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CHARACTER IN EPISTEMOLOGY

ABSTRACT. This paper examines the claim made by certain virtue episte-
mologists that intellectual character virtues like fair-mindedness, open-
mindedness and intellectual courage merit an important and fundamental role
in epistemology. I begin by considering whether these traits merit an
important role in the analysis of knowledge. I argue that they do not and that
in fact they are unlikely to be of much relevance to any of the traditional
problems in epistemology. This presents a serious challenge for virtue epis-
temology. I go on to examine the work of two other virtue epistemologists in
light of this challenge and then sketch an alternative approach that reveals
how the intellectual virtues might merit a substantial role in epistemology
even if not a role in connection with more traditional epistemological projects.

Virtue epistemologists agree that the concept of an intellectual
virtue deserves an important and fundamental role in episte-
mology. They are divided, however, about which traits count as
intellectual virtues. 'Virtue reliabilists' conceive of an intellec-
tual virtue as (roughly) any reliable or truth-conducive property
of a person. They cite as paradigm cases of intellectual virtue
such things as memory, introspection, sense perception, and
reason. 'Virtue responsibilists', by contrast, conceive of intel-
lectual virtues as good intellectual character traits, or the traits
of a successful knower or inquirer. These include traits like fair-
mindedness, open-mindedness, intellectual attentiveness, thor-
oughness, tenacity, and courage.[1]

My concern here is with the latter set of traits and hence with
'responsibilist' rather than 'reliabilist' varieties of virtue epis-
temology.[2] I am interested in whether these traits do in fact
merit an important and fundamental role in epistemology; and
if so, just what this role is likely to amount to.

The most prominent and comprehensive version of virtue
responsibilism to date is Linda Zagzebski's. In *Virtues of the
Mind* (1996), Zagzebski appeals to the concept of an intellectual

virtue to address one of the great problems of traditional epistemology: viz., the analysis of knowledge. She argues that knowledge should be understood as true belief arising from 'acts of intellectual virtue.' For several reasons, a careful examination of Zagzebski's account of knowledge is critical to the present inquiry. First, as I will get to momentarily, Zagzebski's basic approach is likely to strike many as the most plausible and perhaps only way of giving the intellectual virtues a significant role in epistemology. Second, her defense of the claim that an exercise of intellectual virtue is an essential ingredient of knowledge is admirably careful, thorough, and sensitive to potential criticisms; it is easily the best in literature. Third, a careful examination of Zagzebski's particular account of knowledge will allow us to draw certain *general* conclusions about the epistemological role of the intellectual virtues.

The first half of the paper, then, is a detailed explication and assessment of Zagzebski's analysis of knowledge. I offer a variety of reasons for thinking that her conditions for knowledge are neither necessary nor sufficient. I also make clear why *any* attempt to give the intellectual virtues a central role in an analysis of knowledge seems bound to fail. In the second half of the paper, I consider whether there might be an alternative way of giving the intellectual virtues an important and fundamental role in epistemology. I clarify the challenge confronting such a project and evaluate the work of two other virtue responsibilists in light of it. Finally, I sketch an alternative approach that reveals how the intellectual virtues might merit a substantial role in epistemology even if not a role in connection with more traditional epistemological concerns.

1. ZAGZEBSKI ON THE NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE

The main burden of an analysis of knowledge is to give an adequate account of the justification or warrant component of knowledge (i.e., of that which, when added to true belief, makes knowledge). Justification typically is characterized in terms of certain methods of belief formation and maintenance.

Reliabilists, for instance, characterize a justified belief as one that is formed or maintained in a reliable or truth-conducive way. Evidentialists, on the other hand, maintain that a belief is justified just in case it is formed or maintained on the basis of good grounds or evidence.[3] The exercise of intellectual character traits like fair-mindedness and intellectual tenacity can reasonably be understood as ways of forming and maintaining beliefs. Therefore it is not unreasonable to think that if these traits are to occupy an important role in epistemology, it is likely to be in terms of an analysis of knowledge, and specifically, an analysis of justification or warrant.[4]

Zagzebski's *Virtues of the Mind* is the first major attempt to locate the concept of an intellectual virtue (understood as a *character* trait[5]) at the heart of an analysis of knowledge. It has done a great deal to place virtue responsibilism – and virtue epistemology in general – on the epistemological map. The impact of *Virtues of the Mind* is understandable, not merely because it makes an interesting innovation in the analysis of knowledge, but also because it includes penetrating discussions of other important epistemological positions and problems (e.g., reliabilism, the Gettier problem, and the internalism/ externalism debate).[6] As already noted, the epistemological thrust of *Virtues of the Mind* is a defense of the view that knowledge is true belief arising from 'acts of intellectual virtue' (271). 'Act of intellectual virtue' is largely a term of art, an understanding of which requires looking carefully at Zagzebski's general account of virtue.

1.1. *Zagzebski on the Nature of a Virtue*

Zagzebski defines a virtue as 'a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end' (1996, p. 137). There are two main parts to this definition. The first indicates that Zagzebski is thinking of virtues as admirable traits of character and not as mere reliable faculties or powers. The second part of the definition states that when a person possesses a virtue, he possesses a *motivation*

characteristic of that virtue to bring about a certain end and is reliably *successful* at bringing about this end. For instance, a genuinely compassionate person is motivated to alleviate the suffering of others and is reliably successful at doing so.

Zagzebski defines a motivation as a 'disposition or tendency to have a certain motive' and a motive as 'an action-initiating and directing emotion' (134). Accordingly, to possess a virtue, a person must be disposed to have an emotion that initiates and guides action toward an end characteristic of that virtue. Again, a compassionate person is disposed to have characteristically compassionate emotions that lead her to be concerned with and to seek to reduce the suffering of others.[7]

To distinguish intellectual virtues from moral virtues, Zagzebski specifies an ultimate aim unique to each. She says the ultimate aim of an intellectual virtue is 'cognitive contact of reality' (167). This includes the ends of truth, knowledge, and understanding. While Zagzebski is not very specific about the ultimate aim or end of moral virtues, it can be assumed that it is something other than 'cognitive contact with reality.'[8]

Zagzebski distinguishes between individual intellectual virtues by ascribing a 'proximate' or 'immediate' aim to each. The immediate aim of an open-minded person, for example, is to consider the plausibility of others' views even when they conflict with her own. The immediate aim of an intellectually courageous person is to hold fast to her well-supported beliefs in the face of pressure to abandon them. These immediate aims, Zagzebski says, are grounded in the ultimate aim of 'cognitive contact with reality' in that an intellectually virtuous person is led to care about and adopt the former because she possesses the latter. Such a person might, for instance, seek to treat others' views fairly or to persevere with an inquiry in the face of certain obstacles *out of* an interest in reaching the truth, acquiring knowledge, and so forth (181).

1.2. *Zagzebski's Definition of Knowledge*

We are now in a position to examine Zagzebski's definition of an 'act of intellectual virtue':

An act is an *act of intellectual virtue I* just in case it arises from the motivation component of *I*, is something a person with *I* would characteristically do in the circumstances, and is successful in leading to the immediate end of *I* and to the truth because of these features of the act. (2000a, p. 175)[9]

Thus a person who performs an act of, say, intellectual fair-mindedness (i) possesses the motive characteristic of fair-mindedness, (ii) does what a fair-minded person would do in the circumstances, (iii) achieves the immediate end characteristic of fair-mindedness, and (iv) reaches the truth as a result.

Several observations about Zagzebski's account of knowledge are in order. First, by claiming that a person performs an act of intellectual virtue only if she reaches the truth 'because of' the other features of the act, Zagzebski intends to rule out cases in which a person gets to the truth only or primarily by chance.[10] To perform an act of intellectual virtue, a person must reach the truth, not by chance or good luck, but rather through or as a result of her virtuous motives and actions.[11]

Second, careful attention to Zagzebski's initial definition of knowledge reveals a certain redundancy. We have seen that an act of intellectual virtue *by definition* involves reaching the truth. It is therefore redundant to describe knowledge as a state of *true* belief arising from acts of intellectual virtue. The more succinct rendering, as Zagzebski herself goes on to point out, is that knowledge is simply *belief* arising out of acts of intellectual virtue (where it is built into the very notion of an act of intellectual virtue that the belief in question is true) (1996, p. 271).[12]

Third, Zagzebski's account of knowledge does not require that knowers actually *be* intellectually virtuous. For instance, a person of rather mediocre intellectual character might, in a rare moment of intellectual inspiration, possess certain intellectually virtuous motives, perform the corresponding virtuous actions, and reach the truth as a result. In doing so, he would satisfy the conditions for an act of intellectual virtue even though the virtue or virtues in question are not 'entrenched' or stable parts of his intellectual character.[13]

The following example illustrates what knowledge might amount to in a given case for Zagzebski. Imagine a medical

researcher investigating the genetic foundation of a certain disease. As she conducts her research, she exemplifies the motives characteristic of the intellectual virtues of carefulness, thoroughness, fair-mindedness, and intellectual tenacity. She also acts in the manner of one who has these virtues: she examines all the relevant data carefully and in great detail and refrains from cutting any corners; when she encounters information that conflicts with her expectations, she deals with it in a direct, honest, and unbiased way; in the face of repeated intellectual obstacles, she perseveres in her search for the truth. Over time, this leads to a successful inquiry, as the researcher eventually identifies the sought after gene.

The researcher's belief arises from acts of a variety of intellectual virtues: she exhibits the motives characteristic of carefulness, thoroughness, fair-mindedness, and intellectual tenacity, achieves the proximate aims of these virtues, and eventually reaches the truth as a result. On Zagzebski's view, the researcher thereby *knows* that the discovered gene is the foundation of the disease in question.

2. ARE ZAGZEBSKI'S CONDITIONS FOR KNOWLEDGE SUFFICIENT?

We may begin evaluating Zagzebski's account of knowledge by considering whether her conditions for knowledge are sufficient. I discuss four separate reasons for thinking they are not.

2.1. *The Problem of Fleeting Processes*

John Greco (2000) has argued that Zagzebski's account of knowledge is susceptible to a version of the 'fleeting processes' objection commonly raised against reliabilism. Reliabilists hold that knowledge is (roughly) true belief arrived at in a reliable or truth-conducive way. One objection to this view is that a person might reach the truth via a reliable process, but one that is instantiated only fleetingly or momentarily. In such cases, the objection goes, the person cannot be said to know.[14]

Greco argues that Zagzebski's account of knowledge is susceptible to a similar objection. As already noted, Zagzebski allows that a person might perform acts of intellectual virtue and thereby acquire knowledge without actually possessing any of the relevant intellectual virtues. Greco raises the following objection regarding such cases:

On a particular occasion one might do 'something a person with virtue A would (probably) do in the circumstances', and yet possess no disposition to act this way in general. Even if we grant that acting in the specified way is highly reliable, the agent herself would not be reliable. She would possess no disposition to act in the reliable way, and therefore would not have knowledge on the rare occasion she does act that way. (183)

Zagzebski offers the following reply to Greco:

Can an agent satisfy my definition of knowledge without reaching the minimal degree of reliability necessary for knowledge? To perform an act of intellectual virtue in my sense the agent must be motivated to get the truth and to be open-minded, intellectually fair, careful, thorough, etc. She must do what persons who really do possess those virtues characteristically do in her epistemic circumstances. And she must get to the truth because of these acts and their motives. Does that rule out the kind of accidentality that worries Greco? I think that it rules out the cases he mentions in which the agent adopts a cognitively successful process fleetingly. That is because an act of virtue must get to the truth not only because of the process, but also because of the motive. (2000b, p. 210)

Zagzebski is right that Greco seems to focus exclusively on the possibility that a person might *act* in a manner characteristic of intellectual virtue in a merely fleeting or momentary way. He does not comment on what *motives* this person might have. In response to Greco, Zagzebski seems to claim that once we acknowledge that performing acts of intellectual virtue requires, not merely the performance of virtuous actions, but also the instantiation of virtuous motives, the worry about fleeting processes disappears.

But why should this be the case? After all a person might also possess the *motives* characteristic of intellectual virtue in a merely fleeting or momentary way. Consider Greco's example of an unreliable math student who happens to adopt a correct algorithm to solve a certain equation (2000, p. 183). Suppose

the correct application of the algorithm requires that the student be genuinely concerned and motivated to solve the equation. The student might (out of, say, a momentary surge of intellectual enthusiasm due to a recent high score on an exam) also happen to embody these motives, which in turn might contribute to his solving the equation. In this case, the student apparently would satisfy all of Zagzebski's conditions for knowledge. Therefore her account of knowledge is susceptible to Greco's basic objection.[15]

2.2. The Gettier Problem

The Gettier problem is the most familiar challenge in contemporary epistemology to any set of allegedly sufficient conditions for knowledge. While Zagzebski takes pains to show that her view is immune to this problem, careful consideration reveals that it is not.

Zagzebski observes that in Gettier-style cases 'an accident of bad luck is canceled out by an accident of good luck' (1996, p. 284). Suppose, for instance, that near the middle of the day I look at the highly reliable clock in my kitchen and find that it reads five minutes past 12. I form the belief that it is five past 12 and this belief is true. Unknown to me, however, the clock unexpectedly malfunctioned exactly twelve hours prior, at 12:05 AM. While I am justified in believing that it is 12:05 and this belief is true, I cannot be said to *know* that it is 12:05. On Zagzebski's reading of this case, I am unlucky because my typically reliable clock has malfunctioned, thereby setting me up to be deceived. I turn out not to be deceived, however, thanks to a stroke of good luck: viz., the fact that my clock happens at present to read accurately.

Zagzebski explains that what opens the door to this kind of luck is a break or gap between the justification or warrant condition of knowledge and the truth condition. On most accounts of knowledge, it is possible to have a justified or warranted *false* belief: one's being justified or warranted in believing a given claim does not *guarantee* that one's belief is true. But according to Zagzebski, this gap between the

justification and truth conditions of knowledge is what makes most accounts of knowledge susceptible to Gettier counterexamples. As she puts it: 'Since justification does not guarantee truth, it is possible for there to be a break in the connection between justification and truth but for that connection to be regained by chance' (1996, p. 284).

According to Zagzebski, the only way around this problem is to 'close the gap' between justification and truth. Her notion of an act of intellectual virtue does precisely this. To perform an act of intellectual virtue, a person must exhibit certain intellectual motives, perform certain actions, *and form a true belief* as a result. Forming a true belief is part of what it *is* to perform an act of intellectual virtue. In this way, the justification or warrant condition for knowledge turns out to entail the truth condition.

But this does not entirely safeguard Zagzebski's view from Gettier-style counterexamples. Imagine a scholar of medieval literature whose character is marked predominantly by the virtues of open-mindedness and intellectual humility. As such, he is very open to the views of others, is ready and willing to listen sympathetically to arguments and positions that conflict with his own, does not overestimate his own intellectual ability, and does not favor his own views simply because they are his. Suppose the scholar is trying to ascertain the authorship of a certain obscure work of 14th century English mysticism. He has examined all of the relevant secondary literature and the majority of the evidence supports an attribution to a certain male author. Wanting to gain further objectivity on the matter, he decides to consult several of his colleagues. But unknown to the scholar, these colleagues have recently come under the influence of a certain radical religious thinker according to whom men are spiritually impoverished and incapable of genuine mystical experience. When the scholar queries them about the authorship of the relevant text, they respond with confidence that the author was not a man and that the scholar surely has misunderstood or misinterpreted the relevant historical data. After thinking further about the matter and weighing the various considerations, the scholar, out of an earnest openness to his

colleagues' views and a keen awareness of his own fallibility, is drawn to believe that he must be mistaken and that the author of the text in question is a woman. As it turns out, he is right.

The scholar's belief seems clearly to satisfy Zagzebski's conditions for knowledge: he possesses intellectually virtuous motives, acts in a manner characteristic of these virtues, achieves their immediate ends, and reaches the truth as a result. And yet it seems equally clear that the scholar does not *know* that the author in question is a woman. This is due in part to the presence of more or less the same kind of double stroke of luck that Zagzebski tries to rule out. The scholar is epistemically unlucky in that, unknown to him, his colleagues have adopted certain implausible views which make them an unreliable source of information about the matter at hand. Yet this stroke of bad luck is canceled out by a stroke of good luck since in this case his colleagues happen to be right.

We may conclude that Zagzebski's criteria for knowledge are not sufficient. They fail to rule out a certain kind of luck involved with reaching the truth that is incompatible with knowledge.

2.3. *Two Additional Objections*

There are at least two additional reasons for doubting that Zagzebski's criteria are sufficient for knowledge, both of which are suggested by the case of the medievalist. Consider, first, how a reliabilist might assess this case. In addition to the objection just considered, the reliabilist is likely to argue that the scholar's belief is not warranted or justified in the first place on the grounds that this belief is formed in an unreliable way. A person who is guided in her inquiries and beliefs *merely* by the virtues of open-mindedness and intellectual humility is likely to be led astray in various ways. Among other things, she is likely to underestimate the epistemic credibility of her own views and to be insufficiently critical of the views of others. From a reliabilist standpoint, then, beliefs formed via such processes will be unjustified and thus fail to count as knowledge.

A second and analogous objection is likely to be raised by an internalist who believes that knowledge requires the possession of good grounds or evidence. It was stipulated that the majority of the scholar's evidence regarding the authorship of the relevant text points to a certain male author. The scholar therefore lacks sufficient evidence for his belief that the author was a woman. Accordingly, the internalist will judge that the scholar fails to acquire knowledge, and hence that Zagzebski's conditions for knowledge are not sufficient.

2.4. *A Possible Amendment to Zagzebski's View*

Before turning to consider whether Zagzebski's conditions for knowledge are necessary, let us examine a possible amendment to her view that might guard it against three of the four objections just discussed. In the example we have been considering, the scholar's main shortcoming seems to be that he is *merely* open-minded and intellectually humble. He fails to exercise other intellectual virtues that clearly are relevant to his situation, virtues like sensitivity to evidence, intellectual autonomy, and tenacity of belief. This underscores a certain 'unity' among the intellectual virtues: it shows that the intellectual virtues must be exercised in groups if their exercise is to be viewed as an essential feature of knowledge. To accommodate this point, Zagzebski might constrain her analysis by claiming that knowledge is belief arising from acts of the full *range* of intellectual virtues relevant to the situation.

With this revision to her view, Zagzebski apparently could escape Gettier counter-examples like the one just considered. Had the medievalist exercised the full range of relevant intellectual virtues, he presumably would have formed a false belief about the matter in question: while listening openly to his colleagues and being mindful of his own intellectual fallibility, he would have maintained his well-reasoned (albeit false) judgment that the religious text should be attributed to the relevant male author. If so, then despite his virtuous motives, he would have failed to form a true belief, and thereby failed to acquire knowledge. This amendment might also allay the

reliabilist's worry that a person could satisfy Zagzebski's conditions for knowledge while reaching the truth in an unreliable way. For while inquiring or believing in a merely open-minded or intellectually humble way is not reliable, doing so in a manner that exemplifies the full range of intellectual virtues presumably *would* be reliable.[16] Finally, this constraint might safeguard Zagzebski's view from the internalist complaint that her criteria can be satisfied by someone who lacks good reasons or evidence. Had the scholar displayed all of the relevant intellectual virtues, he presumably would have believed in accordance with the preponderance of evidence, which again supported an attribution to a certain male author. In doing so, he would have formed a false belief and therefore failed to satisfy Zagzebski's conditions.

This amendment to Zagzebski's account of knowledge, while perhaps safeguarding it against three of the foregoing objections, fails to defend it against the fleeting processes objection. Moreover, it gives rise to new and complicated questions: for instance, how are we to understand the notion of a virtue's being 'relevant' to a given situation? Furthermore, because the amendment requires knowers to perform acts and possess motives characteristic of an entire *range* of intellectual virtues, would it not make Zagzebski's conditions overly demanding and hence problematic when it comes to considering whether they are *necessary* for knowledge?

3. ARE ZAGZEBSKI'S CONDITIONS FOR KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY?

We have seen that there are some forceful though perhaps not entirely conclusive reasons for doubting that Zagzebski's conditions for knowledge are sufficient. I turn now to consider whether they are necessary. While Zagzebski's account of knowledge does not require that knowers actually be intellectually virtuous, it still demands a good deal. Indeed, there appear to be a variety of cases in which a person acquires knowledge but fails to satisfy Zagzebski's conditions.

3.1. *The Idiot Savant*

One possible case of this sort is discussed by Greco:

Consider a cognitive agent who never engages in Zagzebski-type acts of intellectual virtue. He never manifests the characteristic motivations of these virtues, and is never successful at bringing about their characteristic ends. For example, he never engages in acts that would be considered fair-minded, open-minded, careful or thorough. However, suppose that despite all this the person is highly reliable in making correct judgments in certain important domains; he is almost never wrong in these areas of his expertise, and in fact outperforms other, more open-minded, fair-minded, careful and thorough persons. It seems to me that such a person does not lack knowledge for lack of Zagzebski-type virtuous acts. Rather, he acquires knowledge in some other way. (2000, p. 182)

It is difficult to know how to assess this case since the details of the agent's state of mind are not developed in any detail. But it certainly resembles cases like that of an *idiot savant* who exhibits remarkable cognitive accuracy within a certain domain but has no real sense of how he arrives at these beliefs or of why they are true or likely to be true. If this is how we are to interpret the case, then those who share the intuition that the *idiot savant* has knowledge will likely find this a convincing counterexample to Zagzebski's view.

But the epistemic status of an *idiot savant's* beliefs is questionable. Indeed, several epistemologists have claimed that the idiot savant clearly does *not* have knowledge. Zagzebski herself, for example, is happy to deny that the agent described by Greco has knowledge: 'Here we seem to have a clash of intuitions … for I am not at all inclined to say that the *idiot savant* has knowledge. Mere machine-like reliability in getting to the truth is not sufficient for knowledge. So I would not hesitate to say that the cognitive agent Greco describes … does not have knowledge' (2000b, p. 208). Greco's objection therefore has limited force.

3.2. *Ordinary Perceptual Knowledge*

This does not place Zagzebski's view in the clear, however, for there are a variety of other, less controversial cases in which

a person appears to acquire knowledge but fails to satisfy Zagzebski's conditions. These include some of the most familiar and seemingly straightforward cases of knowledge, for instance, cases of basic perceptual knowledge.[17]

Consider my belief that the lamp in the corner of the room is presently turned on. Few would doubt that I know this; yet in forming this belief, I would not appear to exemplify any virtuous intellectual motives: I simply look toward the relevant part of the room and see that the lamp is turned on. And in doing so, I come to know that it is on.

Zagzebski's response to cases like this would likely be as follows.[18] To know that the lamp is turned on, I must in some sense *seek out the truth* about the state of affairs in question: I must, say, *desire* to know whether the lamp is on and must *bring myself* to look at it. While this does not involve very much on my part, Zagzebski might say that I do exhibit certain low-level virtue motives, for example, the motives characteristic of attentiveness and inquisitiveness. Contrary to initial appearances, then, it might be said that I do perform an act of intellectual virtue and thus do satisfy Zagzebski's conditions for knowledge.

Suppose for a moment that I do exhibit the kind of motives in question. At least three problems remain. The first is related to Zagzebski's claim that a motive is a certain kind of *emotion*, albeit not one that must be 'felt' by its possessor. While I may in some sense seek to discover the truth about whether the lamp is turned on, my motivation to do so would not appear to be an emotion. To support her analysis of this case, Zagzebski would need to rework her conception of a 'motive' such that possessing a motive does not necessarily require having an emotion.[19]

Second, we saw above that to perform an act of intellectual virtue, a person must reach the truth *through* the instantiation of certain motives and actions characteristic of intellectual virtue; more specifically, these motives and actions must provide the 'best explanation' for why the person reaches the truth.[20] But in the case we are considering, whatever low-level motives I might be said to possess (even when combined with my turning to look at the lamp, etc.) do *not* constitute the best

explanation for why I form a true belief. While these things may enter into an exhaustive explanation, it is the routine operation of one of my cognitive *faculties* that most saliently accounts for why I reach the truth: I do so primarily because my visual apparatus functions properly, generating a certain visual experience and a corresponding true belief. It follows that I do not satisfy Zagzebski's conditions for knowledge.

A third problem arises in connection with Zagzebski's claim that an act of intellectual virtue necessarily involves doing what a virtuous person would *characteristically* do in similar circumstances. While it may be true that an intellectually virtuous person would not act any differently than I do in the situation, it seems mistaken to think that in doing so he would be acting *as* an intellectually virtuous person, for there does not appear to be anything particularly *virtuous* about acting in this way.

Zagzebski disagrees with this assessment. She comments:

> How does a person of intellectual virtue act when it comes to forming beliefs based on sense experience or memory?... [W]e would assume that most of the time she does not doubt or even reflectively consider her perceptual or memory beliefs. She does not because she maintains a presumption of truth in such cases until she is given reason to think otherwise. Such an attitude is itself an intellectually virtuous one; to act otherwise is to exhibit a form of intellectual paranoia. (1996, p. 280)

This seems to represent a departure from some of Zagzebski's initial comments about the nature of an intellectual virtue. As noted above, Zagzebski thinks of the motivations and actions characteristic of the various intellectual virtues as arising from a deeper motivation to reach the truth. An intellectually virtuous person is led to evaluate evidence carefully, consider counterexamples, persevere in inquiry, and so forth, out of a desire to reach the truth.

But does a desire to reach the truth result in a presumptive trust in one's own perceptual and memorial beliefs? This depends on how Zagzebski is thinking about the nature of this trust. If she means that an intellectually virtuous person is entirely unconcerned with, say, the possibility that he is dreaming or is the victim of a Cartesian demon, then she would appear to

be mistaken. Indeed, a case can be made for thinking that a person might be led to consider certain skeptical scenarios at least partly *because* he is intellectually virtuous.[21] Zagzebski's point is more likely that an intellectually virtuous person will not *in ordinary circumstances* be prone to doubt or be 'paranoid' about the deliverances of his senses or other cognitive faculties. But again, while this is true, the attitude in question does not seem particularly *virtuous* at all. An intellectually virtuous person does not *as such* trust her senses in the relevant circumstances; this is rather something that any minimally reasonable or sane person can be expected to do.[22]

Zagzebski fails to show that trusting the deliverances of one's cognitive faculties is characteristic of intellectual virtue. Therefore, a person who does so in cases of, say, basic perceptual knowledge fails to satisfy the conditions for an act of intellectual virtue. We may conclude that there are certain clear instances of knowledge that fail to satisfy Zagzebski's conditions.

3.3. *Passive Knowledge*

We have been assuming that in cases of perceptual knowledge like the one just discussed, the subject has some inclination or motivation to reach the truth. But even if Zagzebski were able to rework her account of an act of intellectual virtue to deal with the objections just considered, there remain other putative instances of knowledge that provide decisive grounds for thinking that her conditions for knowledge are not necessary.

These are cases in which a person is more or less *passive* in the acquisition of knowledge. Suppose, for instance, that as I sit working at my desk late one night, the electricity suddenly shuts off, causing the room immediately to go dark. I will, as a result, *automatically* or *spontaneously* form a belief to the effect that the lighting in the room has changed. This belief will simply 'come over me', as it were, regardless of what my intellectual motives happen to be at that moment.

Cases of this general sort in fact are common. They involve situations in which a person forms a true belief at least

primarily as a result of the mere proper functioning of her cognitive faculties. While reaching the truth sometimes requires having certain motives or performing certain acts, such items are conspicuously absent in these cases. Consequently, they present a formidable problem for Zagzebski's account of knowledge.

3.4. *Conclusion*

We have looked closely at the details of Zagzebski's account of knowledge and have encountered a variety of reasons for thinking that her conditions for knowledge are neither necessary nor sufficient. This discussion also licenses a general conclusion about the prospects of *any* virtue responsibilist account of knowledge. Virtue responsibilists maintain that the intellectual virtues merit an important and fundamental role in epistemology. Therefore, any account of knowledge worthy of the 'virtue responsibilist' label presumably will require knowers to exercise certain intellectual virtues (or something close to this). We have seen, however, that certain cases of knowledge lack this component. An exercise of intellectual virtue makes certain requirements of agents *qua* agents: it requires that we think, deliberate, choose, etc., in a certain way. But in the cases in question, a known belief is generated by the more or less spontaneous or natural functioning of a person's cognitive faculties – *not* as a result of the relevant kind of agential or characterological activity. It follows, then, that *any* account of knowledge that makes an exercise of an intellectual virtue a necessary condition for knowledge is fatally flawed.

4. PROSPECTS FOR A RESPONSIBILIST EPISTEMOLOGY

The discussion thus far has revealed that the intellectual virtues, conceived as traits of intellectual character, should not be given a central role in an analysis of knowledge. But neither, it seems, are they likely to be helpful for addressing any of the other traditional or mainstream questions in epistemology. The

foundationalist/coherentist debate, the internalism/externalism debate, and the Gettier Problem, for example, are concerned with the nature or structure of knowledge as such, that is, with certain *essential* features of knowledge. But since an exercise of intellectual virtue is not an essential feature of knowledge, it is unclear how reflection on the intellectual virtues could be of much use in dealing with any of these issues. Skepticism is another venerable epistemological problem. The skeptic doubts whether we can really know anything at all; or, more perspicuously, whether we can have any nonquestion-begging or noncircular reasons for thinking that any of our beliefs are true. But what of significance could reflection on the intellectual *character* of cognitive agents tell us about the inherent limits of our epistemic *grounds*?[23] Finally, it is difficult to see how a consideration of intellectual virtue could be useful for addressing the questions at the center of the debate between empiricists and rationalists, and principally, the question of whether anything is knowable independently of experience or on the basis of pure thought or reason.

All of this would appear to bode very poorly for the virtue responsibilist's claim that the intellectual virtues merit an important and fundamental role in epistemology. It suggests that, with regard to the central aims and questions of epistemology, matters of intellectual character and virtue are of little consequence.

Is there any way around this conclusion? Indeed there may be. Note, first, that the conclusion follows only on the assumption that the full range of questions and issues relevant to epistemology is exhausted by *traditional* issues and questions like those mentioned above. But how plausible is this assumption? Why not think that there are or at least may be *other* issues and questions neglected by traditional epistemology an exploration of which would require an appeal to intellectual virtue? Why not think, for example, that there are substantive issues and questions concerning the intellectual virtues *themselves*?

This suggests a certain hope and challenge for virtue responsibilism. It suggests that while the intellectual virtues are not very relevant to traditional epistemological projects, they might still merit an important role in epistemology proper. The

idea is that there might be substantive questions and issues concerning the intellectual virtues which, while separate from traditional epistemological questions, nevertheless are the proper subject matter of epistemology. The challenge for the virtue responsibilist, then, is to identify such questions and issues. In the remainder of the paper, I briefly consider how two other approaches to virtue epistemology fare with regard to this challenge. I then outline an alternative approach.

4.1. *Lorraine Code*

Lorraine Code (1987) was one of the first contemporary philosophers to appeal to the notion of an intellectual virtue in an epistemological context. She clearly thinks of intellectual virtues as states of intellectual character (44) and thinks they should be a major focus of epistemological inquiry (2–3). Moreover, she does not aim to give the intellectual virtues a central role in connection with traditional epistemological problems like the analysis of knowledge; she seems, in fact, to be skeptical about such projects (63–64; 253). Code's concern is rather with the personal, communal, and social dimensions of the cognitive life. She is interested, for instance, in how the particularities of one's cognitive character and place within a community of knowers can affect one's overall cognitive well-being (37–67; 166–197).

The problem with Code's approach is that it fails to specify a set of substantive philosophical issues and questions related to the intellectual virtues that might warrant giving them an important role in epistemology. Instead, much of Code's discussion is concerned with issues that are not immediately relevant to the intellectual virtues[24] or is so general or obviously correct that it leaves little room for objection or further discussion.[25] The following two passages are characteristic:[26]

Intellectual virtue is, above all, a matter of orientation toward the world, toward one's knowledge-seeking self, and toward other such selves as part of the world. Central to it is a sort of openness to how things are: a respect for the normative force of 'realism.' This attitude involves a willingness to let

things speak for themselves, a kind of humility toward the experienced world that curbs any excessive desire to impose one's cognitive structurings upon it. Intellectual honesty consists in a finely tuned balancing of these two factors, in cultivating an appropriate interplay between self and world. (20)

How, then, are we to delineate more precisely the nature of intellectually virtuous character? ... Intellectually virtuous persons value knowing and understanding how things really are. They resist the temptation to live with partial explanations where fuller ones are attainable; they resist the temptation to live in fantasy or in a world of dream or illusion, considering it better to know, despite the tempting comfort and complacency a life of fantasy or illusion (or one well tinged with fantasy or illusion) can offer. (58–59)

This level and kind of analysis, while seemingly accurate as far as it goes, does little to suggest that deeper reflection on matters of intellectual virtue is called for or is likely to be very philosophically interesting or fruitful. The problem is that Code's discussion of the nature and significance of intellectual virtue fails to move beyond this level. It fails to identify or suggest the sorts of issues or questions that further philosophical inquiry into matters of intellectual virtue might uncover. Consequently, it fails to substantiate the claim that the intellectual virtues merit an important role in theoretical epistemology.[27]

4.2. James Montmarquet

A rather different treatment of the intellectual virtues is offered by James Montmarquet (1993). Montmarquet arrives at an interest in the intellectual virtues by way of a prior concern with the basis of moral responsibility. He is concerned specifically with cases in which an agent is blameworthy for an action that from the agent's own perspective is morally justified, e.g., the unjust treatment of the members of a certain race by a person who genuinely believes these individuals to be inferior. According to Montmarquet, such people can be blamed for their actions only if they can be blamed for the beliefs that permit them.

Montmarquet appeals to the notion of intellectual virtue to elucidate the concept of epistemic responsibility just indicated. He says that an agent can escape moral blame for a wrong action only if the agent's beliefs that license that action are attributable to an exercise of intellectual virtue, where the intellectual virtues are understood as traits of intellectual character. Beliefs that satisfy this condition, he claims, are epistemically *justified* in a certain subjective sense (99). Thus, for example, since the racist's beliefs presumably do not result from an exercise of intellectual virtue (but rather from an exercise of intellectual *vices* like narrow-mindedness, intellectual slavishness, etc.), these beliefs are unjustified and so the racist is reasonably blamed for his racist behavior.

Montmarquet's discussion is more successful than Code's at identifying and engaging substantive philosophical questions related to intellectual virtue. Most of these questions surround the connections he discusses between moral and doxastic responsibility. For instance, is it right to think that, in the cases mentioned above, a person can be blamed for his wrong action only if he can be blamed for the beliefs that led to that action? Is it right to think that we are ever (as Montmarquet claims we are) *directly* responsible for our beliefs? Or are we instead responsible only for, say, the actions that lead up to or cause our beliefs? Assuming we are sometimes directly responsible for our beliefs, to what *extent* is this the case? And does direct doxastic responsibility not entail an implausible doxastic voluntarism? These are some of several challenging philosophical questions that Montmarquet identifies and discusses.

But Montmarquet's discussion still does not amount to a very convincing case for the idea that the intellectual virtues should be given an important role in epistemology.[28] First, some of the more interesting and challenging questions he addresses have at best only indirect relevance to matters of intellectual virtue. This is the case for the questions just noted concerning the nature and extent of doxastic responsibility and doxastic voluntarism. These questions can be articulated and answered without any immediate reference to the notion of intellectual virtue; indeed, this notion does not even figure

prominently into Montmarquet's initial answers: it is only after answering several of them without appealing to intellectual virtue that Montmarquet then goes on to define the relevant kind of doxastic responsibility in terms of virtuously formed or maintained belief. Second, where Montmarquet does address matters of intellectual virtue in a more explicit way, a good deal of his discussion seems proper to *ethics* rather than to epistemology. Recall that what leads Montmarquet to discuss the intellectual virtues in the first place is an interest in the basis of *moral* responsibility. While he does proceed to offer a virtue-based account of *epistemic* justification, he is quick to point out that this kind or sense of justification should not be confused with the kind of analysis that has traditionally occupied epistemologists. (Were Montmarquet to claim otherwise, his account of justification would have severe problems, for as we saw with Zagzebski, an exercise of intellectual virtue simply is not a necessary ingredient of justification in any traditional sense.) Thus, while Montmarquet does identify certain philosophical issues relevant to intellectual virtue, they do not appear to have significant implications for the content or direction of epistemology.

There is, however, at least one notable exception to this assessment. In a chapter titled 'Epistemic Virtue', Montmarquet addresses the question of what exactly makes a given trait an epistemic or intellectual virtue. One of the more intriguing parts of this discussion concerns the reliability or truth-conduciveness of the intellectual virtues, and specifically, the question of whether reliability is a defining characteristic of intellectual virtue. Montmarquet argues that it is not. He claims instead that something is an intellectual virtue just in case it is a quality that 'a truth-desiring person, given the general conditions that *appear* to obtain in the world, would want to have' (30). Montmarquet's position on this issue is fairly complicated and I cannot stop here to examine it. He does, however, offer a lengthy and at least prima facie plausible defense of the idea that reliability itself (as opposed, say, to a reasonable appearance of reliability) is not a defining feature of intellectual virtue. This is a controversial position, since many would and in fact

have claimed that it is precisely actual reliability or truth-conduciveness that makes something an intellectual virtue.[29]

My overall assessment of Montmarquet's discussion, then, is that it does identify at least one substantive philosophical problem (or cluster of problems) concerning the intellectual virtues that is reasonably viewed as the proper subject matter of epistemology. But this still falls short of showing that the intellectual virtues warrant a substantial role in epistemology. To support this claim, a *variety* of substantive issues and questions concerning the intellectual virtues would need to be identified.

4.3. *An Alternative Approach*

The challenge just noted cannot, of course, be met in a fully satisfactory way within the limits of the present paper. But in this final section, I begin to address it by briefly identifying and discussing a fairly broad spectrum of issues and questions concerning the intellectual virtues that might properly be examined within epistemology.[30]

It is reasonable to think that if reflection on the intellectual virtues is to occupy an important position in epistemology, this will be due to the fact that when we attempt to get a handle on things like (a) the *nature* of the intellectual virtues and (b) their *contribution* to a good intellectual life, we find that there is interesting philosophical work to be done in connection with these topics. I begin with a discussion of (b).

It may seem a truism that a person with virtuous intellectual character is more likely than one with mediocre or vicious intellectual character to have a good intellectual life. Thus it may seem that there is likely to be little of philosophical or epistemological interest to be pursued in connection with this fact. But closer inspection reveals otherwise. For instance, in what sense do the intellectual virtues 'contribute' to a good intellectual life? Are they simply a *means* to such a life (e.g., a means to other cognitive values like knowledge and under-standing)?[31] Or are they also partly *constitutive* of a good intellectual life?[32] That they are not a mere means is suggested

by the fact that we tend to value these traits at least partly for their own sake. But then how or in what sense do the intellectual virtues (partly) 'constitute' a good intellectual life? These questions lead to others concerning the value and structure of intellectual virtue. I will return to some of these questions below.

Challenging questions also emerge in connection with the apparently straightforward idea that the intellectual virtues are a *means* to other cognitive goods like knowledge and understanding. First, which parts or aspects of the intellectual virtues contribute to their reliability and how do they do so? How, for instance, are the cognitive and affective elements of an intellectual virtue (e.g., certain beliefs and desires) related such that a person who instantiates them is thereby more likely to acquire true beliefs, form an adequate understanding, and so forth? A second and more complicated set of questions emerges when we consider some of the *limitations* on the reliability of the intellectual virtues. Note that when we consider the intellectual virtues by themselves (taken either individually or as group), their cognitive worth appears questionable. For instance, if one possesses just a single virtue like open-mindedness or intellectual tenacity, it is unlikely that one will thereby be more likely to get to the truth and avoid error. Similarly, if one possesses the full range of intellectual virtues, but is blind or deaf, has a deteriorating memory, lives in an epistemically impoverished culture or historical period, or is the victim of a Cartesian demon, then one's intellectual character also is unlikely to reap many cognitive benefits. This suggests that to get a handle on the sense in which the intellectual virtues are a reliable means to cognitive flourishing, the following sorts of questions must be addressed: How do the individual virtues interrelate or cooperate to make their possessor more likely to reach the truth or acquire knowledge? How is the reliability of the intellectual virtues dependent on other cognitive qualities and resources, e.g., properly functioning faculties, talents, and skills? How do things like intellectual virtues and skills differ from each other and how are they related such that together they are helpful for reaching the truth? What kind of environment or other external

conditions are essential to the reliability of the intellectual virtues?[33]

In light of the ways that the intellectual virtues are dependent on and related to each other and to various cognitive faculties, skills, etc., important questions also arise concerning the very application of the concepts of reliability and virtue. First, if the traits in question are helpful for reaching the truth only when possessed in conjunction with certain faculties and skills, then are the intellectual virtues, even when considered as a whole, in fact reliable? Or does reliability instead supervene only on certain *combinations* of character traits, faculties, skills, etc.? Second, if the relevant character traits, when considered individually, are not reliable, then why should we think of them as intellectual *virtues* at all? Are they not instead mere *parts* of intellectual virtue, that is, parts of an overall condition of intellectual character which alone merits the label 'intellectual virtue'? And even this may not go far enough. For as we just noted, the relevant character traits are helpful for reaching the truth only if possessed in conjunction, not merely with other such traits, but also with other cognitive abilities and resources. So should we think of the notion of an intellectual virtue as applying only to certain combinations of character traits *and* faculties, skills, talents, etc.? This represents a substantial departure from how we ordinarily think and speak about the intellectual virtues; but it should now be evident how reflection on the reliability of these traits might lead us to this conclusion.[34]

For ease of discussion, let us continue to refer to the character traits in question as intellectual virtues. Reflection on the ways that the intellectual virtues are a means to various cognitive ends also gives rise to questions about the ends themselves. For instance, what is the *range* of cognitive ends to which the intellectual virtues are an effective means? Does their effectiveness vary from end to end (e.g., from knowledge to understanding to wisdom)? Are certain virtues directed at certain distinctive ends and others at other ends (e.g., some at knowledge and others at understanding or wisdom)? Or are all intellectual virtues directed at single, unified end (e.g., Zagzebski's 'cognitive contact with reality')?

These, then, are a variety of questions and issues concerned mainly with the *contribution* of the intellectual virtues to the quality of one's intellectual life that might reasonably be pursued from a philosophical – and decidedly *epistemological* – standpoint. I turn now to consider several questions regarding point (a) above, or the *nature* of intellectual virtue.

Many of these questions concern the essential elements or components of an intellectual virtue, including the various psychological components. What emotions or feelings, for example, does an intellectually virtuous person necessarily possess or experience? Must she possess, say, a desire for truth or other such ends? Must she take pleasure in these ends?[35] Why think that the possession of an intellectual virtue requires one to display certain *affective* states at all? Is it not sufficient that one be able to accomplish certain intellectual tasks or achieve certain cognitive goals (which at least sometimes and perhaps often could be done in the absence of the relevant affective states)?[36] What are some of the other psychological elements of an intellectual virtue? Must an intellectually virtuous person possess certain *beliefs*, for example, the belief that the truth is *worth* pursuing and perhaps that it is worth pursing *for its own sake*? And what might be said about the epistemic status of these beliefs? Must an intellectually virtuous person *know* – and perhaps know firsthand or by *acquaintance* – that the truth is worth pursuing, that knowledge is valuable, etc.? Finally, what are the connections between the affective and cognitive elements of intellectual virtue? Does the possession of an intellectual virtue require a desire to reach the truth 'out of' the knowledge that the truth is worth pursuing? If so, what might this connection amount to?

A related set of questions concerns the *motives* of an intellectually virtuous person. First, what is the nature of these motives? Is Zagzebski right to think of them as emotions? If not, what is a more appropriate characterization? Second, with what motives or for what reasons does an intellectually virtuous person characteristically act or believe?[37] Consider the example of a journalist covering an overseas war who jeopardizes her

own safety as she attempts to report the truth about the war. Suppose her ultimate reason or motivation for doing so is that she wants to prove to her superiors that she can handle tough assignments. (Her motivation, in other words, is *not* to discover and report the truth for its own sake.) Does this mean that she fails to exercise the virtue of intellectual courage? Suppose, alternatively, that her reason for pursuing the truth is merely to achieve journalistic fame, to be adored by television viewers, or to earn a larger paycheck. If this is ultimately *why* she seeks the truth amidst the perils of war, is she genuinely intellectually courageous? If so, is her intellectual courage really a *virtue*? If it is not a virtue, shall we conclude that intellectual courage is sometimes a virtue and sometimes not? If so, how shall we distinguish between 'virtuous' and 'nonvirtuous' instances of intellectual courage?

Let us return now to questions about the reliability or truth-conduciveness of the intellectual virtues. Again, it is difficult to deny that the intellectual virtues are helpful (in some sense) for reaching the truth. It would seem to follow that part of what *makes* the relevant traits intellectual virtues is their reliability. But this leaves open the question of whether the reliability of these traits fully accounts for their status as virtues. In other words, are qualities like fair-mindedness, inquisitiveness, and intellectual courage intellectual virtues simply because they are reliable? Or are they virtues at least partly on account of other factors? If they are virtues strictly because of their reliability, then their value would seem to be entirely derivative from the value of ends like truth and knowledge. But this conflicts with the intuition noted above that the intellectual virtues are also worth having at least to some extent for their own sake. The latter suggests that in addition to being instrumentally valuable, the traits in question are also intrinsically valuable.[38]

The idea that the intellectual virtues have intrinsic value gives rise to other difficult questions. For example, what is the connection between the relevant intrinsic and instrumental forms of value? Insofar as an intellectual virtue is instrumentally valuable, its value is derivative; but insofar as it is

intrinsically valuable, it has its value 'in itself.' How, then, are these two kinds of value related in this case? If they are, as they appear to be, two fundamentally different and distinct kinds of value, challenging questions emerge. For example, should we view an intellectual virtue as a single kind of trait that instantiates two fundamentally different and distinct kinds of value? Or rather, shall we say that there are two different kinds or concepts of intellectual virtue and that the character traits in question satisfy the conditions for both (i.e., that they are virtues in both senses, of both kinds, etc.)? Furthermore, what else can be said about why or the sense in which the intellectual virtues are intrinsically valuable? It seems right to say, for instance, that one is a better *person* – albeit in a distinctively intellectual rather than straightforwardly moral sense – as a result of being genuinely fair-minded, intellectually open, careful, reflective, honest, etc. But why should this be so? What is it about these character traits the possession of which actually makes one better *qua* person?

These, then, are several more issues and questions concerning the intellectual virtues that might profitably be addressed from a philosophical standpoint. And presumably there are many others, for example, issues and questions related to the following topics: the individuation of the intellectual virtues; the relation between intellectual virtue and certain 'grounding' concepts like human nature, social or intellectual 'roles', and intellectual 'traditions'; an attempt to specify the full range of intellectual virtues; an adequate classification or taxonomy of the virtues; the relation between intellectual virtue and the notions of intellectual or epistemic duty, responsibility, and luck; the nature of intellectual vice and how it compares with intellectual virtue; the doctrine of the 'mean' as it relates (or fails to relate) to intellectual virtue and vice; the nature of more complicated and seemingly unique virtues like wisdom, intellectual integrity, or intellectual humility[39]; how the bearing of intellectual virtue on cognition varies from one dimension of cognition to another (e.g., from inquiry to belief formation, maintenance, transmission, or application[40]); how social structures or contexts (e.g., the context of corporate rather than

individual research) can determine what count as intellectual virtues or which virtues are most important; the acquisition and cultivation of intellectual virtue; and so on. An exploration of these and related issues is likely to present a variety of philosophical challenges and puzzles and to lead to interesting and fruitful work in epistemology.

4.4. *Conclusion*

Taken as a whole, this overview of some of the philosophical dimensions and aspects of the intellectual virtues would seem to warrant considerable optimism about the virtue responsibilist's claim that the intellectual virtues merit an important and fundamental role in epistemology. First, it indicates that there are indeed substantive philosophical issues and questions to be pursued in connection with the intellectual virtues. Second, it is reasonable to view these issues and questions as falling within the scope epistemology. After all, while not about the nature, limits, or sources of knowledge, these issues and questions nevertheless concern one's character as it relates, both psychologically and causally, to the end or goal of knowledge. Again, an intellectually virtuous person is fundamentally motivated by epistemic goods like knowledge and is (in some sense) reliable at acquiring these goods. Thus it is reasonable to think of an exploration of these aspects or dimensions of intellectual virtue as proper to epistemology.[41] Third, I see no reason for thinking that the relevant issues and questions are somehow secondary to or unimportant compared with traditional epistemological questions. Both sets of questions are concerned with the philosophical dimensions of certain essential elements of cognitive flourishing or well-being. Knowledge is of course one such element; but it is not the only one. The quality of one's intellectual character also plays a crucial role – both as a means and (arguably) as a constituent – in determining the quality of one's intellectual life.

What the foregoing discussion suggests, then, is that the intellectual virtues merit an important and fundamental role in epistemology, not because they are important for addressing

traditional epistemological questions, but because, when considered in their own right, they give rise to interesting and important questions that are the proper subject matter of epistemology. The discussion thus calls for an *expansion* of traditional epistemology to include matters of intellectual virtue rather than, as virtue epistemologists tend to advocate, a *reorientation* of traditional epistemology on the intellectual virtues. If worked out in detail, the result would be a kind of 'character epistemology', that is, an approach to epistemology that focuses on intellectual character itself and its role in the intellectual life.[42]

NOTES

[1] The terms "virtue responsibilism" and "virtue reliabilism" originate with Code 1987 and Axtell 1997, respectively. For overviews of the field of virtue epistemology, see Axtell (1997), Zagzebski (1998), and Baehr (2004).

[2] In light of this limited focus, I will use the term "intellectual virtue" to refer exclusively to the character traits of interest to the virtue responsibilist. I do not mean to deny, however, that there is a broader notion of intellectual virtue according to which the cognitive faculties and abilities that interest the virtue reliabilist are also intellectual virtues.

[3] These are, of course, highly general characterizations. For a more detailed account of reliabilism see Goldman (1979); for an evidentialist account of justification see Conee and Feldman (1985).

[4] This is also suggested by an analogy with virtue ethics. Virtue ethicists sometimes give the notion of a moral virtue a leading role in an account of right action (see, e.g., Hursthouse (1999)). Assuming an analogy between right action and knowledge or justified belief, one might conclude that if the notion of an intellectual virtue is to be given a crucial role in epistemology, it should be in terms of an analysis of knowledge or justified belief. Indeed, several virtue epistemologists (e.g., Sosa (1991); Zagzebski (1996)) consciously model their theories on accounts of right action in virtue ethics.

[5] Ernest Sosa was the first to make use of virtue concepts in an analysis of knowledge. His initial stab at this approach is "The Raft and the Pyramid" (originally published in 1980 and reprinted in Sosa (1991)). But Sosa, as a virtue reliabilist, conceives of intellectual virtues as reliable cognitive faculties or powers, not as character traits.

[6] In *Virtues of the Mind*, Zagzebski also makes important contributions to ethics: she develops a general account of virtue that covers moral as well as intellectual virtue, virtue-based definitions of moral duty and right action, and an account of the fundamental structure of moral value (see especially pp. 77–258).

[7] Zagzebski does not equate emotions with feelings. While she thinks that "it is generally true that there is something that it is *like* to have a certain emotion," she maintains that "it is possible, even likely, that we do not always *feel* our emotions" (p. 130).

[8] While she distinguishes between intellectual and moral virtue, she ultimately holds that intellectual virtue is a species of moral virtue (and consequently, that normative epistemology is a branch of ethics). See p. 255f. For Zagzebski's discussion of the ultimate aim or end of moral virtue, see pp. 137–165.

[9] This is a slightly more refined definition of an act of intellectual virtue than the one in *Virtues of the Mind*.

[10] In such cases, it is usually obvious that the person in question fails to acquire knowledge. For discussions of the general point that known beliefs must be caused by or the result of certain virtuous properties of a cognitive agent, see Greco (2003) and Riggs (2002).

[11] It is also worth noting that Zagzebski does not require that to perform an act of an intellectual virtue, a person must reach the truth *entirely* because of the other features of the act. She explains in a footnote that the relevant virtuous motives and acts need only be "the most salient causal factor" or provide the "best explanation" for why the person gets to the truth (1996, pp. 250–251). This point is discussed in more detail in Zagzebski (1999).

[12] This amendment would not seem to go far enough, however, for what is it to "reach the truth" but to form a *belief* that is true? Thus it may be that, strictly speaking, knowledge on Zagzebski's view is simply the performance of acts of intellectual virtue.

[13] A similar point could be made for one who, while not yet genuinely virtuous, is nonetheless a "virtuous-person-in-training."

[14] Greco explains the problem thus: "[S]uppose that a poor math student adopts a correct algorithm for solving an equation he is working on. By hypothesis, using the algorithm is a highly reliable process for solving the equation. But suppose the student almost never uses a correct algorithm; usually he adopts an incorrect one, or merely hazards a wild guess. Then it seems wrong to say that he has knowledge in the case where he happens to use a reliable process" (2000, p. 183).

[15] Admittedly, this objection is likely to be persuasive only to those who accept some form of externalism/reliabilism. An internalist/evidentialist might, on the assumption that the student actually has good reasons or evidence for his solution to the problem, have no trouble concluding that he does acquire knowledge.

[16] The reliability, or apparent reliability, of the intellectual virtues is actually a fairly complicated matter. I shall return to it near the end of the paper.

[17] While my focus here will be perceptual knowledge, a similar point could be made regarding various instances of memorial, introspective, and a *priori* knowledge.

[18]   She discusses a similar case on p. 281 of *Virtues of the Mind.*

[19]   William Alston raises a similar worry about Zagzebski's account of motivation (Alston, 2000, p. 185).

[20]   See note 11 above.

[21]   A person of intellectual virtue is concerned, as such, with reaching the truth. But skeptical worries arise out of a recognition that we may not have any nonquestion-begging or noncircular reasons for thinking that any of our beliefs are true. This is an unhappy predicament for one who cares about having true beliefs. Therefore, such a person (especially when compared with a person who *doesn't* care whether any of her beliefs are true) might be particularly likely to reflect on and seek to address the problem of skepticism. This does not entail, of course, that *all* intellectually virtuous persons will be worried about skepticism. Nor does it entail that those who are led to worry about skepticism out of intellectual virtue will be entirely preoccupied by it, e.g., by putting off all further reflection or inquiry until the problem has been "solved."

[22]   A similar point is also raised by Alston (2000, p. 188).

[23]   Some externalists might wish to quibble with this characterization of the skeptical problem or with the rhetorical nature of the question just asked. An externalist might say, for example, that if one's intellectual character is reliable, then one can have knowledge, even if one cannot have any non-question-begging reasons in support of what one knows. But this is relevant only if an exercise of virtuous intellectual character is an essential feature of knowledge; and again, we have seen strong reasons for thinking this is not the case. Christopher Hookway (2003) argues on altogether different grounds that an appeal to intellectual virtue can in fact be helpful for dealing with the problem of skepticism. He is concerned, however, with a formulation or version of skepticism very different from the traditional or classical one. And consequently his project does little to undermine the present point.

[24]   See, for instance, Code's discussion of the distinction between knowledge and understanding (pp. 147–161) as well as her discussion of fictional literature as a source of knowledge (Chapter 8). While she raises interesting and substantive questions in connection with these issues, there is little reason to think that answers to them would require much of an appeal to intellectual virtue. Thus they do little to advance the claim that the intellectual virtues merit a substantial epistemological role.

[25]   For a similar assessment of Code's project, see BonJour (1990).

[26]   Similar passages are found throughout Code's book. See, e.g., pp. 135–147 and 172–175.

[27]   This limitation notwithstanding, Code does make some interesting and engaging observations about some of the aspects of the cognitive life (including intellectual character) that receive little attention in most traditional and contemporary epistemology (see, e.g., Chapter 2). She

also makes a convincing case for the idea that fictional and nonfictional narrative is a necessary part of any reasonably complete characterization of intellectual virtue (Chapters 2 and 8). The problem again is that these observations do not form anything like the basis of an alternative approach to epistemology.

[28]   Indeed, in contrast to Code, it is not entirely clear that Montmarquet wishes to defend the idea that the intellectual virtues should be an important focus of epistemology. Still, Montmarquet's book is widely regarded as an important contribution to virtue epistemology. See, for example, Greco (2002) and Zagzebski (1996 and 1998).

[29]   See, for example, Goldman's "Epistemic Folkways and Scientific Epistemology" in Goldman (1992).

[30]   For a structurally similar discussion, see Kvanvig (1992). Kvanvig agrees that the concept of an intellectual virtue is unlikely to be very helpful for addressing traditional problems in epistemology. Yet he maintains that the intellectual virtues should be the main focus of epistemology (which, in fact, is a much stronger proposal than the one being developed here). Most of Kvanvig's discussion is devoted to showing why, given its Cartesian (e.g., belief-based, synchronic, time-slice) orientation, traditional epistemology cannot make sense of the epistemological importance of the intellectual virtues. He does, however, go some way toward outlining an alternative epistemological research program that (allegedly) would make the intellectual virtues the focus of epistemology (pp. 147–188). But Kvanvig's proposed research program differs from the one to be sketched here in important ways: first, it requires a far more radical departure from traditional epistemological concepts and concerns; second, there is little to no overlap between the questions at the heart of Kvanvig's program and the questions identified below; third, it is far from clear whether answers to the questions Kvanvig raises really will involve a substantial appeal to the notion of intellectual virtue. See Baehr (2004) for a development of the latter point.

[31]   Goldman (1992) seems to advocate this view. For an analogous view of moral virtue, see Julia Driver's "The Virtues and Human Nature" (1996).

[32]   An analogous conception of moral virtue is, of course, defended by Aristotle (*NE* 1103a15–1109b25). This account of moral virtue (or something like it) has been defended more recently by Michael Slote (1997) and Thomas Hurka (2001), among others.

[33]   Similar questions concerning cognitive *faculties* like vision, memory, introspection, and the like have already been addressed by virtue reliabilists (e.g., Sosa, 1991). Thus the kind of work called for here would be similar to some work in virtue reliabilism. The similarity is likely to be limited, however, since there appear to be structural differences between the relevant "faculty virtues" and the character virtues we are concerned with here. For instance, the reliability of intellectual character virtues would not, in

contrast with faculty virtues, appear to be *field-specific*. Character virtues also seem to exhibit a tighter "unity" compared with faculty virtues.

[34] One way around this conclusion would be to hold that reliability is not a defining feature of intellectual virtue. See, e.g., Montmarquet's (1993) conception of intellectual virtue noted above.

[35] Cf. Aristotle's discussion of moral virtue in *NE* 1172a20-1176a25 and elsewhere.

[36] An analogous view of moral virtue is defended in Driver (1996).

[37] This mirrors the concern with "moral motivation" in virtue ethics. See, e.g., Hursthouse (1998).

[38] I will not pause here to examine how these claims stand in relation to Christine Korsgaard's well-known discussion in "Two Distinctions In Goodness" (1983). Korsgaard's discussion does not, it seems to me, pose any problem for these claims, mainly because I think that the character traits in question pretty clearly do *not* fall into the category that she identifies of things the value of which is derivative but that nevertheless are desirable in themselves or are worth having, pursuing, etc., for their own sake. And at any rate Korsgaard's complicated and rich discussion, apart from its relation to the present claims, actually supports the more general point that these claims are intended to illustrate: viz., that there are substantive and interesting issues to be pursued in connection with the nature and value of intellectual virtue.

[39] For an interesting discussion of intellectual humility and of the kind of fruitful inquiry that might be applied to individual virtues (see Roberts and Wood, 2003).

[40] This division of the terrain of cognition and its relation to intellectual virtue is discussed briefly in Roberts and Wood (2003).

[41] I do not mean to draw a deep distinction between epistemology and ethics. Indeed, as indicated by the multiple references to virtue ethics in various endnotes above, a discussion of these issues might largely (though not entirely) be an epistemological *extension* of certain discussions in virtue ethics. This might, then, be an area that is continuous with virtue ethics and hence an area where the distinction between epistemology and ethics gets very blurry. I insist only that the relevant issues and questions not be viewed as the proper subject of ethics *rather than* epistemology.

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