

'Doxastic Goods'

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Abstract: Doxastic goods correspond to the many ways in which believing is a valuable state. Given that goods are (or provide) *prima facie* reasons to behave in order to attain them, it follows that we can think of doxastic goods as providing us with *prima facie* reasons to believe. However, once we move to thinking of doxastic goods as reasons to believe, we must begin to think about their potential as motivators of belief. It is at this point, I argue that we must recognize that many of the benefits that beliefs bring us are *surreptitious*; they must work without the believer herself being aware of their doing so. This feature of certain kinds of doxastic goods must be kept in mind as we investigate the goods that our exploration of the world delivers.

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1. Exploration and Doxastic Goods

As epistemologists we are concerned, at the most general level, with the processes involved in the *exploration* of ourselves and the world around us. By 'exploration' I mean a process or activity that comes in a wide range of forms. On one end of the spectrum, we have what we might call *rapport*, the inattentive registering of new information into our belief systems as we move through the world. Throughout most of our lives, exploration is not itself our main concern; as we are engaged in various projects and activities, we form perceptual and testimonial beliefs about the world, and make immediate inferences from these beliefs to many others. At other times, however, exploration comes to take our full attention, and inattentive *rapport* becomes attentive *inquiry*. In inquiry, the process of exploration is more consuming of our concentration; exploration *itself* becomes my primary activity. I turn my attention to a subject matter, and focus my attention upon it. Inquiries include the actions, sometimes very brief, in which we wholeheartedly seek features

of the world: I search for my eyeglasses, for example, or I phone a restaurant to discover when it closes. Inquiries also include many of the fields we find institutionalized in universities—the natural and human sciences—in which enormous groups of people spend large portions of their lives engaging in exploration of relatively local aspects of the world.

The various ways in which we explore our world generate a variety of benefits, or goods. Exploration results in certain changes in our mental and physical lives, and the *goods of exploration*, as we might call them, are those goods that arise in virtue of exploration. The realm of the goods of exploration is the realm of valuable things or states realized as a result of our exploration of the world; such goods embody, in other words, the various ways in which exploration in its various guises can go well. The past twenty years has seen a handful of epistemologists turn to focus on exploration via the goods of exploration. This change of perspective, like all such changes in philosophy, will no doubt prove useful, as (among other things) it forces us to ask different questions about the same terrain. I intend this paper to be seen as an illustration of this, as I will be pressing a question in epistemology that comes into view only when we join what Wayne Riggs has called the ‘value turn’ in epistemology, and look at exploration via the goods that it generates.¹

In this paper, I will restrict myself to a subset of the goods of exploration. These I will call *doxastic goods*, the goods that we gain in virtue of holding beliefs. Doxastic goods correspond to the many ways in which believing is a valuable state, or contributes to valuable states or things. My decision to restrict myself to this subset of the goods of exploration is not insignificant, for two reasons. First, inquiry can and does include a phase that aims not at beliefs but at *questions*, a stage in which problems are raised and developed, and their importance discussed. This process, of recognizing our own ignorance and determining which aspects of our ignorance should be rectified, is not separate from inquiry; it is part of inquiry, with its own procedures, criteria for success, and goods. Thus, belief is only one of the goals of inquiry; particular inquirers engaged in the ‘earlier’ questioning

phase may not see themselves as *at all* involved in the pursuit of belief. Secondly, even if we ignore the questioning phase of inquiry, belief may not be the only or best aim of the 'later' or 'concluding' phase of inquiry; perhaps the ultimate aim of inquiry is or should be some state distinct from belief.²

That granted, the subset of doxastic goods is itself by no means a trivial subset of the goods of exploration. Believing does, as a matter of fact, give us access to an enormous range of goods, both *indirectly*—through action—and *directly*. One of the primary goods that we gain from believing is the ability to *act* successfully, and thereby to attain further goods. Coming to believe what the world is or is not like informs and can improve the decisions, intentions, and actions that we perform on their basis. These actions, in turn, are aimed at the instantiation or gaining of other goods. So, one set of goods that we get from our beliefs are their making possible the attainment of further goods, via action. *Direct* doxastic goods, by contrast, are those goods that we gain from exploration without action. Are there any direct doxastic goods, and if so, what are they? Some possible direct doxastic goods include the following: the non-instrumental value of true beliefs, of justified beliefs, of justified true beliefs, or of knowledge; the credit that I obtain when I am responsible for believing a truth or holding a justified belief; the value of holding an emotion whose appropriateness was informed by an appropriate belief; the value of being characterized by a virtue which was appropriately informed by a belief; the value of a relationship which was made possible or better because of a belief; the value of belonging to a group in virtue of one's doxastic states; and the feeling of well-being or happiness that a belief can give us.

This is merely a *possible* list of doxastic goods, and a number of the members of this list could be disputed. One kind of opposition to this list would involve the thought that while some or all of its members are *doxastic benefits*, they are not all *doxastic goods*. Goods, this person will claim, have features—in virtue of their intimate relationship with reasons—that what we might call 'mere benefits' do not have. In the next three sections of this paper, I will rehearse the kind of considerations that would motivate this position.

2. Goods and Reasons

A good is something that I do or should recognize as having value. As such, a good has an internal or intrinsic relationship to a *reason*; it is necessarily the kind of thing that can give me a reason for behaving—acting, believing, feeling—in some way or another with respect to the good. If some good is attainable, creatable, or conservable, then I have a *prima facie* reason to behave in such a way that I can attain that good, bring it about, preserve it, or respect it. As a *prima facie* reason, it can be overridden by a conflicting good, but it is a reason nonetheless. Joseph Raz makes this claim when he writes,

In general the value of what has value, and the action its value is a reason for, are intrinsically connected. We cannot understand what is of value [e.g.] in a party without understanding what [a party] is a reason for, that is, when one has reason to go to one, and how one behaves at a party. ... What goes for parties goes for musical compositions, mountaineering, philosophy, love, and everything else.³

To see something as a good is, Raz suggests, to see it as something that one has reason to behave in order to attain, preserve, or respect that good. The relationship between goods and reasons is expressible as a conceptual truth: a good is a thing of value, a thing that is to be positively evaluated, a thing *to be favored*, and what it means to be a thing to be favored is to be a thing that we have *prima facie* reason to bring about, preserve, or respect.

This internal relationship holds, I will assume, not just between goods and reasons in general, but between *doxastic* goods and *doxastic* reasons in particular. A doxastic good is, of necessity, a *prima facie* reason to believe something. If I can attain, create, preserve, or respect something of value by believing that *p*, then that fact is or provides me with a reason to believe that *p*. Incorporating the thought that Raz expresses in the passage above, we might say that we cannot understand how something could be *a good to be gained from believing* without its also being *a reason to believe*. What else could a doxastic good be other than something that favors—in the sense of giving us

reason to hold—a belief?

In making this claim, I need not commit myself to any particular account of the relationship between (doxastic) goods and (doxastic) reasons. I need not take a stand, for example, as to whether goods are themselves *identical* with reasons, or whether they have a more distant relationship to each other, say, with goods *providing* us with reasons. Nor need I take a stand as to whether reasons are to be understood in terms of goods, or *vice versa*.⁴ Indeed, I can leave open the possibility that some reasons should not be understood in terms of goods; the claim is that goods are reasons, not that reasons are goods. These are important questions to be explored, especially in relation to doxastic goods and reasons, but my claim here is neutral with respect to how anything gets to be a good or a reason and with the relation between the two. Rather, my claim can be seen as a constraint on any acceptable account of the relationship between goods and reasons: *whatever* you say about goods, reasons, and the relationship between them, you must allow that the existence of a good is *prima facie* a reason to attempt to behave positively towards it.

There are familiar questions about the status of goods and reasons in certain complex situations. In many contexts, if a behavior ϕ brings pleasure to me, then that is a good and a reason for me to ϕ . However, in the context in which that pleasure comes at the cost of someone's great pain, then this is not straightforwardly true. One option is to say that the pleasure that one will gain from ϕ is, *even* in this context, a good and a reason to do it, but that in this context the other person's extreme pain is a larger disvalue, and thus an overriding reason to not perform ϕ . A second option is to say that ϕ 's bringing about pleasure in this context is neither a good nor a reason to perform it. On this account, something's being a good is highly context-dependent, and a thing that is valuable in some contexts may not be valuable in other contexts. Pleasure at the cost of someone's great pain is, simply, not a good. It is only when the act is a good, when it is of value, that it provides a *prima facie* reason to perform it. Whichever option we incline towards, the important point is

that goods and reasons go together. If performing ϕ in a context which causes suffering is good, then it provides a reason to do it (which is in this context overridden); if performing ϕ in a context that causes suffering is not good, then it does not provide a reason to do it.

3. Reasons and Motivation

A good, we have seen, is something that we have defeasible reason to achieve or protect; this relationship reflects the *normative* side of reasons, the side of reasons which favors an action, belief, or emotion. Reasons, however, also have another side; they can be that in the light of which we do something, and they can make a difference to what we do. While it may be that not all actions, beliefs, or emotions occur in the light of reasons, many do. And when someone behaves in the light of reasons, reasons can be appealed to in an *explanation* of what she does. Reasons, in short, have a *motivating* side in addition to their favoring or normative side.⁵

The nature of the motivating side of reasons is widely-discussed and enormously controversial, and I will in this paper remain largely neutral with respect to the various positions that have been thrown up in the debate. My concern is more with what the debate over the nature of rational motivation reveals about goods themselves. In particular, in the remainder of this paper, I will be pressing the fact that our commitments with regard to the motivating side of reasons inevitably affect our view of their normative side. Put another way, our view of the nature of goods, doxastic or otherwise, will be partly determined by our view of whether and how those goods can motivate us to behave. More particularly, I will argue that the limitation in the ability of certain doxastic goods to motivate belief must be acknowledged in the discussion of epistemic value.

So, what *is* the relationship between reasons and motivation? As far as I know, no philosopher denies that *some* reasons motivate; we are all, at least sometimes, guided in our behavior and beliefs by (the consideration of) features of the world that favor what we do or believe. However, discord

arises once we try to commit further than this. At one extreme will be those who claim that it is at least possible for Jones to have a reason to ϕ even though it would in no way be possible for Jones to be motivated to ϕ ; whether or not Jones's reason to ϕ can motivate him is *contingent* upon the agent's psychological status.⁶ Everyone else takes it to be *constitutive* of a reason that it be a potential motivator of an agent's behavior; if Jones has a reason to ϕ , then ϕ must be the sort of thing in the light of which Jones could have ϕ -ed. If Jones could not have acted or believed given the consideration of ϕ , then ϕ cannot be considered one of Jones's reasons.⁷ So, what the first position denies, and what the second position affirms, is that reasons are necessarily *potential motivators*.

This debate is complicated by the various ways in which we can understand what it means to be a 'potential motivator'. A vivid example of this arises in the debate between Bernard Williams and John McDowell—both of whom think that reasons are necessarily potential motivators—over 'internal and external reasons'.⁸ Williams argues that nothing counts as a reason for Jones to do something unless it can, *by Jones's own deliberation*, be brought within what Williams calls Jones's 'motivational set'. An agent does not have a reason to ϕ unless it is possible for that agent to come to desire ϕ -ing or its possible result by deliberation; I do not have reason to ϕ unless I can, by deliberation, come to see ϕ -ing as desirable. McDowell has a more liberal view than Williams with respect to what counts as a potential motivator. He suggests that something should be seen as a potential motivator—and, thus, a reason—for me to do something even though it could only reach my 'motivational set' by some route other than deliberation.

The fairly simple lesson that I want to draw from this is that the view one takes of motivation (in this case what it means to be a potential motivator) affects one's view of reasons (in this case whether something is or is not a reason). By having a *stricter* conception of a potential motivator, Williams rules out certain things from counting as reasons; alternatively, by being more *liberal* in the ways in which a reason can motivate behavior, McDowell allows

more things to count as reasons.⁹ These two categories—strict and liberal—are, of course, *relative* to each other, and not absolute. In the realm of reasons for action, Williams has a *more* restricted attitude towards potential motivators than McDowell. This does not detract from my point, which is that one's view on what counts as a reason will be dependent upon one's view of what counts as a motivator.

Bringing the notion of a *good* back into the picture, the result is a range of possible attitudes towards goods with respect to their ability to motivate. As we saw in the previous section, a good is a *prima facie* reason; something does not count as a good unless it *also* (*prima facie*) counts as a reason. What we have seen now is that what one views as a reason depends upon one's views of the relationship between reasons and motivation. So, for example, the proponent of a more restricted attitude towards potential motivators may (analogously to Williams) rule out certain *apparent* goods from being *real* goods, because of their inability to potentially motivate; these apparent goods are, in reality, mere benefits. Similarly, the proponent of a more liberal attitude towards potential motivators may (analogously to McDowell) count certain apparent goods as *bona fide* because, according to his view of potential motivation, these goods (or consideration of them) *really can* bring about behavior. In short, because of the intimate relationship between goods, reasons, and motivation, one's position on motivation will of necessity carry over into one's position towards goods.

This result will prove important as we return to focus on doxastic goods, because, as we will see in the next section, doxastic benefits can differ radically from one another in their capacity to motivate belief. The severely limited ability of some benefits to motivate belief, I will argue, should give us pause as we turn to consider whether to think of them as *bona fide* doxastic goods (as opposed to mere benefits), and, even if they are *bona fide* goods, whether they do or can play a significant role in our epistemic economy.

4. Doxastic Goods and the Motivation of Belief¹⁰

We can divide doxastic goods into two categories, according to their ability to motivate belief *in the light of our conscious consideration of them*. Some doxastic benefits are such that my consciously realizing that coming to believing that *p* will allow me to attain such goods can, itself, determine my belief that *p*. Other doxastic benefits, however, cannot. The latter can only work *surreptitiously* in bringing about belief; they cannot bring about belief in a way that is 'open' to the believer.

All *pragmatic* doxastic goods are surreptitious motivators, and (as we will see later in the paper) some *epistemic* doxastic goods are surreptitious motivators. Epistemic doxastic goods are the non-instrumental goods that we get from beliefs given their status as true or likely to be true. They include whatever we gain simply and solely from holding a justified or true belief. Pragmatic doxastic goods, on the other hand, include all other goods that we gain from our beliefs: feelings of happiness or well-being, relationships, group-membership, virtues, or emotions that are made possible or enhanced by believing something. Pragmatic doxastic goods play the key role in what we might call a 'pragmatic explanation of a belief', in which a believer is presented as believing because of a concern for pragmatic doxastic goods; Jones believes that *p*, it is said, because it grants him acceptance into a social group, or because it makes him happy.¹¹

Pragmatic doxastic goods are all surreptitious, because a believer herself cannot recognize that she believes something in order to gain pragmatic benefit. I may believe that God exists, and I may recognize the benefits that this belief gives me (e.g., alleviates my fear of death, increases my chances of immortality), but as long as I continue to believe that God exists, I will not see my belief as being *dependent upon* my concern for these benefits. My believing that *p* is incompatible with my seeing my doing so as determined by my concern for pragmatic gain. When I believe that *p*, I cannot see my doing so as something that is not *solely* aimed at grasping a truth.

This is a necessary feature of believing, one that separates it from other

truth-aimed states like guessing, speculating, or conjecturing. It is true that when I guess or speculate, as when I believe, I am after a truth about the subject matter before me.¹² However, in contrast to belief, I can be fully aware that I am guessing, speculating, or conjecturing *right now* because of other benefits that these states give me. I can in full awareness have each of the following thoughts, for example: I am guessing that *p* now because I am playing a trivia game; I am speculating that *p* now because I have a student before me and I need to give her some ideas; I am conjecturing that *p* right now because I am having a friendly conversation about politics or history, and I find it enjoyable to do so. In all of these cases I see myself as aiming at a truth, but I also see each of these states as a *pressurized, motivated, or enjoyable* aiming at truth. Belief is different. One of my beliefs *may be* a pressurized, motivated, or enjoyable aiming at truth, but I cannot see it as such. As David Owens has written,

The guesser can exercise control over her guesses by reflecting on how best to strike a balance between the goal of truth and other goals her guessing serves; the believer cannot.¹³

In acknowledging that I have a belief that *p*, I characterize myself as being in a state *only* for the purpose of being committed to a truth about the subject matter at hand.

The stronger I think that my commitment is held in the light of a concern for pragmatic gain, the stronger will be my inclination to characterize this as something other than a belief. We all suspect that some of our beliefs are affected by pragmatic determinants; to cite just one familiar example: given my pervasive agreement with my friends, colleagues, and those I respect philosophically and otherwise, I often find myself with the suspicion that my relationship with them has had some non-epistemic effect on my beliefs. However, but the stronger these suspicions are, the weaker is the belief itself. As Michael Ayers has written, 'In so far as we doubt that grounds wholly determine our belief, so far is our belief itself subjectively insecure.'¹⁴

It is a familiar feature of folk psychology that we attribute pragmatic

beliefs to other persons. We say that a believer is engaging in wishful thought, or that she believes that *p* because it is too painful to believe otherwise. However, we are very reluctant to accept someone's attribution of a pragmatic belief *to herself*. Imagine being confronted with a friend, Jones, who tells you that he believes that it will be sunny tomorrow because he wants to have a picnic. Jones is telling you that he believes something about the weather because of his own wishes for what the weather will be like. It seems clear, however, that you would not take Jones's claims at face value. You would not accept his assertion of both the belief *and* the explanation. Instead, you would tend to re-interpret Jones's statement: either he believes that it will be sunny tomorrow and he is joking about the explanation, or he is merely confessing that he does not really believe that it is going to be sunny tomorrow at all. The best explanation for this is that we recognize that Jones's believing something is inconsistent with his seeing it as an attempt to gain a pragmatic doxastic good.

In sum, there is a distinction between, on the one hand, *acknowledgeable* or *open* doxastic goods, and on the other hand, *surreptitious* doxastic goods. The latter cannot be recognized by the believer herself as playing a determining role in her belief. They can be admitted in third-personal doxastic explanations, but not in first-personal doxastic explanations. I can be motivated to believe something by a concern for surreptitious goods that I might get from such a belief, but my doing so must be hidden from me.¹⁵

5. Are the Surreptitious Benefits of Beliefs *Bona Fide* Goods?

Let me summarize the thread of the discussion so far. Our concern is with doxastic goods, with the states and things of value that arise in virtue of believing. Doxastic goods, as we have seen, are necessarily *prima facie* reasons to believe. However, whether we count something as a doxastic reason is going to vary in virtue of our view of the relation between doxastic reasons and doxastic motivation. In particular, we have encountered in Section 3 a position that dismisses certain kinds of benefits as *really* goods; this (Williams-

like) position denies that certain apparent goods will not really be goods if they cannot—according to a certain, restricted view of potential motivation—motivate. What is more, we have just seen, in the previous section, that there is a pervasive division between doxastic benefits in virtue of their ability to motivate beliefs; some doxastic benefits are surreptitious, in that they cannot bring about belief in the light of a believer's consideration of them.

In the light of all of this, there now arises a view (similar to the Williams-like view of Section 3) that denies the very existence of surreptitious doxastic goods. Its proponents might defend this position in the following way:

In order for a doxastic benefit to be a *bona fide* doxastic good, it must be one that can motivate belief in the face of the believer's conscious consideration of it. Doxastic benefits that can only motivate surreptitiously (e.g., pragmatic benefits of belief) do not count as doxastic goods; they are all mere benefits of believing. Therefore, there is no such thing as a surreptitious doxastic good.

The proponent of the above position says that a doxastic good must be such that it can, in the face of my conscious consideration of it, motivate me to believe. Just like Williams' dismissal of external reasons in the light of his strictures on motivation, we here have a dismissal of surreptitious doxastic goods in the light of strictures on doxastic motivation. If my being aware of something I will gain by believing cannot lead me to believe, goes this position, then the thing I am aware of cannot be a doxastic good. It might be *to my advantage* to believe it, but it cannot itself be a good.

The proponent of a more liberal attitude towards the motivating power of doxastic goods would disagree, arguing that the surreptitiousness of a doxastic benefit is irrelevant to whether it counts as a doxastic good or not. In a claim resembling that of John McDowell's that Owen Wingrave may have reason to join the army even though deliberation will not get him to see that he has desires that would or could be fulfilled were he to do so, the proponent of a liberal view of surreptitious doxastic goods would say that the

unacknowledgeable benefits that we get from believing are *bona fide* goods, and thus reasons to believe. A doxastic benefit is a doxastic good, and thus a reason to believe, even though it may only be an *unconscious* motivator to believe.

The presence of these competing positions on doxastic goods represents some of the work that epistemologists and philosophers of mind will need to do as they examine exploration with an emphasis on value. As we turn to think about believing as a process that generates things of value, questions of motivation will inevitably arise and make the going more difficult. These questions must be broached and engaged with.

In the remainder of this paper, I will not undertake a defense of either the restricted or the liberal attitude towards surreptitious doxastic goods. Rather, I want to focus on what would follow even if we assume the liberal position, and accept that surreptitious doxastic benefits are *bona fide* goods, we must recognize the limited role that they are obliged to play in our doxastic economy. In this section, I will argue that surreptitious doxastic goods, if they indeed exist, will be all but absent in two distinct areas of our doxastic lives. In the next and final section, I will turn to focus on a surreptitious doxastic benefit that has been the topic of a good deal of recent discussion, namely epistemic credit.

First, it is important to see that surreptitious doxastic goods will be of little or no positive significance in our reflective view of ourselves as believers. This is largely a consequence of the fact that they will not be goods that I consider in my deliberations about what to believe. As Richard Foley astutely observed some twenty years ago,

when people reflect upon what reasons they have to believe something ... they rarely even consider the practical advantages that might accrue to them by believing it ...¹⁶

In my own doxastic deliberation, in considering what to believe, I do not focus on the pragmatic benefits that may accrue to me in coming to believe one thing rather than another. The reason for this, as we saw in the previous

section, is that a believer cannot be consciously moved to belief out of a concern for pragmatic benefit. Doxastic deliberation has a certain 'transparency', as it is sometimes put; in deliberating, we focus not upon the belief and its features, but upon the world and what we know of it, upon what features the world is likely to have or not have. That, and not benefit, is the locus of doxastic reflection. As a consequence, surreptitious doxastic goods are not going to loom large in our views of ourselves, our lives, and the direction that we want our lives. We are not going to rank surreptitious believing as an important feature of ourselves; we are not going to seek out surreptitious believing as a significant goal; we are not going to be proud of or prize ourselves as surreptitious believers. Again, the reason for this is that surreptitious doxastic goods are, as their name implies, necessarily hidden from us.

Secondly, and as a consequence of the previous feature of surreptitious doxastic goods, they will be almost wholly absent from our epistemic discourse, as they must play almost no role in *argumentation*. Again, this is something that Foley has pointed out to us:

Likewise, when someone tries to convince another person that he has reasons to believe something, they rarely even mention the practical benefits that might result from believing it ...¹⁷

The pragmatic benefits of believing are rarely spoken of in our doxastic discourse. In attempting to convince someone of something, we almost never raise the pragmatic benefit that a believer will attain from doing so. Scientists, philosophers, historians, and those engaged in informal arguments at the pub do not attempt to win over their opponents by pointing out the non-epistemic benefits that will accrue to them by converting to the other side. Pragmatic benefits are surreptitious, and so an argumentative move of the form 'You should believe that *p*, because it will make you happy or bring you fame', is impotent to move belief.

The fact that a pragmatic doxastic benefit cannot consciously motivate belief does not mean that it cannot consciously motivate *action*, and in

particular an action *that may lead to belief*. I may act with the intention of gaining the belief that *p*, in full awareness that what I hope to gain is a pragmatic benefit from this belief. This, indeed, is what Blaise Pascal was attempting to get his readers to do in the *Pensées*. After arguing that we should believe in the Articles of Faith because of the pragmatic benefit it will give us, Pascal suggests engaging in behavior that will lead to such belief. 'Learn from those who were once bound like you and who now wager all they have', goes his famous advice to his reader,

They behaved just as if they did believe, taking holy water, having masses said, and so on. That will make you believe quite naturally, and will make you more docile.¹⁸

Pascal recognized that even though a concern for pragmatic doxastic benefit cannot consciously lead you to believe, it can lead you to act in order to gain the belief. It is the latter that he offers as a way to belief.¹⁹ Pascal recognized that as believers we do not immediately respond to the prospect of a pragmatic doxastic benefit; we can only seek such benefits indirectly. What is more, even if Pascal's pragmatic argument for belief works for one of his readers, its success must, in the end, be hidden from the believer. Once I become a Pascalian believer, I can recognize that it was the desire for immortality led me to follow Pascal's advice to *act* in certain ways; however, I cannot think that my *believing* in God's existence depends upon my desire for immortality. Pascalian belief-formation must, in a sense, cover its own tracks.

In sum, even if we were to take a liberal attitude towards pragmatic doxastic benefits, and consider them to be *bona fide* doxastic goods, we must acknowledge that such goods must do their work in a way that is hidden from us. This is true whether they work directly (as in wishful thinking), or by motivating action that will lead to belief (as Pascal utilized them). Incidental and acknowledgeable doxastic goods may equally qualify as goods, but the former must motivate in a different manner from the latter. In acknowledging this, we recognize that pragmatic doxastic goods have no significant place in *epistemic dialogue*, in the discursive give and take that plays such a large role in

our lives. Pragmatic doxastic benefits may, indeed, be reasons to believe, but they are not, except in the very attenuated sense that Pascal pursued, reasons that we make reference to in our interpersonal lives.

Before turning to look at a particular surreptitious doxastic benefit, I want to finish this section by glancing at a recent discussion over the existence of *surreptitious ethical virtues*. This debate was largely started by Julia Driver,²⁰ in a paper in which defends the existence of what she calls ‘virtues of ignorance’. Modesty, Driver argues, is a surreptitious ethical virtue: our being modest requires a considerable lack of awareness that we are such. Modesty involves, in other words, an underestimation of oneself. One is modest only when one is *ignorant* with regard to the worth of one’s actions or self. If Driver is correct, then there are virtues such that our own consideration of them are not going to openly motivate us to achieve them.²¹

If there are surreptitious ethical virtues, they will be absent—in the same way that pragmatic doxastic goods are—from our ethical views of ourselves and ethical discourse. Driver herself emphasizes the first in her discussion of modesty:

A desired feature of any account of modesty is that it explain the oddity of:

(1) I am modest.

(1) seems to be oddly self-defeating. If I were to utter (1), the charitable person would think that I was joking. Others would think that I was being nonsensical.²²

This, Driver continues, is why modesty is what she calls a ‘virtue of ignorance’: ‘an asymmetry exists between the self-ascription of the virtue and the other-ascription of it. I can ascribe the virtue to another, but I cannot coherently and sincerely ascribe it to myself.’²³ As a consequence, my own modesty cannot be significant in my view of myself; pride in my own modesty, for example, would be more or less self-defeating. Similarly, one will not be motivated to be modest by a conscious concern to be modest; we cannot, except by some tortuous method, *set out* to be modest.

Secondly—and, again, just as with surreptitious doxastic goods—if there are surreptitious ethical goods, then they must play a severely limited role in ethical discourse. You can speak directly to me about, and even criticize me for, say, my immodesty; but if modesty is a surreptitious virtue, then your doing so cannot have anything but a hidden and indirect effect. This is because my own desire to be modest cannot, except unconsciously, *lead* me to be modest. It follows that your pointing out to me that I am immodest cannot play the role that other ethical criticism of me would play. Criticisms like ‘you are uncharitable’, ‘you are ungenerous’, and ‘you are intolerant’, can all lead me to rethink my behavioral tendencies towards others, and, in the light of this reflection, I may eventually change, and become more charitable, more generous, and more tolerant. But the criticism ‘you are immodest’ cannot work like this. In so far as I see myself as behaving *in order to be more modest*, so far am I in danger of being guilty of *false modesty*—behaving modestly without really being so. Seeking to be modest undercuts its own result.

Surreptitious goods, both doxastic and ethical, are states that the agent herself can be aware of having without this awareness undercutting the state itself. The consideration of surreptitious doxastic benefits or virtues can only bring about belief or virtuous behavior in a hidden or indirect way. Surreptitious goods must by and large drop out of our evaluative views of ourselves and evaluative discourse directed at convincing or undermining belief and virtuous behavior. As a consequence, as we will see in the next section, there is a danger that surreptitious doxastic goods, even if they are *bona fide* goods, will not be able to play certain roles that philosophers might be tempted to posit for them.

6. Searching for the Value of Knowledge

One somewhat vexing problem in the discussion of doxastic goods is the search for the value of knowledge. The question, sometimes called the ‘Value Problem’, can be put in various ways. What is the doxastic good that accounts

for the value that we place on knowledge over that of *mere* true belief (i.e., true belief that does not count as knowledge)? What good or goods accrue to us as knowers that we do not gain from being true believers? What is our concern for knowledge or being knowers a concern *for*?

These questions do not allow for easy answers, because an appealing account of the difference between knowledge and true belief is that knowledge is *nothing more* than true belief gained from a warranted position or by using a justifying method. When I have knowledge, I have nothing more than a true belief that I have gained from a position that is, crudely, likely to give me a true belief. Put another way, the difference between knowledge and true belief is that knowledge is a true belief gained by a good method of gaining true beliefs. But that story—in which good belief-forming methods are only a *means* to getting true beliefs—leaves us without an obvious account of the value of true belief achieved by good means *over* true belief not gotten by good means.²⁴

One interesting, and initially plausible, response to the Value Problem appeals to the notion of credit. The difference between holding knowledge and holding mere true belief, it is claimed, is that in the case of the former, the believer is responsible for getting to the true belief. The believer, in other words, deserves *credit* for her true belief. Just as we deserve credit for our successful actions, we also deserve credit for our successful beliefs. And being in a state in which one is deserving of credit, it is claimed, is valuable; it is a doxastic good. Just as the state of *being a hero* is a valuable one in which one deserves credit for some deed, *being a knower* is a valuable state as one in which one deserves credit for a true belief. Consequently, the suggestion is that the value of knowledge derives from the credit that a knower deserves; we value knowledge because, as knowers, we value credit for our gaining of a true belief. Wayne Riggs summarizes the position thus:

A person who is causally efficacious in bringing about some positively valuable outcome is 'due' some amount of credit for having done so. ...
[W]e value coming to hold a true belief in a (sufficiently) non-

accidental way because we get more epistemic credit for the true belief than we would have had we gotten it right accidentally.²⁵

We deserve credit for non-accidentally achieving true belief; the value of knowledge is the value of credit for this achievement.

Credit is an epistemic doxastic good. That is, it is a good that we attain directly upon believing a true or warranted belief. However, and perhaps surprisingly, it is a good that can only motivate one to believe surreptitiously. While the concern to gain a true or justified belief can consciously lead me to believe that p , the concern to gain *credit for* a justified true belief cannot. I cannot explain my believing that p as being done in order to gain credit for doing so, anymore than I can explain my believing that p as being done in order to be famous.

This is one area in which belief is distinguished from action. I can act in order to receive credit for doing so. The hero who waits until the video camera is on before jumping in the lake to save the drowning victim looks to be acting more out of concern for his own credit than with his victim. The same is true for what we might call epistemic actions, actions that we undertake in order to achieve beliefs about the world. I can launch an experiment, or start a philosophy paper, or work on a mathematical proof, well knowing that my primary concern is for getting credit for what I believe after the investigation is done. However, even though credit can in full awareness lead me to these actions, it cannot be what I think has determined my belief. My concern for epistemic credit must work as surreptitiously as my concern for fame.

Is this a strike against the credit answer to the Value Problem? It depends upon the role that you think the value of knowledge plays in our lives. In defending a surreptitious benefit like credit as the primary source of the value of knowledge over mere true belief, we are relegating our concern for knowledge to a concern for that which can only (i) incidentally motivate believing, and (ii) motivate epistemic action.²⁶ What this leaves out was hinted at in the previous section: credit will play no role either in our concern

to be knowers nor in the interpersonal dialectical phenomena—testimony, advice, argument—in which we engage and which directly affects what beliefs we hold. Credit must play, at best, an attenuated role in these procedures.

Because credit is a surreptitious doxastic benefit, a concern for credit cannot give us, except in an incidental way, a reason to get into a state of knowledge on any one occasion. My concern for knowledge, on the credit account, will not be a concern that is at work as I deliberate upon what to believe. It may be something I seek, and it may be something of which I am proud when I have attained it, but my concern for being a knower will be at one remove from believing itself. As a consequence, advice or argument that runs, ‘You should believe that p , because in doing so you will get credit for doing so’ will not get me immediately to a belief anymore than will the advice or argument, ‘You should believe that p because it will make you famous and happy.’ My concern to be a knower, on the credit account, is my concern for credit, but appeals to credit in discourse will (unless presented as a Pascalian way) fall on deaf ears. Such appeals may work ‘behind the scenes’, but they will not directly affect belief as, say, an appeal to evidence would.

If the value of knowing derives from a surreptitious benefit like credit, then our concern for knowledge works in a similar manner to our concern to be modest. As we saw in the previous section, a concern to be modest can only work in an indirect way, and the same is true, but to a lesser extent, of the virtue of generosity. As Driver writes, ‘The generous person does not do the generous thing because he realizes it is generous; rather, he does the generous thing out of consideration for others.’²⁷ The value that I place on the property of being generous does not motivate me to be generous; for me to be generous, my concern must be directed at other persons. In the same way, the credit view of the value of knowledge places knowledge in, at best, a subsidiary motivating role. Just as my being generous is by and large the result of a concern for something other than being generous (i.e., other persons), the credit account tells us that my being a knower is by and large

going to be the result of a concern for something other than knowledge (i.e., true belief). On the credit account, my concern for knowledge—or my concern to be a knower—is not itself, except indirectly, something that can lead me to be a knower. My concern for knowledge will not, for example, lead me to trust the expert over the novice, or to respond to the good argument over the weak one; on the credit account, this doxastic behavior is to be explained by my concern for true belief. Because my concern for knowledge is a concern for the credit I will gain from non-accidentally believing a true belief, it can only motivate my believing in the same way that my concern for being generous or modest can motivate my acting generously or modestly. It must, in some way, be working ‘behind the scenes’.

This point will not come as a surprise to the defender of credit. Credit accounts work within a framework in which the aim of inquiry is true belief. The Value Problem arises in the face of an instrumental view of epistemic justification, and the credit account gives us an answer to the Value Problem *within* this framework. However, in doing so, it accepts one prominent feature of this framework: knowledge is relegated to a secondary aim of inquiry. By not rejecting the instrumentalist framework the proponent of the credit account must see the value of knowledge as a *by-product* of exploration, and not one of our primary aims. This is reflected in the fact that credit cannot play a primary role in epistemic discourse, and in the fact that credit accounts cannot acknowledge more than a minor or indirect doxastic motivating role for our concern for knowledge.

If you find this unsatisfactory, then you will need to embark on a search for a quite different view of exploration, one in which not (or not only) true belief, but *knowledge itself* is both a goal of inquiry, something a concern for which motivates our exploratory behavior. If we want to do this, if we want to allow our concern for knowledge to play a more fundamental role in exploration, then we must throw out the framework in which we see exploration as concerned only for truth. We need to find some way of showing that knowledge is its own goal. It is only then that we will have a

way of seeing a concern for knowledge as directly motivating doxastic behavior, and only then will we see my concern to be a knower as—like my concern to be generous—in reality shorthand for my concern for something else.

What would an alternative framework, in which knowledge was seen as a primary concern of exploration, look like? This is no a small question, but we can see hints of it in some of the more challenging recent work by epistemologists. John McDowell's 'XX' and 'XX' are both ... Timothy Williamson's *Knowledge and its Limits* is similarly ... The final chapter of Jonathan Kvanvig's *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding* is, even more explicitly, a reflection of the same concern ...

Is the search for an answer to the Value Problem a search for an acknowledgeable doxastic good, a good the conscious consideration of which can lead us to belief? Stated differently, must the good that knowledge gives us be one that itself consciously motivates us to believe? My concern has not been to answer this question, but rather to show just how much goes along with offering one answer rather than another to it. Doxastic benefits come in two kinds, those that are surreptitious and those that are acknowledgeable in their motivating power. Even if the former are *bona fide* doxastic goods, a story in which a surreptitious doxastic good explains the value of knowledge will have further commitments that derive from that very fact. This may not be a mark against the story, but it is an aspect of the story that must itself be acknowledged, and which needs to be in the forefront of our attention as we continue to investigate doxastic goods.²⁸

1. 'The Value Turn in Epistemology', *New Waves in Epistemology* (eds.) V. Hendricks and D.H. Pritchard (Ashgate, forthcoming).
2. See Bas van Fraassen, *The Scientific Image* (Oxford University Press, 1980), for a defense of the claim that the theory-commitment—the end-product of theorizing—should not be belief.
3. *Value, Respect, and Attachment* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 164-5.
4. For this debate, see the first two chapters of T.M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Harvard University Press, 1998).

5. In coming to think of reasons as having two 'sides', I have been influenced by Jonathan Dancy's work; see, e.g., his *Practical Reality* (Oxford University Press, 2002), Chapter 1.
6. David O. Brink, as I understand him, occupies this position. *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), especially Chapter 3.
7. For defenses of this position, see Bernard Williams, 'Internal and External Reasons', reprinted in his *Moral Luck* (Cambridge University Press), 101-113; and Jonathan Dancy, 'Why There is Really No Such Thing as the Theory of Motivation', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Volume 95: 1-18.
8. Williams, 'Internal and External Reasons' and 'Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame', reprinted in his *Making Sense of Humanity and Other Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge University Press, 1995). McDowell, 'Might There Be External Reasons?', in *World, Mind, and Ethics: Essays on the Ethical Philosophy of Bernard Williams*, edited by J.E.J. Altham and Ross Harrison (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 68-85.
9. Similarly, the theorist who denies (pace Williams and McDowell) that reasons must be potential motivators will do so on the basis of his or her account of what it means to be a potential motivator.
10. When I speak of the 'motivation of belief', I am not using this phrase in the technical sense in which it is used in discussions of, e.g., wishful thinking, pragmatic believing, and such. The motivational side of doxastic reasons is the correlate of the motivational side of reasons for action.
11. For more on pragmatic (and epistemic) doxastic explanation, see Ward E. Jones, 'The Pragmatic Explanation of Believing', *Crítica* 36:108 (2004), pp. 3-36.
12. J. David Velleman, 'On the Aim of Belief', *The Possibility of Practical Reason* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 244-81.
13. David Owens (2002) 'Epistemic Akrasia', *The Monist* 85:3.
14. *Locke* (Routledge, 1991) Volume 1, p. 148
15. The claim of this section is defended at more length in Ward E. Jones, 'Explaining Our Own Beliefs: Nonepistemic Believing and Doxastic Instability', *Philosophical Studies* 111:3 (2002), pp. 217-249.
16. Richard Foley, *The Theory of Epistemic Rationality* (Harvard University Press, 1987), 214-15.
17. Richard Foley, *The Theory of Epistemic Rationality* (Harvard University Press, 1987), 214-15.
18. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, translated by A.J. Krailsheimer (Penguin, 1966) fragment 418 (Lafuma numbering).
19. For more discussion of Pascal on this issue, see Ward E. Jones, 'Religious Conversion, Self-Deception, and Pascal's Wager', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36:2 (1998), 167-188.
20. 'The Virtues of Ignorance', *Journal of Philosophy* 86 (1989). Related

claims are present in earlier work of Bernard Williams', e.g., 'Utilitarianism and Moral Self-Indulgence', reprinted in his *Moral Luck* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 40-53.

21. Driver's article has generated a considerable amount of discussion and dissent. See, e.g., her debate with G.F. Schueler, in *Ethics* 107 (April 1997).
22. 'The Virtues of Ignorance', *Journal of Philosophy* 86 (1989), 375.
23. 'The Virtues of Ignorance', *Journal of Philosophy* 86 (1989), 380.
24. I have discussed the Value Problem in 'Why Do We Value Knowledge?', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34:4 (October 1997), pp. 423-439. To date, the most extensive discussion of the Value Problem is Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).
25. 'Reliability and the Value of Knowledge', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 64:1 (2002), 92-3.
26. This is not to say that the credit view of the value of knowing cannot be combined with another view.
27. 'The Virtues of Ignorance', p. 379.
28. Thanks to Albert Ayler, and an audience at Rhodes University.