How to Value Accuracy: Veritism and Hurka’s Principle

According to Veritism, accuracy is the fundamental epistemic value. Epistemologists often take Veritism to entail that all other epistemic items can only have worth by tending to produce accurate beliefs or by being products of sources with this tendency. Yet many value theorists deny that all derivative value is grounded via instrumental relations of these sorts (“Instrumentalism”). Veritists, I suggest, can and should follow suit. To defend the suggestion, I develop a non-Instrumentalist version of Veritism inspired by Thomas Hurka’s axiology and show that it avoids a generalized version of the swamping problem. Indeed, I argue that the real moral of the swamping problem is that Instrumentalism is false: granting Instrumentalism, similar problems will confront any economical epistemic axiology. While there are probably other ways to develop Veritism without Instrumentalism, I show that my way is a promising one that needn’t rest on psychologically exacting views about rationality or knowledge.

1 Introduction

“[T]he proper appreciation of a beautiful object is a good thing,” wrote G. E. Moore. Yet while beauty and its proper appreciation are both good, it is implausible that they are equally fundamental goods. Appreciating beauty is good because beauty is good. After all, it is only good to appreciate what merits appreciation. Appreciating trash is no good. So, although it is valuable, the appreciation of beauty seems to have a derivative kind of value.

This is an example of a more general fact. In any evaluative domain, some values are more fundamental than others, in the sense that the value of everything else in the domain is explained in terms of their value. So, for any evaluative domain, we can ask the Fundamentality Question:

\[(FQ)\] Which value or set of values is the most fundamental in the domain?

Ethicists have long addressed FQ as it arises in the practical domain. Epistemologists have recently taken interest in FQ as it arises in the epistemic domain. There are, after all, many epistemic values: accuracy, rationality, justification, coherence, knowledge, etc. But it is doubtful that they are equally fundamental. We admire some of them from the epistemic point of view because we admire others from the epistemic point of view.

So, which is fundamental? Many have found it attractive to think that truth is at the bottom of it all. For many items we value from the epistemic point of view, it is

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1Moore (1903: Ch. VI, §114).
plausible that we value them because we value accuracy in belief. Inspired by this idea, one might favor:

(Veritism) Accurate belief is the sole fundamental epistemic value.

Many epistemologists have accepted Veritism, though it finds considerable opposition in recent literature. I also accept the view. But I think opponents and proponents alike understand it in an unjustifiably narrow way. Veritism is defensible if and only if it is understood less narrowly. The aim of this paper is to explain and defend this claim.

The Narrow Assumption: Instrumentalism about Derivative Value. Many epistemologists assume that there is only one kind of way in which we can explain one epistemic value in terms of a more fundamental epistemic value. The explanation, they assume, must proceed by invoking instrumental relations, so that for any X, X is derivatively epistemically good only by (i) tending to produce fundamental epistemic goods or (ii) being the product of something with feature (i). Call the kind of value something has just in virtue of (i) production value, and the kind something has just in virtue of (ii) mere product value. More officially, then, many assume:

(Instrumentalism about Derivative Epistemic Value) All derivative epistemic value is value of either the production or the mere product kind.

As a result, many assume that Veritism is trivially equivalent to:

(Instrumentalist Veritism) Accurate belief is the sole non-instrumental epistemic value.

None of this is trivial, however. Many value theorists have rejected Instrumentalism, including some who are consequentialists about rightness. Accordingly, it is only natural to wonder whether Veritism can take a less narrow form.

What could derivative value be, if not instrumentally grounded value? The example with which I opened provides one illustration. Appreciating beauty is good because beauty is good. But this 'because' signals no instrumental relation. Appreciating beauty does not reliably cause more beauty to exist, and needn’t be the product of anything beauty-conducive. Luckily, we are not forced to appeal to instrumental relations. On a more natural model, the instance of appreciation derives value because (a) its intentional object is good and (b) it is the way to value that good object. The result is appealing: appreciating beauty seems parasitically but also non-instrumentally good.

Hurka’s Principle. Ethicists have constructed axiologies that honor this idea. Thomas Hurka, for example, defends a recursive account on which there are basic non-instrumental values such as beauty and pleasure, and a principle for grounding derivative non-instrumental values in the basic ones:

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2One might reserve ‘instrumental epistemic value’ for (i). But I use it to capture the kind of derivative value that something has just by standing in some instrumental relation. The product of relation is just as much an instrumental relation as the caused by relation is a causal relation. Since many epistemologists allow that (ii) can ground derivative epistemic value, it is only fair to define Instrumentalism this way.
(Hurka’s Principle) When V is a non-instrumental value, fitting ways of valuing V have derivative non-instrumental value.\(^3\)

Given this principle, Hurka suggests that consequentialists about rightness can embrace the non-instrumental value of virtue while also respecting the thought that virtue has only a parasitic kind of value. They can do so by identifying virtues with ways of valuing more fundamental values and by making use of Hurka’s Principle.

Hurka’s model is not the only model in value theory that rejects Instrumentalism. Other value theorists have rejected it.\(^4\) I highlight Hurka’s view simply because it inspired my positive view.

Before I proceed, I will note that we should extend Hurka’s Principle in two ways that will prove important. First of all, it is natural to think that it is not only ways of valuing (e.g., love) but also actions and other attitudes that manifest these ways of valuing (e.g., loving treatment) that have derivative non-instrumental value. Manifestations of ways of valuing, as I’ll stress again in §4, are not mere products of ways of valuing. Indeed, only acts and attitudes can be proper manifestations.

By way of illustration, suppose Alice performs a beneficent act that manifests her valuing of beneficence, while Beatrice performs the same kind of act as a PR stunt. Alice’s act has greater worth than Beatrice’s, and this extra worth is not merely instrumental. But the fact that Alice’s act has greater worth is not just a brute fact. There is a two-stage explanation of this fact: (i) Alice’s act has greater worth by manifesting real valuing of beneficence, and (ii) this valuing, in turn, is good because it is fittingly directed at something good. So, we should extend the principle to say:

When V is a non-instrumental value, fitting ways of valuing V and their manifestations have derivative non-instrumental value.

One further extension of Hurka’s Principle will prove important. Like Sosa (2007), I will only be assuming that accuracy, knowledge, rationality, etc., have value from the epistemic point of view. So, I am only interested in defending a version of Veritism on which accuracy is the sole fundamental value from the epistemic point of view. It is compatible with this view that accuracy in belief might have no non-instrumental value from any non-epistemic point of view. Thus, I need the principle that if V-ing is a fitting way of valuing a non-instrumental value from the point of view of a domain D, V-ing has derivative non-instrumental value from the point of view of D.

This extended principle is no less plausible than the original. Even if one doubts that beauty is non-instrumentally valuable simpliciter, it is undoubtedly non-instrumentally valuable from the aesthetic point of view. So is the appreciation of beauty: this is also a good thing from the aesthetic point of view, since it is the aesthetically fitting response

\(^3\)See Hurka (2001). Hurka uses a less general version of this principle which mentions love rather than ways of valuing. But this principle is, I take it, plausible because love is a way of valuing. And there are other ways of valuing the valuable—an idea that will prove crucial in this paper.

Is this principle trivial because ‘fitting’ is synonymous with ‘valuable’? No. Fittingness and value are distinct normative categories. The principle is non-trivial for this reason. Moreover, the principle says that fitting ways of valuing are derivatively valuable, not just valuable.

to beauty. But the latter has a derivative status relative to the former. So, we should revise the principle in one further way:

(\textit{The Extended Hurka Principle}) When V is a non-instrumental value from the point of view of domain D, fitting ways of valuing V in D and their manifestations have derivative non-instrumental value from the point of view of D.

\textbf{A Caption of the View and the Plan.} My view appeals to the Extended Hurka Principle to explain why rational belief, justified belief, and knowledge have an accuracy-oriented kind of epistemic worth. On my view, such beliefs are epistemically valuable because they manifest certain \textit{ways to place value on accuracy in thought}. I will understand the ways of placing value on accuracy in thought in a psychologically unexacting way: they need not be explicitly voiced, conscious, emotional, or global in the way that character traits are global. Indeed, they are things that children and animals can display, just by being disposed to think in certain ways.

The view is compatible with many substantive pictures of the nature of rational belief, knowledge, and other epistemic desiderata. I see the best pictures as simply disagreeing about what it takes to place value on accuracy in thought. My view is that any way of placing value on accuracy in believing P involves a disposition to hold the belief that P only if it is likely to be accurate relative to the epistemic reasons. There are several ways to place value on accuracy in thought because there are several kinds of \textit{likelihood} and \textit{epistemic reasons}, which correspond to different epistemic desiderata. These ways and the corresponding desiderata qualify as derivatively epistemically good thanks to the Extended Hurka Principle.

I should stress that rejecting Instrumentalism is compatible with the idea that some items might have both instrumental epistemic value and a different kind of derivative epistemic value. Reliability, I agree, is a \textit{necessary} condition for some epistemic virtues. I only deny that Instrumentalism can explain all the facts about derivative epistemic value. I will sketch a different model of epistemic value derivation. But I intend this model to supplement the instrumental model, not supplant it.

With this capsule statement in mind, here is the plan. In \S 2, I explain why Veritism should not be identified with Instrumentalist Veritism. Instrumentalist Veritism faces a generalized version of the swamping problem. But this problem undermines Instrumentalism, not Veritism. For if we grant Instrumentalism, similar problems arise for \textit{any} economical epistemic axiology. I show in \S 3 how Veritism could take a less narrow form and avoid the swamping problem. After answering objections in \S 4, I show in \S 5 why some alternative views either fail or collapse into my view.

\section{Instrumentalism and the Swamping Problem}

Why should Veritists reject Instrumentalism? A large reason is that this is the best way to solve a generalized version of the swamping problem. To bring this out, I

\footnote{Of course, it sounds weird to say that the appreciation of beauty is aesthetically good. But the problem is terminological: since appreciation is an aesthetically fitting response to beauty, it is certainly a good thing from the aesthetic point of view. This is why I use the "point of view" talk, which is more general.}
will rehearse the original swamping problem and explain why we should still take it seriously. I will then explain why it undermines Instrumentalist Veritism. But I will argue that the Instrumentalist half is the culprit. This is because any modest epistemic axiology that embraces Instrumentalism will face a relative of the swamping problem, and Veritists can easily solve the problem by rejecting Instrumentalism.

2.1 The Old Problem (and Why It Remains Important)

Originally, the swamping problem was presented as a problem for a simple kind of reliabilism. The following thoughts prompted the problem. The epistemic value of a reliable belief-forming process per se is just instrumental epistemic value relative to the goal of producing a high ratio of true to false beliefs. While reliable belief-forming processes have great epistemic value, one also wants to evaluate their products. And unfortunately, the following claim is plausible:

(A) A belief’s having been produced by a reliable belief-forming process does not as such make that belief epistemically better if that belief is already true.

(A) is made plausible by an analogy from Zagzebski (1999). The mere fact that some good coffee was produced by a reliable coffeemaker does not make that coffee better. But a reliably produced true belief as such is analogous to a reliably produced cup of good coffee. Thus:

(B) If knowledge = true belief produced by a reliable belief-forming process, then knowledge is not as such epistemically better than true belief.

But knowledge is as such epistemically better than true belief. Hence the problem.

Some might try to resist this argument by observing that we do sometimes place greater value on products of reliable sources. For example, the market value of a good watch produced by Rolex would be far higher than that of an unusual, qualitatively identical watch produced by Casio. Doesn’t this undermine the swamping argument?

No. Intuition pumps like this do support the conclusion that some products of reliable sources are better than intrinsically similar products of unreliable sources. But this conclusion does not undermine the reasoning behind the swamping problem. Here is why. The key thought behind the swamping argument is this:

(*) Being produced by a reliable producer of good Fs cannot as such make a good F better.

The ‘as such’ matters. It is consistent with (*) that other properties can contingently accompany a good F’s reliable ancestry and add value to that F. The Rolex/Casio example is an illustration: Rolexes are status symbols. That is why the Rolex is preferable. If it were not a status symbol, it would be irrational to prefer the Rolex.

Proponents of the swamping argument will agree that reliably produced good Fs are sometimes better than unreliably produced good Fs. Zagzebski (1996) agrees that

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reliability is a necessary condition for complete epistemic virtue. Thus, she agrees that some reliably produced true beliefs are better than mere true beliefs: some reliably produced true beliefs will satisfy the other necessary conditions for manifesting complete epistemic virtue, after all! What Zagzebski and others deny is that reliable ancestry as such is sufficient to explain why knowledge as such is epistemically better.

That was the problem all along. So, the conclusion (i.e., (B)) from the original literature stands. It is insufficient to observe that a reliably produced F is sometimes better than an unreliably produced but intrinsically similar F. Zagzebski and others will agree but deny that the explanation proceeds via the bare fact of reliable production. That was the point of the coffee analogy. The analogy forces us to ask what else could make the difference, since reliable ancestry as such seems insufficient.

2.2 The Deeper Problem

The swamping problem runs deeper than this, as others have recognized. It is easy to see that the problem is not just a problem about knowledge or just a problem for reliabilists.

To see the first point, note that reliabilists identify a belief’s being justified with its being produced by a reliable type of belief-forming process. Assume they are right for the sake of argument. We can use the same coffee analogy to argue that justification cannot as such add epistemic value to true belief. That is bad: justification as such does add epistemic value to true belief! This is not a restatement of the problem about knowledge: due to the Gettier problem, no reliabilist will equate knowledge with justified true belief.

There is an even more general structure that makes the problem not just of limited interest to reliabilists. On any view on which

being justified : true belief :: being produced by a good coffeemaker : good coffee

there is a worry that justification cannot as such add epistemic value to true belief. So, there is a worry for any view on which the epistemic value of justified belief consists in its being the mere product of some type of source that is only instrumentally good relative to true belief. Reliabilists are hardly the only epistemologists who accept this assumption.

These observations lead to a general argument against Instrumentalist Veritism. Instrumentalist Veritism entails that:

(I) Items other than true belief are epistemically good iff they (i) tend to produce true (and not false) beliefs or (ii) are products of a source with property (i).

And the following is a natural generalization of the points about the coffeemaker case:

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7See Zagzebski (1996: 165-194), and especially the sections entitled “The Success Component of the Intellectual Virtues” and “Montmarquet on the Virtues and Truth-Conduciveness.”
9As Duncan Pritchard (2010, 2011) in effect observed.
Swamping Premise) If X has its source in something that is only instrumentally
good relative to property F and X already exemplifies F, the mere fact that X has
that source cannot as such make X better.

But according to Instrumentalist Veritism, justifying sources only have instrumental
epistemic value relative to true belief. So (I) and (II) will entail:

(Bad) A true belief’s being justified cannot as such make it epistemically better.

Some would take this to undermine Veritism. But this is only because they assume In-
strumentalism. Veritists can reject Instrumentalism and view the generalized swamp-
ing problem as an argument against it. To support this tactic, I will show that the
Swamping Premise does not extend to other species of derivative value. This will
show that the problem is a local one for Instrumentalists. To drive the point home, I
will show that there are similar problems for all modest alternatives to Veritism that
cling to Instrumentalism.

2.3 Why Other Forms of Derivative Value Help

Let us first understand why rejecting Instrumentalism can help Veritists. Doing so
can help them, I suggest, because other forms of derivative value are not subject to
swamping by the values on which they are parasitic. To see this, consider:

(Stronger Swamping Premise) For no type of derivative value and no sense of “has
its source in” is it true that:

if X has its source in something that only has derivative value relative to property
F but X already has F, X’s having that source as such makes X better.

This is false. Suppose Alice performs an act of beneficence because she values benefi-
cence, while Beatrice performs the same kind of action as a PR stunt. Plausibly, Alice’s
action is better than Beatrice’s because it manifests (and in this sense has its source in)
real concern for beneficence. Yet just as appreciating beauty is good because beauty
is good, so valuing beneficence is good because beneficence is good. It is just that the
‘because’ here signals no instrumental explanation.

Here an act derives value by manifesting something only derivatively good rela-
tive to another property that the act exemplifies. The source manifested is (1) Alice’s
valuing of beneficence, and the property exemplified is (2) beneficence. Yet it is plau-
sible that the sheer fact that Alice’s act has its source in (1) makes that act worthier
per se. In a picture:

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This would be impossible if the Stronger Swamping Premise were true. So it is false.

If the foregoing points are right, Veritism generates no problem: only its conjunction with Instrumentalism does. If Veritists adopt a different model of value derivation, they can avoid swamping just as it was avoided in the case of Alice’s beneficent action.

On the view I develop in §3, rational belief and knowledge gain epistemic worth by manifesting ways of placing value on accuracy in thought. On this view, the case of knowing parallels the case of Alice’s beneficent action. Knowledge requires a belief whose accuracy manifests a disposition to hold beliefs only if there is sufficient objective and subjective evidence that they are true. This disposition just is a way to place value on accuracy in thought. Ways of placing value on accuracy are epistemically good because accuracy is epistemically good. But this ‘because’ is not (purely) instrumental. Parallelizing Alice’s case:

I will explain the ways of placing value on accuracy in thought in §3. The tactic is what matters now. Veritists can claim that true beliefs can gain epistemic worth by manifesting ways of placing value on accuracy, just as beneficent actions can gain moral worth by manifesting an agent’s valuing of beneficence. Both cases undermine the Stronger Swamping Premise.

So Veritists can avoid the swamping problem if they appeal to forms of derivative value beyond the instrumental. But they must avoid the problem in this way. For the restricted Swamping Premise is true. Instrumentalist Veritism is false.

2.4 A General Problem for Instrumentalists

We can strengthen this advice by seeing that if Instrumentalism were true, other economical epistemic axiologies would face relatives of the swamping problem.
Observe that there is another side to Zagzebski’s analogy. We do not only think that being produced by a reliable coffeemaker *per se* cannot improve good cups of coffee. We also think that coming from a reliable coffeemaker *per se* cannot improve bad cups of coffee. If you drink some vile coffee and cringe, it is not comforting to be told: “Hey, at least it was produced by a reliable coffeemaker.” These facts support a more striking sibling of the restricted Swamping Premise:

*(Dud Principle)* If X was produced by a source that is only good because it produces good Fs, that fact as such can’t make X better if X is otherwise a bad F.

Carter and Jarvis (2012) took this to undermine the intuitions behind the swamping problem. For they thought that the Dud Principle would imply, crazily, that “non-factive epistemic properties—most saliently justification—are never epistemically valuable”. But this is too fast: that crazy conclusion follows only if we grant Instrumentalism.

Like the original Swamping Premise, the Dud Principle concerns mere product value. The crazy conclusion would not follow from the Dud Principle if non-factive epistemic properties had a different kind of derivative epistemic value. Only if the Dud Principle extends to other kinds of derivative value is Carter and Jarvis’s conclusion fair.

But the Dud Principle does not generalize, for the same reasons why the Swamping Premise did not generalize. Consider someone trying to perform a beneficent act as a manifestation of her valuing of beneficence, failing only due to bad luck. Her efforts remain better than the failed efforts of someone merely looking for a PR boost.

What the Dud Principle really suggests is that Instrumentalism is an incomplete model. After all, it is not as if Carter and Jarvis can convince us that vile coffee is better if it comes from an otherwise reliable coffee machine. Like the original Swamping Premise, the Dud Principle captures a fact about mere products of instrumentally good sources. But it is then easy to see that any modest axiology that embraces Instrumentalism will face a relative of the swamping problem.

Suppose, for example, that knowledge is one’s fundamental epistemic good. Given Instrumentalism, how can one explain the epistemic value of justified beliefs? One must claim that such beliefs are good by being products of knowledge-conducive types of processes. But the Dud Principle will make it mysterious why justified false beliefs are epistemically good. From an Instrumentalist point of view, they are duds just like bad cups from otherwise reliable coffeemakers.

Expanding the stock of fundamental epistemic values doesn’t really help. Even if one adds justified belief, knowledge, understanding, and true belief to the list, there remain epistemic values that (a) no one can reasonably take to be fundamental, but (b) admit of no Instrumentalist explanation. Consider the epistemic value of *trying one’s best to form beliefs accurately*. This is a *paradigmatically derivative* value: trying to do something good is admirable *because* it is intentionally directed at something good. But if we accept Instrumentalism, it is hard to explain why it is derivatively epistemically good. Merely trying to form one’s beliefs accurately is not reliably instrumental to accuracy, knowledge, justification, etc. Yet there remains something admirable in one’s best efforts.
Any modest epistemic axiology that endorses Instrumentalism will face a relative of the swamping problem. Some paradigmatically derivative epistemic values admit of no general Instrumentalist explanation. So, everyone, not just Veritists, should reject Instrumentalism.

3 Veritism without Instrumentalism

Of course, work remains for Veritists. They must provide a more specific view that takes advantage of our observations about forms of value derivation beyond the instrumental, and explain how this view can capture central intuitions about epistemic value.

My view will secure these desiderata. After noting that there are more ways to value something than by promoting it, I will suggest that central epistemic values like coherent belief, rational belief, and knowledge can be viewed as manifesting different ways of placing value on accuracy, and as deriving accuracy-oriented epistemic value thanks to the Extended Hurka Principle.

3.1 Other Ways of Valuing in General

Let’s start with a more general fact. It is a truism that values are items that it is proper to value. Given the truism, one should ask for any fundamental value V in any domain:

Which ways of valuing V are the fitting ways in the domain?

Instrumentalists might accept a narrow answer:

(The Teleological Answer) For any fundamental value V, the only basically fitting way to value V is to instrumentally promote V.  

But the Teleological Answer is implausible. There are many ways to value: dedication, loyalty, respect, veneration, love, support, etc. This answer regards only one as basically fitting to fundamental value. This is hardly a default view. For some values, promotion is not the basically fitting response. If friendship were fundamentally "to be promoted", we could properly spend less time caring about the friends we have and more time amassing friends or causing others to have more friends. But we can properly value friendship without taking ourselves to have reasons to produce more instances of friendship. Fans of the Teleological Answer could multiply fundamental values in reply, and claim that loyalty, commitment, respect, dedication, etc., are all fundamental values. But this pluralism is implausible. Besides violating canons of parsimony, it fails to explain asymmetries. Dedication to one’s friends matters because friendship matters.

These points highlight an insight needed for a version of Veritism that rejects Instrumentalism. The Veritist should capitalize on this insight and suggest that there are more ways to place value on accuracy in thought than by producing a high ratio of true to false beliefs by any means, including means that disrespect accuracy.

\[\text{11} \] I say ‘basically proper’ because the instrumentalist can obviously allow that other ways of valuing V are non-basically fitting in virtue of helping to instrumentally promote V.

### 3.2 Ways to Place Value on Accuracy in Thought

How can we implement the insight? What are the ways to place value on accuracy in thought? I understand them as different ways to honor the following ideal of accuracy:

\[(AI) \text{ It is correct to believe } P \text{ iff } P \text{ is true.}\]

AI is not a directly belief-guiding norm. But we can honor this norm indirectly. By doing so, we place value on accuracy in our thinking. Coherent, rational, and knowledgeable beliefs can be viewed as epistemically good from a truth-oriented point of view by manifesting three increasingly demanding ways to honor AI: commitment, respect, and compliance.

#### 3.2.1 Commitment and Coherence

To see the first way to honor AI, consider other ideals, like this ideal of politeness:

\[(PI) \text{ It is correct to say } Q \text{ to some casual interlocutor only if saying } Q \text{ would not make this interlocutor pointlessly uncomfortable.}\]

Imagine that Edward is trying to make you pointlessly uncomfortable by saying Q. He may fail: unbeknownst to him, Q may put you at ease. If so, he conforms to PI. Still, he is clearly reckless with respect to PI, and manifests a lack of commitment to PI.

Being committed to an ideal is part of what it takes to honor it. Commitment to an ideal in \(\phi\)-ing is grounded in a disposition to \(\phi\) only if one takes there to be sufficient evidence that \(\phi\)-ing is in conformity with that ideal. When we criticize people for recklessness with respect to some ideal, it is this we find lacking.

Like any ideal, the ideal of accuracy calls for commitment. Consider someone who takes himself to have conclusive evidence that he believes P inaccurately but believes P anyway. He does not place sufficient value on accuracy in his thinking. He might believe accurately anyway. But he fails to manifest commitment to AI in believing P, like how Edward failed to manifest commitment to PI in saying Q. This is why he doesn’t fully honor AI.

Commitment to AI lines up with one interesting epistemic value—viz., coherence. Complying with the norms of doxastic coherence is the way to manifest commitment to AI. The coherent may fail to place value on accuracy in some ways, but not by lack of commitment to the ideal of accuracy.

#### 3.2.2 Respect and Substantive Rationality

Coherence is not the whole of epistemic rationality. Epistemic rationality also has a substantive side. Substantive epistemic rationality involves a stronger way to honor the ideal of accuracy than commitment, though it does not require conformity.

To understand this, compare the ideal of politeness again. This time imagine Edna, who seems to succeed by her own lights with respect to PI. She is confident that her interlocutor likes talking about X and so intends to bring up X. But Edna neglects certain apparent evidence. She has a seeming memory that X makes her interlocutor uncomfortable but disregards it as misleading. This apparent memory might really be
misleading. If so, Edna conforms to PI. But she is negligent with respect to PI, and fails to respect PI in one natural sense.\(^{13}\)

Respect is another way to honor an ideal. To respect an ideal in \(\phi\)-ing is to manifest a disposition to \(\phi\) iff the apparent evidence indicates that \(\phi\)-ing would be in conformity with the ideal. When we criticize people for being negligent with respect to an ideal, it is this we find lacking.

Like any ideal, the ideal of accuracy calls for respect. Consider someone who mistakenly takes himself to have conclusive evidence for P by randomly disregarding obvious evidence against P as misleading. While he might believe something true, he fails to place sufficient value on accuracy in believing P, just as Edna failed to place sufficient value on politeness in bringing up X.

Respect for AI lines up with another interesting epistemic value—viz., substantive epistemic rationality. Being substantively epistemically rational is the way to respect the ideal of accuracy. Substantively rational thinkers may fail to place value on accuracy in their thinking in other ways, but not by a lack of respect, in one intuitive sense of ‘respect’.

### 3.2.3 Compliance and Knowledge

Even if we are fully committed to some ideal and respect it, we may not honor it fully. To honor an ideal fully, one must actually conform to it. Not all non-conformity manifests disrespect or lack of commitment. Imagine someone falsely telling you that a topic does not make her uncomfortable. Perhaps she recognizes that you enjoy this topic and wants to oblige you. If you bring it up, you fall short with respect to PI. But not by disrespect or lack of commitment.

Of course, mere conformity is not a way to honor an ideal. Conformity can be the lucky product of negligence or recklessness. If you fall short because you do not fully honor PI, it is not just because of non-conformity. Rather, what you fail to do is something you are sadly in no position to do: namely, to comply with the ideal.

What is it to comply with an ideal? It is to conform with the ideal by respecting it. In cases like the one imagined, compliance is not open to you: only if it became apparent that the topic makes your interlocutor uncomfortable would it be open to you. This is why you are excusable. But compliance sometimes is open to us. When it is, it is the most fitting way to honor the ideal.

Like other ideals, AI also calls for compliance. Sometimes we can conform to AI by respecting AI, thereby complying with AI. When we do, we believe accurately by believing rationally. This way of placing value on accuracy lines up with another epistemic value—viz., knowing. Knowing that P is the way to comply with the ideal of accuracy.

### 3.3 Deriving Epistemic Value via the Extended Hurka Principle

Once we see that these central epistemic values reflect different ways of placing value on accuracy in thought, we can use the Extended Hurka Principle to explain their epistemic value from an accuracy-oriented point of view. Consider substantive rationality.

\(^{13}\)There are affinities here with Darwall (1977)’s general notion of recognition respect.
It requires sensitivity (in a dispositional sense) to the apparent evidence bearing on one’s accuracy. That is a way to place value on accuracy in thought. If so, we can use the Extended Hurka Principle to explain the epistemic value of substantively rational belief in accuracy-oriented terms. In a picture:

The same story explains why coherence and knowledge have derivative epistemic value. Being coherent is the way to be committed to the ideal of accuracy. Knowing is the way to comply with the ideal of accuracy. Being committed to and complying with the ideal of accuracy are epistemically fitting ways to place value on accuracy in thought. Accordingly, we can explain the epistemic value of coherence and knowledge from the perspective of accuracy just like we explained the epistemic value of substantive rationality. In pictures:

There are epistemic values other than coherence, rationality, and knowledge. But I hypothesize that every properly epistemic value that is not just instrumentally valuable relative to the others that I discussed will be explicable in something like this framework. In §4, I will address objections to this hypothesis. For now, I am happy to have derived the epistemic value of three central items.

### 3.4 Advantages

The version of Veritism I’ve sketched has many attractions. Let’s consider them.
My view is the first to honor the fact that value derivation need not proceed via instrumental relations. This yields advantages. The Swamping Premise does not generalize to other forms of derivative value. Just as acts that manifest ways of valuing ethical ideals are ethically better, so doxastic attitudes that manifest ways of valuing accuracy are epistemically better.

My view inherits the broader virtues of Veritism. Veritism is a simple axiology. Parsimony is as much a virtue in axiology as it is elsewhere. Supplemented with more sophisticated views about derivative value, Veritism also has great explanatory power. And its explanatory power is intuitive. It is intuitive that we care about things like rationality because we care about accuracy.

Since I deny that the 'because' must be understood instrumentally, I can vindicate this intuitive claim more directly than Instrumentalists. Forming beliefs in a way that appears likely to achieve accuracy does not entail reliable achievement of accuracy. Just consider demon worlds, where our experiences are the same but the demon ensures that they radically fail to match external reality. These worlds do suggest that some epistemic values cannot be explained in terms of truth-conducivity. But this does not show that not all epistemic values are truth-oriented. It just shows that truth orientation should not be understood merely instrumentally.

Isn’t rationality a way of “subjectively promoting” accuracy? Sure. But if we are Instrumentalists, it is unclear why this is more than a merely apparently good thing. Expected value is perhaps connected to obligation. But it is not a kind of value, just as expected wealth is not a kind of wealth. Yet rationality does not just appear to have epistemic value. It has real epistemic value, even in demon worlds. The only way to explain this short of an error theory is to view the “subjective promotion” of accuracy as constituting something further: a way to value accuracy.

4 Five Objections Answered

A theory can have many virtues while facing conclusive objections. Having sketched my theory and explained its virtues, I will now answer five major objections.

4.1 Too Demanding?

I said that coherence, rationality and knowledge are epistemically valuable in virtue of manifesting ways to place value on accuracy in thought. But must people place value on accuracy in thought to believe coherently, rationally, or knowingly? Isn’t this too demanding?

Reply. This objection is itself nourished by overly demanding assumptions. In particular, it assumes that placing value on accuracy in thought is more demanding than it is.

It is plausible that when we think carefully by heeding all the apparent evidence bearing on the accuracy of our beliefs, we place value on accuracy in our thinking. This fits under a more general pattern. When we reason carefully and heed the apparent evidence bearing on whether we would conform to a standard by φ-ing, it is plausible
that our $\phi$-ing exhibits respect for that standard. It is plausible, then, that respecting accuracy is not psychologically demanding.

This idea is not strained. If Sal thinks carelessly and forms beliefs iff they are comforting, it is natural to fault him for placing insufficient value on accuracy in his thinking. When we do so, we are calling for something more modest than love or passion for accuracy. Love, passion and the like are not the only forms of valuing. They did not figure in my account. We need not view respect, commitment or compliance as constituted by emotions or states with any fancy qualitative feel.

They are just ways to be attuned to factors that bear on the accuracy of one's beliefs. The ways to place value on accuracy I invoked are forms of sensitivity to truth-oriented reasons: the reasons are belief-relative in the case of commitment, appearance-relative in the case of respect, and fact-relative in the case of compliance. In this un-exacting sense, even children may place value on accuracy in thought—e.g., by being disposed to abandon their beliefs when they are probably inaccurate relative to the epistemic reasons.

Indeed, ways of valuing accuracy could simply be grounded in competences. This is true, at any rate, if competence is understood as epistemically good because its exercises constitute ways to place value on accuracy. Consider Greco (1999: 289):

[S]ubjective justification can be understood in terms of the dispositions a person manifests when she is thinking conscientiously.... [B]y 'thinking conscientiously', I do not mean thinking with an explicitly voiced purpose of finding out the truth. Neither do I mean thinking with this as one's sole purpose. Rather, I intend the state that most people are in as a kind of default mode—trying to form one's beliefs accurately.

Properly framed, this could be a version of my picture.

4.2 Doesn't the View Then Collapse into Familiar Views?

My reply dovetails with another objection. Doesn't this reply show that my view collapses into familiar views? Aren't the properties that subvene my ways of placing value on accuracy just familiar ones from other theories of rationality and knowledge?

Reply. This objection misses the point of my view. I can agree that my ways of valuing accuracy are grounded in familiar properties from other accounts of the nature of rationality and knowledge. My view is not about the nature of rationality or knowledge, but about why these properties are epistemically good. What matters for this purpose is that these properties manifest something further—viz., ways to place value on accuracy.

Here we see what is new. My view captures unappreciated truth-oriented unity in epistemic value by its appeal to the Extended Hurka Principle and ways of placing value on accuracy in thought. These ideas are not familiar in epistemology. Most epistemologists assume without argument that all derivative value must be grounded via instrumental relations to fundamental value.

One might try to restate the objection: “But if ways to place value on accuracy are grounded in familiar properties, then ways to place value on accuracy will only be epistemically valuable if these familiar properties are epistemically valuable. But it is your job to explain why these familiar properties are epistemically valuable!”
I reply that they are epistemically valuable because they constitute ways of valuing accuracy, which in turn derive epistemic value via the Extended Hurka Principle. This sounds question-begging only if we are hoodwinked by a fallacy. Consider a beautiful painting. It is grounded in a bunch of atoms. These atoms are not beautiful. If they have value, it is because they ground something else. We should not insist that the atoms must have antecedent value and worry that the painting is trash because we cannot find this antecedent value. Their value can be explained in a trickle-down fashion: they ground the painting and it is valuable, so they are valuable. Downwards causation may be incredible. But downwards value inheritance is the norm.

4.3 Did We Really Avoid Swamping?

I said Veritists could avoid swamping by appealing to two facts: (i) that manifestations of ways of valuing valuable properties are themselves non-instrumentally valuable, and (ii) that this value remains even when the manifestations have the properties that are valued. Thanks to (i) and (ii), it seems true that if an accurate belief manifests (and in this sense has its source in) the believer’s valuing of accuracy, the belief is epistemically better.

But is there really a general truth backing this claim? Suppose a painter values beauty, and for this reason produces a beautiful painting. Does this painting have any extra value from the aesthetic point of view, simply in virtue of the fact that it was produced by someone who values beauty? This is implausible, one might insist.

Reply. My reply appeals to the difference between manifestations of ways of valuing and mere products of ways of valuing. Only acts and attitudes can obviously manifest ways of valuing. It is unclear that objects can manifest fitting ways of valuing. If so, the supposed counterexample is no counterexample to the principle I used, which claimed that manifestations of fitting ways of valuing have derivative non-instrumental value.

Now, mightn’t some features of an artwork manifest an artist’s ideals just like his acts and attitudes do? Perhaps. But the examples that make this thought believable support my view. Imagine two novels with the same nice stylistic properties. One has them by accident; it is the work of a hack writer, entirely unaware of the significance of these properties, and who could easily have written garbage. The other novel was written by an artist who appreciates the significance of these properties and includes them for this reason. It is not crazy to claim that the second is a better literary work.

More carefully: it is not crazy to make this claim if we assume that the aesthetic value of a work isn’t independent of the artistic intention behind it. Of course, one might reject that assumption. But if one does reject that assumption, one is adopting the view that the aesthetic properties of a work cannot be manifestations of the artist’s ideals: they are mere products of the artist.

It is fair for the opponent of Instrumentalism to emphasize the difference between manifestations and mere products. Avoiding Instrumentalism requires an appeal to relations that are not instrumental. The product of relation is an instrumental relation. It is not surprising that mere products of valuable sources don’t derive any value. And if we consider clear manifestations of the artist’s ideals—painterly choices—it is not implausible that they can derive value. Consider a painter who knows what is beautiful
and produces something beautiful deliberately, and another who produces something beautiful only accidentally. The first painter’s acts are more admirable.

4.4 What About Other Epistemic Values?

One might accept my account of the epistemic value of coherence, rationality, and knowledge but worry that the approach cannot stretch farther. How can it ground all epistemic values, including rich ones like open-mindedness and intellectual courage?

Reply. I have a two-pronged response. First, I think these rich properties have a special glow partly by having extra value that is not properly epistemic. Beliefs that exhibit these properties might be somewhat epistemically better than mere true beliefs. But—second prong—my framework can explain their properly epistemic value.

A warm-up to the first prong. Epistemic value theorists often try to explain too much by not distinguishing two things we could mean by 'epistemic value'. I would separate

(a) being good from the epistemic point of view

from

(b) being good *simpliciter* and also epistemic.

There are parallels. Consider talk of a good chess strategy. This may pick out

(c) something that is good *from the point of view of chess strategy*

or

(d) something that is good *simpliciter* and also a chess strategy.

If your chess strategy will humiliate your opponent, it exemplifies (c) but not (d). Similarly, something might be epistemically superb but of little worth absolutely.

Must the chess expert explain the goodness of chess strategies from the point of View of the Universe? No. It is similarly hard to see why the epistemologist must explain which epistemic items matter from that point of view. A theory of epistemic value should not make it impossible to understand why certain epistemic properties are desirable from the Point of View of the Universe. But this is a weak constraint. If we reject Instrumentalism, there is no reason to believe that Veritism violates this constraint.

Intuitions voiced in the literature on epistemic value often conflate (a) and (b). Once we remove obstacles to seeing how knowledge and understanding can possibly have value *simpliciter*, we must recognize that intuitions about (b) are best left for non-epistemic axiologists to explain. A theory of what is valuable from the epistemic point of view need not explain them, just as the chess strategist need not vindicate chess fanaticism.

With this in mind, I approach some items with suspicion. Consider understanding. While special in absolute terms, its significance from the epistemic point of view is unclear. Note that while (A-C) are defensible epistemic requirements, (***”) aren’t:
(A) Don’t believe P while also believing that your evidence for P is insufficient.

(B) Don’t believe P while also believing that you lack justification to believe P.

(C) Don’t judge that P while also believing that you don’t know that P.

(*) Don’t believe P while also believing that you do not understand why P.

(**) Don’t have beliefs about X while also believing that you don’t understand X.

Of some facts I know, I am sure I do not understand why they are so. Of some topics about which I have beliefs, I am sure I do not understand them. Sometimes this is not my fault. We may hope to understand the facts. But they may be unintelligible. The world could have been a bag of loose facts. We exhibit no epistemic flaw if we take some facts to obtain while finding them unintelligible. By contrast, we exhibit a flaw if we judge while admitting that we do so irrationally, unjustifiably, etc.

So it is unclear that a theory of epistemic value must explain our thirst for understanding. Still, understanding has some accuracy-oriented value. Like Pritchard (2010: 75-6), I think one cannot understand a topic without having many rational true beliefs about it. I just suspect that whatever value understanding has beyond this is not properly epistemic.

I am less moved yet by other items that are sometimes claimed to have some truth-disconnected epistemic value. Some point to features like open-mindedness and intellectual courage. While the goodness of these features is not wholly truth-disconnected, I am unconvinced that their extra value is properly epistemic. This is not ad hoc: being willing to take the ideas of others seriously is good, but it can be epistemically counterproductive. The same goes for the intellectual courage associated with finding alternatives to common views even when they face no serious objections.

4.5 **Trivial Truths and the Valuing of Accuracy**

There is a different objection worth discussing in connection with the last. Many have objected that accuracy cannot be the fundamental epistemic value because the best way to promote that value would be to do absurd things like memorizing telephone books.

But accuracy-first views need not encourage such nonsense. My view only implies that when one is taking a stance on some proposition, it is epistemically desirable to hold a doxastic attitude that manifests certain ways of honoring the ideal of accuracy:

(AI) It is correct to believe P iff P is true.

AI is weaker than:

(AI+) One ought to believe P iff P is true.

Granting AI+, we would be obliged to memorize telephone books. But AI calls for no such thing: AI only implies that if P is true, it is correct to believe that P. The claim

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that it is correct to believe truths does not imply the claim that it is incorrect to not believe truths.

This reply is preferable to the common one. Many suggest that we trade Al+ for:

\[(Al-) \text{ For any important proposition } P, \text{ a person ought to believe } P \text{ iff } P \text{ is true.}\]

While \(Al-\) avoids bad implications about trivial truths, it creates new problems. It fails to explain why it can be as epistemically criticizable to have wildly irrational beliefs about phone numbers as about philosophy. \(Al\), by contrast, renders all inaccurate beliefs equally incorrect. So, beliefs that equally disrespect \(Al\) are equally epistemically flawed.

5 On the Competition

I have displayed the advantages of my view and answered a host of objections. But even if a view has only advantages and avoids objections, it is only worth endorsing if it outperforms the competition. Does my view do so?

As we saw earlier, no modest form of pluralism about fundamental epistemic value that clings to Instrumentalism can avoid every relative of the swamping problem. With Instrumentalism dropped, there is no reason related to the swamping problem to prefer these forms of pluralism. Since parsimony is a virtue, we should prefer my view.

What about other forms of monism? Granting Instrumentalism, they too will face relatives of the swamping problem. If the desire to avoid the swamping problem attracts one to a knowledge-first epistemic axiology, one is short-sighted: this view will face related problems, as we saw earlier. One could embrace a non-Veritist version of monism while also rejecting Instrumentalism. But because I am optimistic about the analyzability of knowledge, I doubt that the main alternative—i.e., the knowledge-first view—is well-motivated.

5.1 What About Reliabilist Virtue Epistemology?

Still, this does not exhaust the alternatives.

One alternative is virtue epistemology of the sort defended by Ernest Sosa. On this view, beliefs gain epistemic value by manifesting an epistemic agent’s competence. While competence here is reliabilist, it is also agent-level in a way reliable processes need not be. Owing to this difference, Sosa’s model makes a narrower prediction than the process reliabilist’s: only beliefs that manifest the agent’s epistemic competence gain extra epistemic worth. This can seem to give Sosa a more principled response to the swamping problem. Apt belief is an achievement, while products of reliable processes are not necessarily achievements.

Compare this with my view. On my view, beliefs gain epistemic worth by manifesting certain ways of placing value on accuracy in thought. Structurally, the views are similar: in both cases, the belief derives epistemic worth by manifesting a truth-connected person-level feature. Verbally, the feature differs: it is a reliabilist competence in one case, and a way of placing value on accuracy in thought in the other. But one might think Sosa has the advantage, since his feature sounds less lofty.
Why prefer my view? I have two responses. First, this question rests partly on a false dilemma. I would view some kinds of competent belief as constituting ways to place value on accuracy in thought. Since I do not understand ways of placing value on accuracy in thought in a demanding way, there is no divide between Sosa and me here.

The difference rests not in the demands we make, but in our views of derivative epistemic value. On my view, it is only because some competences constitute ways to place value on accuracy in thought that their manifestations have derivative epistemic value. Sosa explains why manifestations of competence have epistemic value without regard to whether they constitute ways to place value on accuracy in thought.

This brings me to the second response. It is crucial for the success of virtue epistemology that competences be able to ground ways of placing value on accuracy in thought. We can see this by seeing why Sosa’s picture leaves us with no convincing way to understand the difference in *epistemic worth* between the first-order beliefs of clairvoyants and those of (e.g.) sighted children. While Sosa’s view has some advantages over other reliabilist views, the advantages are axiologically insufficient. Perhaps clairvoyants have animal knowledge. The question is whether Sosa can explain the difference in epistemic worth between a clairvoyant’s first-order beliefs and those of sighted children.

Sosa could revise his account of first-order competence in a way that John Greco has recommended. But the revision is attractive because it turns competences into the sorts of things that plausibly ground ways of valuing accuracy. The revision is not motivated unless viewed as conceding that the reliabilist part of the view does not do the axiological work. So, there is a dilemma: this form of virtue epistemology either (i) is lacking in explanatory power or (ii) collapses into my view.

### 5.2 First Horn

Competences for Sosa are reliable belief-forming dispositions, relative to favorable conditions in the actual world. This account predicts symmetry between the first-order beliefs of clairvoyants and the first-order beliefs of sighted subjects. Their beliefs can equally manifest Sosan competence. If the facts of epistemic value are explained by such competences, the first-order doxastic attitudes of clairvoyants must be equal in epistemic value to the parallel attitudes of sighted perceivers.

But even if we agree that the doxastic attitudes of clairvoyants have some epistemic worth, it is implausible that the degree is the same. We might agree that the clairvoyant knows. We are doing epistemic axiology now. Our objection is just as well expressed as one about the difference in epistemic worth between two instances of knowledge.

Some reliabilists try to deem the clairvoyant incompetent by adding a ‘no defeaters’ clause to their theory. But the best versions of this strategy count as defeaters factors that should look irrelevant from a purely reliabilist perspective—e.g., mere beliefs or appearances about the quality of one’s belief-forming processes.\(^\text{15}\) Like John

\[^{15}\text{Some reliabilist accounts of defeat are supposed to address clairvoyance. But they encounter troubles in modified cases. Consider the alternative reliable process account of defeat. On this account, having a defeater for one’s belief that } p \text{ consists in having available to one an alternative reliable process that, if used in addition to or instead of the one actually used, would have led to one’s not believing } p. \text{ Goldman}\]
Greco, I find this unprincipled: “Reliabilism insists on a reliabilist account of evidence in favor of belief. . . . [H]ow can the same theory plausibly understand evidence against belief differently? Such a strategy seems at best ad hoc.”

Sosa’s tack differs. He thinks clairvoyants might have animal knowledge and holds that what they lack is reflective knowledge. Reflective knowledge is understood as apt belief that one aptly believes, where aptness is understood in the same externalist way at both orders. What clairvoyants lack is an externalistically parsed grasp of the status of their first-order beliefs.

This gives Sosa’s explanation more unity than the defeat strategy. But the explanation falls short axiologically. Consider a child seeing a red apple on the table in good light and then judging that there is a red apple on the table. This child might lack the conceptual resources to form a belief about the propriety of her first-order belief. Indeed, she might lack the mental state concept BELIEF and the ability to engage in any second-order reflection. Nevertheless, her perceptual beliefs about the apple are epistemically worthier than those of the clairvoyant 400 miles away who equally reliably forms beliefs about the child’s surroundings. This difference is not at the reflective level.

Some might bite the bullet, claiming that the child’s beliefs are on a par with the clairvoyant’s. But the reply is costly, and it underestimates the scope of the problem. Many adults lack much of a reflective stance on their perceptual beliefs and so have little reflective perceptual knowledge. The fact that some are in a position to gain reflective knowledge is irrelevant.

The real difference is not at the second order. The story should come at the first order.

5.3 Second Horn

John Greco has proposed an enriched account of first-order competence. But his proposal faces his own objections to liberal defeat strategies unless his view is understood as a version of my view. To see this, consider the details. Greco (2010: 43) first suggests that we analyze epistemic responsibility in terms of the intellectual dispositions that one manifests when one is motivated to believe the truth:

“S’s belief that $p$ is epistemically responsible if and only if S’s believing that $p$ is properly motivated; if and only if S’s believing that $p$ results from intellectual dispositions that S manifests when S is motivated to believe the truth.”

He then analyzes epistemic virtue in terms of reliability and epistemic responsibility:


I rely on Sosa (1991)’s discussion of clairvoyance. Since then he hasn’t explicitly discussed it.

Greco (2010: 43).
"S’s belief that \( p \) is epistemically virtuous if and only if both (a) S’s belief that \( p \) is epistemically responsible; and (b) S is objectively reliable in believing that \( p \)."\(^{19}\)

The unjustified clairvoyant, Greco suggests, fails condition (a).

But Greco’s explanation confronts his own objection to the reliabilist’s appeal to an unreliabilist kind of defeat. Greco insists that reliabilists cannot treat positive and negative justification-relevant properties differently without a unified explanation of why both matter. He faces a similar question. He says that epistemic responsibility is a virtue. But we must ask him why. What unified story can deem both objective reliability and motivation to believe the truth as epistemic virtues?

Greco has offered no answer. By contrast, my view provides a simple explanation of why being motivated to believe the truth is epistemically virtuous. It is a way to place value on accuracy in thought, and it matters from the epistemic point of view via the Extended Hurka Principle. This confirms my prediction of convergence.

Thus the second horn: revising the account of first-order epistemic virtue is principled only if underpinned by a view of epistemic virtue like mine. So, virtue epistemology either cannot explain all the facts of epistemic value or collapses into my view.

5.4 A Middle Way Between Reliabilism and Responsibilism

Reliabilist virtue epistemology is not the only kind of virtue epistemology. The main alternative is responsibilism. Since responsibilism is typically defined as a view that emphasizes the role of intellectual character traits, I doubt that it can succeed. I doubt that any enduring traits of intellectual character are necessary for justification, rationality, knowledge, or other items of traditional epistemological interest. Since I agree with existing critiques, I will not dilate on these doubts.\(^{20}\)

Here is what matters. The common distinction between reliabilist and responsibilist virtue epistemology is not exhaustive. There is unoccupied space between, since there are pictures of virtue that virtue epistemologists ignore. Hurka (2001) understands virtues as ways of valuing more basic values. Ways of valuing are not faculties or character traits. While I have not understood them (as Hurka (2006) does) as current states, I have understood them as less than character traits or faculties.

My view could be understood as a new version of virtue epistemology. The label doesn’t matter to me, but it highlights a direction for future research and positions my view in an illuminating way with respect to the competition. Examined from this perspective, one can also see that it strikes a balance between two extremes. It inherits some advantages from existing traditions in virtue epistemology while avoiding their flaws. This is another reason to suspect it is on the right track.

6 Conclusion

Let’s take stock. I argued that Veritists can and should reject Instrumentalism. This is the moral of the swampimg problem. We can see that it is the moral by seeing that if

\(^{19}\)Greco (2010: 43).

\(^{20}\)In particular, I agree with many of Dougherty (2011)’s criticisms.
Instrumentalism were true, the points that led to the swamping problem would lead to related problems for other economical epistemic axiologies. This should not convince us that a radical form of pluralism about fundamental epistemic value is true. It should convince us that Instrumentalism is false.

I have shown that Veritism is defensible once we abandon Instrumentalism. As I argued in §2, the kind of derivative value generated by Hurka’s Principle is immune from swamping. A beneficent act that manifests the agent’s valuing of beneficence is as such better than a similar act performed just as a PR stunt. This is plausible despite the fact that the goodness of valuing beneficence is parasitic on the goodness of beneficence.

This fact would be useless if we could not apply the Extended Hurka Principle to the relevant cases in the epistemic domain. But we can. I argued that central epistemic values like coherence, rationality, and knowledge essentially manifest certain ways to place value on accuracy in thought. None of this is an overintellectualization. To think otherwise is to implicitly overintellectualize the modest achievement of placing value on accuracy in thought. It is natural to fault subjects for failing to place sufficient value on accuracy in thought, and plausible that people who disregard the evidence are open to criticism precisely because they fail to place sufficient value on accuracy in thought.

So, there is a way for Veritists to avoid the swamping problem and provide explanations of the epistemic value of central epistemic properties like rationality and knowledge. Since it is antecedently attractive to think that epistemic evaluation is truth-oriented, I think we should continue to be attracted to Veritism.

References

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