirectly suggest that such an appreciation of epistemic virtue is part of what successful testimony must transmit.

These suggestions are complemented by **Thomas Grundmann**'s contribution on peer disagreement that is included here. Grundmann focuses

on the epistemic relevance of the widespread disagreements in philosophy, and he asks whether these disagreements should lead us toward skepticism about philosophy. His argument brings out two insights: Firstly, the type of disagreement that is epistemically relevant (as a rebutting defeater) is disagreement with people that we *justifiably* believe to be peers. As in Lackey's contribution, we find that in social epistemology an important role is played by the ability to judge the other party's epistemic competence. Secondly, Grundmann argues that disagreement in the special area of philosophy is not damaging because it is an area in which *peerhood agnosticism* is the warranted stance toward the competence of others. This contribution points to another way in which concepts of virtuous competence must do important work: They govern our assessments of and responses to cases of disagreement.

David P. Schweikard's contribution is likewise concerned with the central role of notions of virtuous epistemic agency in the context of social epistemology. Schweikard focuses on the concept of epistemic responsibility. In a basic sense, an epistemically responsible agent is one whose beliefs are properly motivated and whose reflection qualifies as open-minded, critical, and conscientious. Schweikard's contribution considers the issues surrounding epistemic responsibility in the context of situations in which agents receive or pass on information. It aims at characterizations of responsible receivers of information, as well as responsible informants, and thus combines concerns of virtue epistemology and social epistemology, taking steps toward a more refined conception of responsible epistemic agency.

As we pointed out above, notions of virtue quite generally have a complementary aspect. Virtues do not have only an *integrative* aspect, tying together notions of excellent action and thought and a broader accounts of a flourishing human life. Furthermore, concepts of virtue are also *fine-grained*. Take the case of ethics again. Ever since Anscombe's complaints against modern moral philosophy (Anscombe 1958), concepts of virtue have been praised for their ability to offer a richer and more diverse picture of ethical life, a picture dealing in concepts of *courage*, *benevolence*, *justice*, and *truthfulness* rather than in abstract notions of *duties* and *oughts*. Analogously, this fine-grained character may also make notions of virtue attractive as central concepts in contemporary accounts of the work that knowledge does.

Indeed, some authors use concepts of epistemic virtue not so much as unifying concepts but instead as a means to differentiate between aspects of our practice in a way that the all-purpose concepts of knowledge and justification do not. This may seem to be incompatible with the use of virtue concepts as unifying concepts. But this impression, we think, would be misleading. Take the case of ethics again. Virtues connect ethical excellence and the good life precisely by suggesting *specific* links. The modern view that morality and human flourishing are two distinct practical ideals may be due to the abstractness of the global notions of morality and flourishing. The appeal to fine-grained notions of moral excellence like courage, truthfulness,

justice, and the like suggests manifold connections between these ideals. What makes concepts of virtue attractive as centerpieces in an account of our practical lives is precisely the fact that different notions of virtue connect different aspects of this life. The unifying and the differentiating role are two faces of one coin.

A first example of the differentiating potential can be found in **Ernest Sosa's** contribution. His chapter offers a new argument for a distinction he has long defended, a distinction between two varieties of knowledge: animal knowledge and reflective knowledge. On this basis, the chapter argues further that we ought to distinguish two kinds of Gettier problems: In one of them the subject lacks knowledge altogether, but in the other the subject lacks only the reflective sort while still retaining knowledge of the animal sort. In effect, this shows that a differentiated understanding of epistemic virtue (in both its reflective and its animal form) can explain different aspects of a well-known puzzle and of the work that needs to be done in achieving knowledge.

The collection further includes contributions by two authors that have been influential in exploiting the fine-grained nature and the differentiating potential of virtue concepts in a more revisionary and radical way. The contributions by **Christopher Hookway** and **Jonathan L. Kvanvig** both make an effort to put epistemic virtues to work, through an effort of a kind that slightly differs from the efforts described above. Both authors are already renowned for insisting that epistemic virtues are connected to epistemic projects that are not adequately described in general terms of knowledge and justification. Epistemic virtues are focal points of a picture of our epistemic lives in which knowledge and justification are not the only notions that take center stage. On Kvanvig's account (as presented in his monographs 2003 and 2006), certain epistemic virtues matter not so much for knowledge but for *understanding*. On Hookway's view (see his monographs 1990 and 2004), which draws heavily on work by pragmatists from Peirce to Quine, they are connected to inquiry as an activity, not to justification as a status.

Kvanvig's contribution continues his campaign on behalf of the notion of understanding. He attempts to explain the special value of this epistemic achievement and formulates a response-dependence account of this particular value. On this account, understanding is defined as the goal of a distinctive kind of intellectual motive, namely curiosity. The special kind of value of understanding lies in the fact that understanding is what curiosity drives at. Curiosity here is understood as a noninstrumental epistemic motive, and it has been regarded as a virtue at least since Hume. Here, fine-grained notions like the notion of curiosity lead us to appreciate a specific aspect of the role of information in our lives.

Hookway focuses on the condition of *freedom of mind*, understood as a kind of autonomy in the area of inquiry. He distinguishes several impediments that may keep us from achieving this autonomy and presents epistemic virtues as abilities that allow us to overcome these impediments to epistemic

autonomy and inquiry. Again, we gain a better understanding of the work that virtues need to do in our lives.

Although these authors argue against a narrow concern with knowledge, their efforts in effect serve to present us with a more comprehensive and unified picture of our epistemic lives. By putting virtues to work, they enable us to see that there is work to be done in our epistemic lives that knowledge and justification alone cannot do.

All of this suggests that epistemic virtues can play a role that goes beyond the mere analysis of knowledge. They may enlighten various aspects of the broader picture of our epistemic lives that has emerged, either by taking central roles in the theory of testimony or in the integration of practical and theoretical reason, or by pointing us to aspects of our epistemic lives that are neglected by the knowledge-centered mainstream. To put it in a nutshell: Many recent authors 'put knowledge to work,' and the contributions mentioned so far suggest, in more or less direct ways, that some of the relevant work may need to be done, and to be described, in terms of virtue.

In this way, the relevant chapters suggest that epistemic virtues ought to be put to work. But this has a flipside. The second point we mentioned above is that our understanding of epistemic virtues in turn *requires* a better understanding of the work they would have to do. Here, recent discussions about testimony and about pragmatic aspects of knowledge may be seen as sources of a fuller understanding of epistemic virtue. If knowledge is what is sought and transmitted in testimony, and if it is what is required for the justification of action and assertion, then the epistemically virtuous agent must be the one who performs well in these regards. He or she must be the one to whom to turn when we seek knowledge from others, and the one who knows what to rely on in reasoning, action, and making assertions.

Indeed, there is reason to think that this is not merely a welcome but optional additional input to accounts of epistemic virtues. If the appeal to epistemic virtues is to be more than a suggestive and catchy phrase, a comprehensive account of the role they play in our lives is needed. There is little interest in a theory of knowledge that features virtues merely as *that which enables us to gain knowledge*. Indeed, one may fear that an isolated appeal to notions of virtue may lead to triviality or circularity in some contexts. Presumably, epistemic virtues are *valuable* traits, traits worth admiring and endorsing. At the same time, many virtue epistemologists explain the specific value of knowledge in terms of the value of virtuous performance and its success. So virtue epistemologists cannot at the same time declare that the good thing about the virtues is that they give us knowledge, when what is good about knowledge is spelled out in terms of the value of success from virtue. We need independent ways to understand what *constitutes* these virtues as virtues. The way to do this is precisely to highlight the contribution that epistemic virtues make not only to the acquisition of knowledge but also to a good epistemic life in general. So more input from discussions of testimony, the pragmatic and

normative role of knowledge for reasoning, action and assertion, and so on, is needed.

In this sense, virtue epistemology not only promises to give an integrated account of various aspects of our epistemic practices but the appeal of virtue-theoretic analyses of knowledge also *depends* on our ability to give independent content to the idea of an epistemic virtue, that is, to give some independent account of what epistemic virtues are and what they are *for*. Whatever substance there is to notions of epistemic virtue must be derived from a broad picture of how these virtues work and how they contribute to a virtuous character and a flourishing life.

This worry is articulated and addressed in a number of critical contributions. **Christian Nimt**z argues that the concept of virtue, as it is employed in the analyses of knowledge offered by Sosa and Greco, does not itself contribute anything substantial to these analyses. All of the relevant work, Nimtz argues, is done by the incorporation of conditions of *explanatory* dependence between the grounds of belief and the truth of the belief. So all the benefits that virtue-theoretic analyses bring in dealing with fake barns or gettierized forms of justification can be reaped by more traditional approaches, as long as they incorporate an explanatory condition. This precisely suggests that notions of epistemic virtue must earn their living in other areas besides the narrow concern with analyzing knowledge. The specific surplus value of notions of epistemic virtue may lie not in their role in overcoming problems in the analysis of knowledge but in locating knowledge at the center of a full understanding of our epistemic lives.

A complementary objection is raised by **Jesper Kallestrup** and **Duncan Pritchard**. Instead of arguing that virtues are superfluous in an account of knowledge, they suggest that virtues do not do enough. More specifically, the authors argue that what they call phenomena of “epistemic dependence” show that epistemic virtues alone cannot supply us with everything we need in an account of knowledge (cf. chapter 11, this volume). Indeed, they argue that factors beyond the reach of individual competence may have the effect that an exercise of virtue or competence is neither necessary nor sufficient for knowledge. This is intended as a refutation of ‘robust’ as opposed to a ‘modest’ virtue epistemology. But even if robust versions of virtue epistemology should prove to be incompatible with forms of epistemic dependence, this does not yet rule out the possibility that virtues take center stage in an account of knowledge. Maybe the moral to take away is that an adequate understanding of epistemic virtue must itself incorporate external conditions. Maybe epistemic virtues must be characterized not in narrowly individualistic terms but in terms referring to environmental conditions that are beyond the individual’s cognitive agency. Just like knowledge is a “broad” state (at least according to Williamson 2000), epistemic virtues may be competences that are individuated broadly. This externalist understanding of virtues is certainly not alien to the Aristotelian tradition, although it would have to be investigated as to what its consequences would be for notions of individual

achievement, credit, and responsibility in virtue epistemology. In any case, this may lead to a richer account of virtue that is informed more fully by an account of the work that epistemic virtues would have to do.

Elke Brendel's contribution starts from a debate between defenders of modal or 'antiluck' analyses of knowledge, especially safety theories, on the one hand and virtue theories on the other. She argues that a "method-reliabilist" safety account can be defended against a number of objections and stresses that virtues need not enter into an analysis of knowledge. However, she goes on to suggest that this insight may lead to a better understanding of the theoretical relevance of epistemic virtues. Instead of being a constituent of knowledge, epistemic virtues are ways of acquiring knowledge. By distinguishing between the conceptual or metaphysical project of analyzing knowledge from the project of identifying ways of acquiring knowledge, both formal and modal conditions and notions of epistemic virtue find a natural place. Virtues are tied closely to a particular kind of work that needs to be done in our practical lives.

In a more skeptical vein, **Tim Henning's** chapter argues that at least one important aspect of the work that needs to be done in our epistemic lives is not adequately conceptualized in terms of virtue. As he argues, we not only have an interest in *flagging good informants* but also an interest in *flagging good information*. These, Henning claims, do not come to the same thing, and some recent debates went astray due to mistaking the one for the other. Henning argues that modal conditions of safety should be understood along the latter lines. Often, what we value is not that a belief state is safely correct but that what is believed, the proposition, is *safely true*. A proposition may be safely true, given a subject's evidence, even though the subject does not reliably respond to the evidence by forming the correct belief. Still, even though the subject lacks one valuable epistemic property, the proposition in question has a different valuable epistemic property—that of not easily being false, given the evidence. Henning goes on to argue that this valuable property of propositions is important, for example, in practical reasoning. Against defenders of the knowledge norm on practical reasoning, Henning argues that any reasonable norm of this kind must be 'transparent' to the question of whether the relevant *content* of the reasoning is true. The epistemic norm should pertain not to the state of believing but to what is believed. Following discussions in recent formal semantics, Henning argues that the relevant property of propositions, and hence the correct epistemic norm on reasoning, should not be expressed in terms of knowledge (or safe belief or anything the like) but in terms of epistemic modals.

However, even if not all that we care about in the epistemic realm is adequately captured in terms of agents' states and performances, this does not mean that virtue is irrelevant. As Williams (1995, 190) stresses, the virtuous person usually does not care about which action would express her virtuous character—she responds to the relevant reasons present in her situation. Likewise, it may be argued that the epistemically virtuous agent responds

to evidence and to the relevant epistemic properties of pieces of information that they have in virtue of the evidence.

In sum, the contributions to this volume hopefully provide the reader with a fuller understanding of the interrelations between the concerns of the recent investigations into virtue epistemology, social epistemology, the value of knowledge, and the pragmatics of knowledge. It is to be hoped that there will be more attempts at combining the various strands, yielding a more unified and more differentiated understanding of the various dimensions of the practice that defines our understanding of virtuous epistemic agency.

NOTES

1. For more on these different strands, see the following (and work cited further on): On virtue epistemology, see Axtell (2000), Fairweather and Zagzebski (2001), and Brady and Pritchard (2003); on testimony, see Lackey and Sosa (2006); on pragmatic encroachment, see the monographs Stanley (2005), Hawthorne (2004), and Fantl and McGrath (2009); on the value of knowledge, see Prichard, Millar, and Haddock (2010).
2. It should be noted that the authors mentioned represent only one of the various types of virtue epistemology currently on offer. For an overview, see Greco and Turri (2011).

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