INTRODUCTION: VIRTUE AND VICE

HEATHER BATTALY

The Basics

Elizabeth Anscombe’s infamous 1958 paper “Modern Moral Philosophy” argued that ethical theory should jettison meaningless evaluations of acts, like “right act” and “wrong act,” and instead evaluate the character traits of agents. Radically, Anscombe called for the elimination of deontological and consequentialist theories in ethics. Though few philosophers have embraced her eliminativism, Anscombe is widely credited with ushering in a revival of virtue ethics. Virtue ethics shifts the focus of ethical evaluation away from actions and onto agents. It tells us what it is to be an excellent person, and what qualities excellent people have. In short, virtue ethicists think that moral virtues matter. Many contemporary virtue ethicists employ the work of the ancients, especially Aristotle, in developing their views. Thus, in On Virtue Ethics, Rosalind Hursthouse (1999) argues for an account of the moral virtues that is neo-Aristotelian. In The Morality of Happiness, Julia Annas (1993) explores Aristotelian and Stoic views of the virtues.

Virtue epistemology developed in response to two different sets of concerns. In the 1980s Ernest Sosa introduced the notion of an intellectual virtue in an attempt to circumvent the debate between foundationalism and coherence theory, and to answer objections to reliabilism (see Sosa 1991). In 1996, Linda Zagzebski’s Virtues of the Mind argued for a virtue theory in epistemology that is analogous to contemporary virtue theories in ethics. Both versions of virtue epistemology shift the focus of epistemic evaluation away from beliefs and onto agents. Virtue epistemology tells us what it is to be an excellent thinker, and what qualities excellent thinkers have. In short, virtue epistemologists think that epistemic virtues matter. “Virtue-responsibilists” like Zagzebski argue for accounts of the epistemic virtues that are based on Aristotle’s account of the moral virtues, whereas “virtue-reliabilists” like Sosa argue that epistemic virtues are qualities that enable us to attain truths.¹

¹ Guy Axtell uses the terms “virtue-reliabilism” and “virtue-responsibilism” in the introduction to Axtell 2000.
What exactly is a virtue theory in ethics and epistemology? Virtue theories can be contrasted with act-based and belief-based theories. Act-based theories in ethics, like deontology and consequentialism, take right and wrong acts—types of act-evaluation—to be more fundamental than the moral virtues and vices—types of agent-evaluation. Accordingly, act-based theories define the moral virtues and vices in terms of right and wrong acts. Virtue theories in ethics do the reverse. They take the moral virtues and vices—types of agent-evaluation—to be more fundamental than any type of act-evaluation. Accordingly, virtue theories in ethics define right and wrong acts in terms of the moral virtues and vices, rather than the other way around. For instance, Hursthouse explains right action in terms of the virtues as follows: “An action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would characteristically . . . do in the circumstances” (1999, 28). Analogously, belief-based epistemologies, like evidentialist accounts of justification and truth-tracking accounts of knowledge, take justified beliefs and knowledge—types of belief-evaluation—to be more fundamental than the epistemic virtues and vices—types of agent-evaluation. Accordingly, belief-based theories would define the epistemic virtues and vices (if they addressed them at all) in terms of justified beliefs or knowledge. Virtue theories in epistemology do the reverse. They take the epistemic virtues and vices—types of agent-evaluation—to be more fundamental than any type of belief-evaluation. Accordingly, virtue theories in epistemology define belief-evaluations—justification and knowledge—in terms of the epistemic virtues, rather than the other way around. To illustrate, Sosa argues that knowledge requires true belief that is produced by an intellectual virtue (see Sosa 1991, 2004, 2007), while Zagzebski contends that knowledge is belief that results from acts of intellectual virtue (1996, 271). The first group of chapters in this collection addresses virtue theories in ethics and epistemology. The collection opens with “Virtue Ethics and Virtue Epistemology,” in which Roger Crisp rejects the definition of virtue theory above, and offers an alternative.

What is a virtue? Roughly, virtues are qualities that make a person excellent. Which qualities make a person excellent? Arguably, there are two important but different ways to answer this question, both of which are employed in the literature. First, one might contend that virtues are qualities that attain good ends. Specifically, they are qualities that enable a thing to attain good ends or perform its function well. This concept of virtue begins with the intuition that good ends matter, and that the virtues are qualities that reliably attain good ends. Hence, to be virtuous, one must be effective at attaining the good—attaining the good is necessary for virtue. Attaining the good is also sufficient for virtue—any quality that reliably attains good ends counts as a virtue. This concept of virtue is employed by Plato in book I of the Republic and by Aristotle in book I of the Nicomachean Ethics. In contemporary virtue ethics, it is employed by Julia Driver (2001), who contends that the moral virtues are traits of
character that systematically produce good consequences. On her view, virtuous motivations are neither necessary nor sufficient for being morally virtuous. Good consequences are all that matter. Thus, caring about others is not enough for benevolence, if one consistently fails to help others. Nor is caring about others required for benevolence, since one might consistently succeed in helping others without caring about them. In contemporary virtue epistemology, Sosa and the virtue-reliabilists employ this concept of virtue. Sosa explicitly contends that there is “a ‘sense’ of virtue ... in which anything with a function—natural or artificial—does have virtues” (1991, 271). He argues that since our primary epistemic function is attaining truths, the epistemic virtues are whatever qualities enable us to do that, be they natural faculties or acquired skills. He takes reliable vision, memory, induction, and deduction to be paradigmatic epistemic virtues. For him, the epistemic virtues require neither virtuous actions nor virtuous motives. Reliably getting the truth is all that matters.

Second, one might contend that virtues are qualities that involve good motives. Specifically, virtues are acquired traits of character that involve appropriate motivation, action, emotion, and perception. This concept of virtue begins with the intuition that motives matter. Attaining good ends is not enough (or not even required) for virtue, since one can attain good ends, and even perform appropriate actions, but have vicious motives. This concept of virtue is more popular among virtue ethicists than the previous concept, and is famously endorsed by Aristotle in book II of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle there argues that moral virtue is “a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by ... that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it” (1998, 1006b36–39). To illustrate, courage is a disposition to fear and yet to face the appropriate things, at the appropriate times, in the appropriate ways, and with the appropriate motivations. Courage lies in a mean between a vice of excess (foolhardiness) and a vice of deficiency (cowardice). Aristotle argues that the moral virtues are not natural faculties, because, unlike natural faculties, the moral virtues are praiseworthy. He thinks that the moral virtues are not skills (partly) because the virtuous person, but not the skilled person, must have a specific motivation in acting: the virtuous person must choose the appropriate acts for their own sakes.

In contemporary virtue ethics, this concept of virtue is employed by Rosalind Hursthouse (1999), who argues that the moral virtues are entrenched dispositions of appropriate motivation, action, emotion, and perception. For example, the honest person is motivated to do what she thinks is right, reliably tells the truth, is distressed and angry when others lie, and notices who is or is not trustworthy. Using Aristotle’s notion of the *phronimos* (practically wise person), Hursthouse argues that the honest person’s motivations, actions, emotions, and perceptions
match those of the *phronimos*. In contemporary virtue epistemology, Zagzebski and the virtue-responsibilists employ this concept of virtue. Zagzebski (1996) argues that the epistemic virtues are acquired character traits that involve appropriate epistemic motivations, appropriate epistemic actions, and reliable success in attaining true beliefs. She thinks that attaining good ends is required, but not enough, for being virtuous. (In contrast, James Montmarquet [1993] thinks that attaining true beliefs is not even required for epistemic virtue.) Zagzebski takes open-mindedness, intellectual courage, intellectual autonomy, and intellectual humility to be paradigmatic epistemic virtues. On her view, a person with the virtue of open-mindedness is motivated to attain truths and motivated to consider alternative ideas; he also considers alternative ideas when he should, and reliably attains truths as a result. Using Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean, Zagzebski argues that the virtue of open-mindedness lies in a mean between two vices.

Which of these two concepts of virtue is the “real” concept? Arguably, there is no single real concept of virtue, and arguments to that effect will be unproductive (see Battaly 2008a, 2008b). Both concepts are good: both identify qualities of an excellent person. One way to be an excellent person is to reliably get the good; for example, to reliably help others rather than harm them, or to reliably get truths rather than falsehoods. Another way to be an excellent person is to possess virtuous motivations: to care about others or about the truth.

What is a vice? If virtues are qualities that attain the good, then vices are qualities that fail to attain the good. If, on the other hand, virtues and vices are contraries rather than contradictories, then one can fall short of virtue without being fully vicious. One could instead be *akratic*—weak-willed—or *enkratic*—continent. The *enkratic* person performs, for example, benevolent acts, but must overcome competing motivations in order to do so. The *akratic* person also has competing motivations, but unlike the *enkratic* person, fails to overcome them and fails to perform benevolent acts. In contrast with the *akratic* person, the vicious person does not have competing motivations—she is not conflicted. The vicious person’s motives are in fact bad. Arguably, the person who possesses the vice of cruelty is disposed to harm others, be pleased by others’ failures, and notice opportunities for insulting others, and is motivated to do these things because she thinks they are good. By comparison with the literature on virtue, considerably less has been written about vice. This is especially true of intellectual vice. A noteworthy exception is Miranda Fricker’s *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), which provides a detailed account of the epistemic vice of testimonial injustice. This collection contains two chapters on epistemic vices: Jason Baehr’s “Epistemic Malevolence,” which makes use of Robert Adams’s (2006) account of moral malevolence; and my “Epistemic Self-Indulgence,” which employs Aristotle’s account of moral self-indulgence.
The Structure of Virtue Ethics and Virtue Epistemology

What is a virtue theory in ethics? We have seen that the standard answer is that virtue ethics differs from deontological and consequentialist ethics because it reverses “the direction of analysis” of two of the main concepts in ethical theory: the concept of right action and the concept of virtue (see Greco 2004). To explicate, it is claimed that deontological and consequentialist theories both take the concept of right action to be more fundamental than the concept of virtue, and define virtue in terms of right action. Whereas virtue ethics takes the concept of virtue to be more fundamental than the concept of right action, and defines right action in terms of virtue—as an action that a virtuous person would perform. The three chapters in the first group all address the structure of virtue theories in ethics. Linda Zagzebski and Thomas Hurka both endorse versions of the direction of analysis view, while Roger Crisp’s “Virtue Ethics and Virtue Epistemology” suggests that the direction of analysis view is problematic.

Crisp explores the problems and prospects for an analogy between virtue ethics and virtue epistemology. In so doing, he defines virtue ethics, outlines a virtue epistemology that is modeled on Aristotelian virtue ethics, and enumerates several challenges for virtue epistemology. Crisp argues that all ethical theories ask and answer the following questions: How should I live? What kind of person should I be? And, how should I act? On his view, what is distinctive about virtue ethics is the ultimate reason it gives for its answer, rather than the answer it gives. After all, Crisp explains, virtue ethics and utilitarianism might give the same answer—live virtuously, be a virtuous person, and act virtuously. The difference is that the utilitarian gives this answer because she thinks that living and acting virtuously maximize utility, whereas the virtue ethicist gives this answer because she thinks that it is virtuous to live and act virtuously. According to Crisp, for a theory to count as an “explanatory” virtue ethics, the ultimate reason it gives for living and acting virtuously must be provided by the virtues themselves. Crisp also argues that defining virtue ethics in terms of its direction of analysis is problematic. For if we define virtue ethics in terms of its direction of analysis, then virtue ethics is committed to claiming that an act is right because it is an act that a virtuous person would perform. But that, argues Crisp, is false: “What the virtuous person would do is insufficient to explain rightness.” Sometimes what makes an act right are the details of the situation, rather than the fact that a virtuous person would do it.

Crisp outlines an Aristotelian virtue epistemology that allows for two different sorts of epistemic virtues. He begins with Aristotle’s notion of moral virtue and his doctrine of the mean. Aristotle famously argues that each moral virtue lies in a mean between a vice of excess and a vice of deficiency. The morally virtuous person hits the mean—he acts and feels as he should. According to Aristotle, the virtues deserve praise because we
are responsible for possessing them. Likewise, argues Crisp, some epistemic virtues lie in a mean and involve actions and feelings. These virtues include: creativity, perseverance, open-mindedness, self-doubt, and joy in inquiry. Crisp suggests that these virtues deserve praise because they are traits for which we are, to some extent, responsible. But he also thinks that there are epistemic virtues for which we are not responsible, including the capacities of perception and memory. Thus, he makes space for both responsibilist and reliabilist epistemic virtues.

Crisp concludes that though it is worth developing a virtue epistemology that is modeled on virtue ethics, such a view faces several challenges. First, most virtue ethicists do not endorse virtue epistemology but instead rely on epistemological theories that virtue epistemologists reject. Second, the debates about the role of commonsense intuitions in ethics would carry over to virtue epistemology. Finally, virtue epistemology may not be able to live up to its billing: it may fail to avoid the foundationalist-coherentist debate, the internalist-externalist debate, and skepticism.

Linda Zagzebski’s “Exemplarist Virtue Theory” argues for a radical kind of virtue ethics that is grounded in exemplars. Zagzebski enumerates three main desiderata of a moral theory. First, a moral theory should “simplify, systematize, and justify our moral beliefs and practices.” Second, there must be some element in the theory that enables users to link the theory to the world—to recognize that a particular element of the theory refers to a particular thing in the world. Third, Zagzebski thinks that “foundational” moral theories currently have an advantage, since contemporary philosophers (unlike the ancients) assume that morality itself requires justification. A moral theory is foundational if it takes a single moral concept as its foundation, and uses that concept to define all other moral concepts. Accordingly, Zagzebski thinks, contra Crisp, that virtue ethics takes virtue concepts to be the most fundamental, and defines the concept of a right act in terms of virtue concepts.

With these desiderata in mind, Zagzebski designs an innovative moral theory that grounds moral concepts in exemplars—virtuous people. The theory is foundational, but its foundation is not conceptual. Radically, its foundation consists in virtuous people themselves. Zagzebski’s moral theory begins with direct reference to exemplars. Employing the well-known Kripke-Putnam theory of reference, Zagzebski argues that direct reference to exemplars is analogous to direct reference to gold (see Kripke 1980 and Putnam 1979). Roughly, the Kripke-Putnam view argues that the referent of the natural kind term “gold” is fixed by ostention. Zagzebski highlights two features of this view. First, it argues that one can successfully refer to gold even if one does not know the essential properties of gold—those properties were in fact discovered much later via empirical research. Second, it argues that a speaker can successfully refer to gold even if she associates the wrong descriptive meaning with “gold,” provided that she is connected “by a chain of communication” to
other speakers who reliably pick out gold. Analogously, contends Zagzebski, we can fix the referent of the term “good person” by pointing at exemplars. Moreover, we can successfully refer to exemplars even if we do not know their essential properties. Like the nature of gold, the nature of exemplars may be discovered later via empirical research. We can also successfully refer to exemplars even if we associate the wrong descriptive meaning with the term “good person,” provided that there are some speakers in our community who do succeed in picking out exemplars.

Is there anyone in our community who reliably identifies exemplars? Zagzebski thinks that we identify good people via the emotion of admiration, which she claims is “generally trustworthy when we have it after reflection and when it withstands critique by others.” Hence, she thinks that people in our community who have a sufficiently developed emotion of admiration succeed in picking out exemplars. Zagzebski acknowledges that just as some of the stuff that we judged to be gold (pyrite) was not really gold, some of the people that we judge to be exemplars may not really be exemplars. We might learn later on, via empirical research and narratives, that some of our judgments were mistaken.

Zagzebski defines the concepts of a right act, a virtue, a duty, a good state of affairs, and a good life by direct reference to exemplars. Thus, a virtue is “a trait we admire in that person,” where “that” refers directly to an exemplar. It is a trait that “makes the [admirable] person paradigmatically good in a certain respect.” A right act is “an act a person like that would take to be favored by the balance of reasons.” Zagzebski concludes that her exemplarist virtue theory satisfies the three desiderata above. It explains our practice of identifying exemplars; its direct reference to exemplars links the theory to the world; and it is foundational.

Hurka and Zagzebski agree, contra Crisp, that virtue ethics differs from deontological and consequentialist ethics because it takes the concept of virtue to be more fundamental than the concept of right action, and defines right action in terms of virtues rather than the reverse. But Hurka and Zagzebski disagree about whether we should endorse virtue ethics. Zagzebski endorses a radical version of virtue ethics, which takes exemplars—virtuous people—to be fundamental, and defines the concept of right action (and other moral concepts) in terms of exemplars. In contrast, Hurka’s “Right Act, Virtuous Motive” argues against all versions of virtue ethics, and for “higher-level” accounts, which define both the concept of right action and virtue concepts in terms of a third moral concept (either the good or rightness) (see also Hurka 2001).

Hurka sets out to explain why right acts and virtuous motives often coincide. He considers four possible explanations: consequentialism, deontology, virtue ethics, and higher-level accounts. He argues that consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics have at least one thing in common: they all define right acts and virtuous motives directly in terms of each other. That is to say, each view treats one of the two
concepts as more fundamental than the other, and then defines the other concept in its terms. Consequentialism takes the concept of right acts to be more fundamental, and argues that virtuous motives are those that tend to produce right acts. Deontology takes the concept of right acts to be more fundamental, and argues that virtuous motives are motives to perform right acts because they are right. Virtue ethics takes the concept of virtuous motives to be more fundamental, and argues that right acts are those that would be done from virtuous motives. Hurka insightfully contends that there is a fourth option. In contrast, higher-level accounts argue that rights acts and virtuous motives coincide, not because either concept is defined directly in terms of the other, but because “each involves a relation to some third [basic] moral property.”

What is that basic moral property? Hurka maintains that there are two sorts of higher-level accounts. The first falls within a consequentialist framework: it takes goods and evils to be basic, and it defines both right acts and virtuous motives in terms of goods and evils. Hurka argues that virtuous motives are here defined as appropriate attitudes toward goods and evils. That is, it is virtuous to love and want goods—like another person’s pleasure—and to hate and seek the absence of evils—like another person’s pain. Correspondingly, it is vicious to love evils, and to hate goods. Right acts are defined as acts that produce the greatest surplus of good over evil. The second sort of higher-level account falls within a deontological framework: it takes moral rightness to be basic, and it defines right acts and virtuous motives in terms of rightness. Accordingly, it is virtuous to love and want what is right, and to hate and want to avoid what is wrong. Here, right acts are acts that instantiate the property of rightness.

Hurka defends his higher-level accounts by arguing that they have an advantage over virtue ethics. On his view, some versions of virtue ethics are committed to claiming that right acts and virtuous motives always coincide: all acts that issue from virtuous motives are right, and all right acts issue from virtuous motives. Other versions of virtue ethics are committed only to the former. In contrast with both versions of virtue ethics, Hurka’s view contends that though right acts and virtuous motives often coincide, they sometimes come apart, and do so in two ways—namely, right acts are sometimes performed from nonvirtuous motives, and wrong acts are sometimes performed from virtuous ones. Hurka argues that, unlike virtue ethics, his higher-level accounts allow for these possibilities. To illustrate, take an attorney who prosecutes a defendant, and does so because of malice. Suppose the defendant is guilty. According to Hurka’s higher-level consequentialist account, the attorney’s act is right given that it deters crime and produces more goods than evils, even though the attorney’s motive is clearly vicious. Alternatively, take an attorney who prosecutes a defendant because he cares about protecting the community and sincerely believes that the defendant is guilty. Suppose his belief is false—the defendant is innocent. As long as punishing an innocent defendant produces
more evils than goods, then according to the higher-level account, the attorney’s act is wrong, even though it is virtuously motivated. We can apply Hurka’s objection to Zagzebski’s view, by adding that the virtuously motivated attorney is an exemplar.

**Virtue and Context**

Guy Axtell’s “Agency Ascriptions in Ethics and Epistemology: Or, Navigating Intersections, Narrow and Broad” and Sarah Wright’s “Virtues, Social Roles, and Contextualism” both explore connections between the virtues and context. Axtell argues that whether we should ascribe broad traits (e.g., benevolence) or narrow traits (e.g., “dropped paper” compassion) to agents depends on the context. Wright contends that virtues are context-sensitive—they are sensitive to the social roles of agents. She uses social roles to ground a view in epistemology that she calls “virtue contextualism.”

Axtell addresses two problems in ascribing character traits to people—one in epistemology, and one in ethics. The generality problem in epistemology, originally an objection to reliabilism, points out that every token belief-forming process is an instance of many different types (see Conee and Feldman 1998). For example, the token process that produces your belief that there are words on this page is an instance of multiple process-types, including: vision at a particular time \( t \), vision of a medium-sized object in a well-lighted environment, vision, and perception. It is the process-type, not the process-token, that matters; and different process-types enjoy different degrees of reliability. The generality problem contends that there is no principled way to decide which of the process-types is relevant—there is no principled way to decide how narrow or how broad the process-type should be. Axtell points out that the generality problem applies to both reliabilist and responsibilist epistemic virtues. The second problem is the situationist challenge in ethics (see Doris 2002). Following Aristotle, contemporary virtue ethicists tend to think of the virtues as global character traits—as habits or stable dispositions of the agent that influence her motivations, actions, emotions, and perceptions in every situation. Situationists argue that there are no such character traits—there are no global dispositions like benevolence. If character traits exist at all, they are narrow and localized (e.g., “dropped paper” compassion), rather than broad and global. The situationist challenge has led to a distinction between dispositionalists (e.g., Zagzebski) and occurrenceists (e.g., Hurka).

Axtell argues that these two problems are analogous. Both problems are about how narrowly or how broadly we should construe the virtues. Axtell suggests that inquiry-pragmatism can shed light on these problems. The inquiry-pragmatist argues that which traits (narrow or broad) are relevant depends on the context and on our pragmatic interests. Thus, some contexts and interests will make narrow traits relevant, others will
make broad traits relevant. In short, we can and should make narrow-trait ascriptions and broad-trait ascriptions. Which ascriptions we make, and when, are determined by the context.

Using Christopher Lepock’s response to the generality problem, Axtell argues that reliabilist virtues are best construed as narrow traits, whereas responsibilist virtues, like open-mindedness, are best construed as broad traits. This is because our goal in ascribing narrow traits is to evaluate particular beliefs, whereas our goal in ascribing broad traits is to evaluate people. Thus, our goals and interests in epistemology dictate when we should ascribe narrow traits and when we should ascribe broad ones. Axtell suggests that we use this same strategy to respond to the situationist problem. In ethics, our goal in ascribing narrow traits is the evaluation of particular acts, whereas our goal in ascribing broad traits is to evaluate people. In sum, Axtell argues that “narrowly and broadly typed traits [should be] . . . seen as ascribed in response to different . . . explanatory interests . . . with neither being primary over or reducible to the other.” Accordingly, Axtell rejects views that reduce one sort of trait ascription to the other. Zagzebski’s view takes global traits—dispositions—to be primary, whereas Hurka’s takes narrow traits—occurrent virtuous motives—to be primary. Axtell argues against both of these views. He also implies that we should not define right acts in terms of virtuous agents, since act evaluation should not be reduced to agent evaluation.

In “Virtues, Social Roles, and Contextualism,” Sarah Wright argues that moral and epistemic virtues are sensitive to context, specifically to the social roles of agents. The social roles of agents include being a daughter, a member of one’s country and community, and a member of one’s chosen profession. Wright argues that virtues are means between extremes, and that the location of the mean “depends on the social roles of the person who must act.” Thus, the mean is different for agents with different social roles. To illustrate, to hit the mean associated with the moral virtue of courage, a police officer who witnesses a burglary must pursue the criminal, whereas a bystander need only call the police. To hit the mean associated with the virtue of epistemic carefulness, a doctor who reads about the effectiveness of a drug in *Time* magazine should seek further evidence, whereas a layperson can hit the mean by believing that the drug is effective. Wright argues that since we are inevitably embedded in social roles, “there is no way to be a courageous person *simpliciter;* there is no mean in a vacuum . . . there is no way to exhibit the . . . virtues except within a social role. One is only courageous *in the role of a bystander* or *in the role of police officer.*” Wright notes that some social roles are incompatible with the virtues. Virtues are excellences, but not all excellences are virtues. Excelling in the social role of thieving is not a moral virtue, nor is excelling in the social role of cult-following an epistemic virtue. But as long as a social role is compatible with living well, morally or epistemically, we can develop virtues within that social role.
Wright uses social roles to ground her “virtue contextualism.” Contextualists in epistemology argue that we lack knowledge in skeptical contexts but have knowledge in ordinary contexts. Different versions of contextualism disagree about which conditions fix a context and about when contexts change. Wright evaluates two versions of contextualism, which she calls “attributor contextualism” and “methodological contextualism.” Suppose that person A is attributing knowledge to person B. Roughly, attributor contextualism (DeRose 1999) argues that the context of person A, the one who makes the knowledge-attribution, determines the epistemic context. So, if A assumes ordinary standards for knowledge, then “B knows that $p$” will be true. But if A mentions the possibility that B is being deceived by a demon, then “B knows that $p$” will be false. A’s mere mention of a skeptical possibility is sufficient for changing the context to a skeptical one. Wright rejects attributor contextualism on the grounds that it makes the epistemic context too easy to change. In contrast, methodological contextualism (Williams 2004) argues that the context of person B determines the epistemic context. That context is fixed by B’s interests—for example, in doing history—and the parameters that are specific to the methodology that B is interested in—for example, the parameters of doing history. Consequently, A’s mere mention of Cartesian demons does not suffice to change the epistemic context to a skeptical one. To change it, A must convince B to abandon his interest in doing history and take up an interest in battling the skeptic. As a result, contexts are more stable. Wright objects to methodological contextualism on the grounds that it cannot explain what makes an epistemic context good or bad, and thus cannot explain what makes knowledge valuable. Wright contends that her virtue contextualism, which grounds methodological contexts in social roles, solves this problem. She concludes that social roles that are compatible with living well (i.e., social roles in which one can develop virtues) generate contexts “such that the knowledge had within them is valuable.”

**Virtue and Emotion**

Aristotle argues that the virtues are, in part, dispositions to have appropriate emotions. The chapters in this group examine links between virtue and emotion. Michael Brady’s “Virtue, Emotion, and Attention” addresses the role of emotion in the virtuous person’s acquisition of evaluative knowledge. Amy Coplan’s “Feeling Without Thinking: Lessons from the Ancients on Emotion and Virtue-Acquisition” addresses the role of emotion in the acquisition of the virtues themselves. Both chapters make use of empirical research.

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2 Some contextualists argue that knowledge-attributions are false in skeptical contexts, but true in ordinary contexts.
Brady rejects the perceptual model of emotions, which claims that the virtuous person gets evaluative knowledge from her emotional responses. The perceptual model of emotions, endorsed by Peter Goldie (2004), argues that emotional responses are like sensory perceptions. Roughly, our emotional responses provide us with evaluative knowledge in the same way that our sensory experiences provide us with perceptual knowledge. On this account, my sensory experience of a white wall gives me a prima facie reason to believe that there is a white wall. Analogously, my fear of the neighbor’s dog gives me a prima facie reason to believe that the dog is dangerous. These reasons are defeasible. Like our sensory experiences, our emotional responses sometimes fail to track reality—I might be afraid of a sweet old golden retriever who is not dangerous. So, by themselves, emotional responses are insufficient for evaluative knowledge. To get that knowledge, the perceptual model claims that we must also have “virtuous habits of attention.” Brady explains that these are dispositions to pay attention to, and evaluate the reliability of, our emotional systems when and only when there is good reason to do so. The person who possesses such virtues does not constantly pay attention to her emotional systems, she only does so when there is reason to. When there is no reason for her to pay attention to her emotional systems, she is right to trust her emotional responses and to regard them as “providing her with genuine information about how things are in the evaluative world.” In short, the perceptual model claims that in normal circumstances, the virtuous person’s emotional responses yield evaluative knowledge.

Against the perceptual model, Brady argues that it is not emotional responses but a non-emotional capacity that yields evaluative knowledge. Using empirical research, Brady argues that there is a key difference between sensory experiences and emotions. Unlike sensory experiences, emotional responses persist and consume us—they trigger conscious reflection and deliberation about whether or not they are tracking reality. Thus, my fear of the neighbor’s dog triggers deliberation about whether I should be afraid. The fear is emotional; the deliberation is not. Brady contends that in deliberating about our emotional responses, we look for non-emotional features of their objects and conditions that confirm or disconfirm our responses. So, in deliberating, I look for features of the dog (e.g., growling) and the conditions (e.g., it is eating) that indicate that the dog is, or is not, dangerous in these conditions. Brady argues that virtuous people have learned to directly recognize the emotion-relevant features in objects and conditions; they have developed the non-emotional capacity to recognize that “these features are signs of danger, [and] those features are signs of wrongdoing.” Brady thinks that emotional responses play a vital role in the development of this capacity—in the acquisition of this virtue. But once this non-emotional capacity is acquired, the virtuous person relies on it for evaluative knowledge. Consequently, in normal circumstances, it is not the virtuous person’s
emotional responses that generate evaluative knowledge; it is her non-emotional capacity that does so. The most important upshot of Brady’s view is that virtuous people can and do gain evaluative knowledge without having emotional responses. This is their standard way of gaining evaluative knowledge. When a virtuous person has an emotional response, it is because the circumstances are “abnormal or surprising,” and she cannot take it for granted that her non-emotional capacity will get the right result.

In “Feeling Without Thinking,” Amy Coplan argues that the way we conceptualize emotion influences our views about how we acquire virtue. If, like Socrates and Chrysippus, we think that emotion is controlled by, or a species of, reason, then acquiring virtue will essentially be a matter of correcting our false beliefs and replacing them with knowledge. But if, like Plato and Posidonius, we think that emotion is independent from reason, then acquiring virtue will also involve the habituation of our emotions. Coplan argues against the intellectualism of Socrates, Chrysippus, and the contemporary cognitive theory of emotion, and sides with Plato, Posidonius, and the contemporary noncognitive theory of emotion.

Socrates and Chrysippus are both intellectualists. They think that knowledge is sufficient for virtue. As long as we reason well and acquire knowledge, we will acquire virtue. According to intellectualism, our emotions and actions follow directly from our knowledge or ignorance. Our emotions are not independent sources of action, since they either are themselves a species of reason (Chrysippus thinks emotions are judgments) or are completely controlled by reason. Accordingly, virtue-acquisition is essentially a matter of replacing our false beliefs with knowledge. Coplan contends that the intellectualism of Socrates and Chrysippus resurfaces in the contemporary cognitive theory of emotion, endorsed by Robert Solomon (2007) and Martha Nussbaum (2004). The cognitive theory claims that emotions are essentially cognitive judgments. Emotions need not be accompanied by physical sensations or changes in the body. Thus, fear is a judgment that something is dangerous.

Plato and Posidonius both reject intellectualism. They think that emotion and reason are independent powers of the soul, and that emotion cannot be completely controlled by reason. They argue that emotions are independent sources of action. Hence, knowledge and reason alone are insufficient for virtue. To acquire the virtues, we must also train our noncognitive emotions. Coplan contends that the views of Plato and Posidonius foreshadow the contemporary noncognitive theory of emotion, endorsed by Jenefer Robinson (2005) and Jesse Prinz (2004). The noncognitive theory claims that emotions are essentially embodied appraisals—physical sensations and changes in the body that focus one’s attention and prepare one to respond. These appraisals are neither conscious nor conceptual, but they are nonetheless meaningful. Thus, according to the noncognitive theory, fear is “(1) an embodied appraisal,
which represents the stimulus as dangerous through bodily changes, and
(2) the perception of those changes, which is what we feel as fear.”

Coplan defends the noncognitive theory of emotion, and argues against
intellectualism, by using current empirical research on emotional contagion
and mirror-neurons. She argues that this research supports the claim that
emotions can be involuntary and automatic and do not require conscious
judgment. Coplan concludes that knowledge is insufficient for virtue-
acquisition. To acquire the virtues, we must also train our emotions.

Virtues and Vices

The chapters in the final group provide analyses of individual virtues and
vices. Christine Swanton’s “A Challenge to Intellectual Virtue from
Moral Virtue: The Case of Universal Love” and Wayne Riggs’s “Open-
Mindedness” analyze specific virtues. Jason Baehr’s “Epistemic Malevo-
lence” and my “Epistemic Self-Indulgence” analyze specific vices.

Swanton tackles the moral virtue of universal love, and in so doing
provides a much-needed secular analysis of grace. She defines universal love
as “a preparedness to be, for example, beneficent, gracious, forgiving,
merciful to anyone where appropriate, and a manifesting of that prepared-
ness to assignable individuals, as appropriate” (her emphasis). This love is
universal—it is not withdrawn on the basis of “the unattractiveness of the
object, or lack of affection for the object,” nor even on the basis of the
object’s “lack of virtue” or lack of “other merits.” Accordingly, one might
argue that universal love does not exhibit practical wisdom, and hence is not
a moral virtue. In reply, Swanton contends that although universal love is
indeed “arational” and “reasonless,” it is still reason-responsive. Conse-
quently, it cannot be so easily expelled from the class of moral virtues.

Is the notion of universal love incoherent? Universal love is a
preparedness to manifest love toward any individual regardless of merit,
attractiveness, and personal relations. As such, it is universal, rather than
partial. But it is simultaneously a love of particular individuals in their
particularity, rather than a love of humanity in general. How can these
two aspects of universal love be reconciled? Swanton contends that the
answer lies in the analysis of preparedness. She argues that preparedness
is a Grundstimmung: it is a background “emotional orientation to the
world at large.” According to Heidegger, a Grundstimmung is a back-
ground “emotional hum” that sometimes “irrupts” in intense emotion
(see Heidegger 1995). Swanton thinks that this analysis of preparedness
allows one to be engrossed in particular individuals, without demanding
that one be engrossed in all individuals. For if preparedness is a
Grundstimmung, then one becomes engrossed in a particular individual
only when one’s background emotional hum irrupts in an intense emotion
of love. Between irruptions, preparedness is simply a readiness to become
engrossed in any individual. So, it does not entail actual engrossment in all individuals.

Grace is one type of universal love. Swanton argues that grace is a form of love that is “expressed by someone in a superior position, to someone in an inferior position,” as when one club member graciously accepts not being invited to another club member’s birthday party. Swanton elucidates grace as a virtue by contrasting it with condescension, blind charity, failure to let be, cheap grace, excessive legalism, pride as a vice, and humility as a vice. She argues that acts of grace are “arational”; that is, that there is no intention with which the acts are done. Take Bruce*, the club member who graciously accepts not being invited to Wayne’s birthday party. Though Bruce* would have loved to have been invited, he is not bitter, he does not think or speak ill of Wayne, he does not complain, and he makes kind remarks when the subject comes up. Swanton argues that these acts of grace are spontaneous; Bruce* does not perform them with a “desired upshot” in mind. Hence, they are arational. In addition, Swanton argues, they are “reasonless”—they lack contributory reasons. She borrows Jonathan Dancy’s notion, according to which a contributory reason provides a justification for the agent’s act. Swanton contends that there are no contributory reasons for Bruce*’s acts of grace. She concludes that though acts of grace are arational and reasonless, they are nevertheless reason-responsive.

The virtue of open-mindedness is a paradigmatic intellectual virtue; accordingly, analyses of it are much needed. In “Open-Mindedness,” Wayne Riggs contends that open-mindedness requires an awareness of “one’s fallibility as a believer” and dispositions that put this awareness into practice in one’s behavior. He proposes three desiderata for an account of the virtue of open-mindedness. The account should ensure that open-mindedness is a thick concept rather than a thin one. It should also treat intellectual virtues (or at least one kind of them) as character traits—much as virtue-responsibilists do—rather than as cognitive faculties—as virtue-reliabilists do. That is, it should treat intellectual virtues as interesting in their own right, even if they turn out not to be necessary for knowledge. Finally, the account should solve four puzzles that arise for open-mindedness. It should explain: (a) why anyone would want to be open-minded; (b) why an otherwise intellectually virtuous person would want to be open-minded; (c) how open-mindedness is consistent with strongly held beliefs; and (d) when we should expend resources in pursuing open-mindedness. Puzzles (b) and (c) warrant brief explanation. An otherwise intellectually virtuous person appears to have little motivation to consider alternative views, since he has every reason to believe that others in his community are not as likely to get the truth as he is. But open-mindedness seems to require that he consider alternative views. Regarding (c), open-mindedness appears to be inconsistent with strongly held beliefs. It seems that if an agent is fully confident in her belief
that \( p \), then she will not seriously consider the possibility that not-\( p \). But being open-minded about \( p \) seems to entail that she take the possibility that not-\( p \) seriously.

Following Jonathan Adler (2004), Riggs contends that open-mindedness is “an attitude toward oneself as a believer, rather than toward any particular belief.” If one is open-minded, then one acknowledges the possibility that “anytime one believes something, it is possible that one is wrong.” In short, the open-minded person is aware that humans are fallible—that some or other of her beliefs are false. Riggs argues that Adler’s account of open-mindedness is good as far as it goes—it solves puzzles (a) and (c)—but is ultimately incomplete. To be genuinely open-minded, one must not only be aware that one is fallible, one must put that awareness into practice in one’s behavior. Consequently, one must also be disposed to seek self-knowledge about one’s cognitive weaknesses, to self-monitor for situations in which one is prone to such weaknesses, and to combat those weaknesses when the given situations arise. The open-minded person who knows that he is prone to wishful thinking when forming beliefs about his finances, and who realizes that he is discussing the current state of his finances, will combat that weakness by seriously considering challenges to his beliefs about his finances.

Hence, Riggs argues, the otherwise intellectually virtuous person is motivated to be open-minded because even she is subject to some cognitive weaknesses. But she need not take every challenge to her beliefs seriously—she can conserve her resources. The open-minded person can dismiss a challenge to her belief that \( p \) if: she is confident that her belief that \( p \) is well justified; and she is confident that she is not in a situation in which she is prone to cognitive weaknesses; and she is correct that she is not in a situation in which she is prone to cognitive weaknesses.

Along with Miranda Fricker’s *Epistemic Injustice* (2007), Jason Baehr’s “Epistemic Malevolence” and my “Epistemic Self-Indulgence” are among the first works to examine specific epistemic vices in detail. Each of these two chapters argues that there is an epistemic analogue of a moral vice.

Baehr contends that despite its failure to appear on standard lists of intellectual vices, epistemic malevolence is indeed a paradigmatic intellectual vice, the structure of which is analogous to that of moral malevolence. Accordingly, Baehr argues for five key features of moral malevolence. First, moral malevolence is an “opposition to the good as such”; an opposition that is robustly willed, active, and personally deep. The morally malevolent person is intentionally and fundamentally hostile toward the good, and attempts to diminish or destroy it. Second, the morally malevolent person regards the good as an enemy—she “enemizes” the good. Third, Baehr argues that the object of moral
malevolence can be personal or impersonal. When one is opposed to an individual person’s well-being, or the well-being of a specific group of people, one’s malevolence is personal. In contrast, supervillains, like Milton’s Satan and the Joker, are opposed to the good in general, or to goodness itself; hence their malevolence is impersonal. Fourth, a supervillain need not oppose his own good—the scope of impersonal malevolence need not be maximally broad. Fifth, Baehr advocates a subjective conception of malevolence. He argues that the morally malevolent person need not be opposed to that which is in fact good; she need only be opposed to that which she regards as good. On Baehr’s view, opposition to what is in fact good is neither necessary nor sufficient for malevolence. Malevolence turns on whether one intends to undermine the good, not on whether what one opposes is in fact good, or on whether one reliably succeeds in undermining the good. Accordingly, some people who oppose what is in fact good and reliably produce harm are not malevolent, and others who oppose what is not in fact good and fail to produce harm are malevolent.

Analogously, epistemic malevolence is an opposition to the epistemic good as such. Baehr suggests that the epistemic good includes, but is not limited to, knowledge. Like moral malevolence, epistemic malevolence can be impersonal or personal. Accordingly, the epistemically malevolent person enemizes knowledge in general, or some person’s or group’s knowledge or epistemic well-being. Baehr provides four illustrations of the vice of epistemic malevolence: the infamous Cartesian Demon, the Foucauldian “suspicionist,” the character O’Brien in George Orwell’s 1984, and the Aulds, to whom Frederick Douglass was enslaved. Finally, Baehr highlights an important asymmetry between moral malevolence and epistemic malevolence: we think that moral malevolence is a paradigmatic moral vice, but we do not think that epistemic malevolence is a paradigmatic epistemic vice. Epistemic malevolence does not appear on standard lists of intellectual vices. Baehr suggests that this asymmetry can be explained by the fact that epistemic malevolence is less common than moral malevolence.

In “Epistemic Self-Indulgence” I argue that there is an epistemic analogue of the moral vice of self-indulgence. I defend an Aristotelian account of moral self-indulgence, which I use as a model for epistemic self-indulgence. I argue that there are several distinguishing features of moral self-indulgence. First, the vice of moral self-indulgence is an “excess” of the corresponding virtue of moral temperance. The passions and actions associated with moral self-indulgence and temperance are (by and large) physical, and they famously include wanting, consuming, and enjoying food, drink, and sex. I argue that the morally temperate person desires, consumes, and enjoys only appropriate objects, only at appropriate times, and only in appropriate amounts. By way of contrast, the morally self-indulgent person exceeds with respect to objects, or occa-
sions, or amounts. She desires, consumes, and enjoys appropriate and inappropriate objects indiscriminately (e.g., sex with her own partner, and sex with her best friend’s partner); or desires, consumes, and enjoys appropriate or inappropriate objects at inappropriate times (e.g., at a job interview); or desires, consumes, and enjoys appropriate or inappropriate objects too much (e.g., hourly). Second, following Aristotle, I restrict the purview of moral temperance and its vices to desires that are “peculiar” to individuals—such as wanting chocolate cake—rather than “common” to human beings—such as a shared biological desire for food. Third, I argue that according to Aristotle, the morally temperate person desires and consumes both objects that actively contribute to his health and objects that do not undermine his health; in short, the temperate person eats broccoli but also eats an occasional “treat,” like chocolate cake (see Young 1988). Accordingly, the morally self-indulgent person consumes objects that contribute to her health, treats, and objects that actively undermine her health.

Likewise, the vice of epistemic self-indulgence is an “excess” of the virtue of epistemic temperance. Accordingly, the passions and actions associated with these traits are epistemic rather than physical, and include wanting, consuming, and enjoying beliefs, knowledge, and belief-forming practices. I argue that the epistemically temperate person desires, consumes, and enjoys only appropriate epistemic objects, only at appropriate times, and only in appropriate amounts. The epistemically self-indulgent person, however, either desires, consumes, and enjoys appropriate and inappropriate epistemic objects indiscriminately (e.g., true beliefs about physics and false beliefs about physics, or reliable processes and unreliable processes); or desires, consumes, and enjoys epistemic objects at inappropriate times (e.g., while having sex with his partner); or desires, consumes, and enjoys epistemic objects too much (thus preventing him from pursuing other things of value). I contend that the purview of epistemic temperance and its vices is restricted to epistemic desires that are “peculiar” to individuals—e.g., wanting true beliefs about metaphysics—and excludes the “common” desire for perceptual information about one’s surroundings. I also argue that even if trivial truths (like true beliefs about Derek Jeter’s batting average and Paris Hilton’s whereabouts) do not actively contribute to valuable epistemic ends, they are still “epistemic treats.” Celebrity trivia may be of lesser value than truths about physics, but the occasional consumption of celebrity trivia does not undermine valuable epistemic ends. Accordingly, the epistemically temperate person will consume objects that actively contribute to valuable epistemic ends and epistemic treats, whereas the epistemically self-indulgent person consumes all of these and objects that undermine valuable epistemic ends (e.g., false beliefs or unreliable processes). Finally, I suggest that philosophers and skeptics are epistemically self-indulgent because they desire, consume, and enjoy epistemic objects too much.
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