

## **'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 doxastic goods are *prima facie* reasons to believe. However, there is a distinction between the ways in which a believer's concern for doxastic goods can motivate him to believe; some doxastic goods are *unacknowledgeable* to the believer. This feature of certain kinds of doxastic goods must be kept in mind as we search for the value of knowledge.

[Version: May 2005; 7000 words/7500 with footnotes.]

### **1. Exploration and Doxastic Goods**

Our exploration of ourselves and the world around us 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, belief-formation does not itself consume our concentration. Rather, we are engaged in other projects, eating, working, spending time with friends and family, and simply navigating from one place or one time to another. As we progress through these activities, we form perceptual beliefs about the world, and make immediate inferences from these perceptual beliefs to many others. Our beliefs are in constant flux as we incorporate new beliefs with those that we previously held.

At other times, however, exploration requires our full attention. When it does, inattentive *rapport* becomes attentive *inquiry*. In inquiry, the process of exploration is more consuming of our concentration; exploration *itself* becomes my concern. 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.

As inquiry becomes more sophisticated and more consuming of our attention, we can see it breaking into a wide range of distinguishable, and to some extent independent, phases. The phase of an inquiry most discussed, of course, is the concluding phase, in which a methodology is chosen and answers and solutions sought. The terminus of this phase of inquiry is *belief*, or at least something akin to it. However, inquiry also involves another phase, in which the parameters of an inquiry *itself* are set; questions and problems are raised and developed. The 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. It should not be forgotten that the question-asking phase of inquiry is a phase *of* inquiry, with its own procedures and criteria for success. Belief, in its various guises, is only one goal of inquiry; particular inquirers engaged in the questioning phase may not see themselves as at all involved in the pursuit of belief.

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, as we come to raise questions and problems, to form beliefs, to change the strengths of our current beliefs, to change the connections between our beliefs and other states, or to realize what we do or do not know. 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 benefits 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.

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. My decision to restrict myself to this subset of the goods of exploration is not insignificant, for at least two reasons. The first reason, discussed above, is that inquiry includes a phase that aims not at belief but at questioning, and many of the goods of exploration will derive from this earlier phase and not the concluding phase of inquiry. Secondly, belief may not be the only or best aim of the second phase of inquiry. Perhaps the ultimate aim of inquiry also includes some state distinct from belief, or perhaps the ultimate aim of inquiry *should* be some state distinct from belief.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of these points, however, the goods we gain from believing are an important subset of the goods of exploration. One of the primary goods that we gain from belief 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 doxastic goods are a kind of *indirect* or *instrumental* good. They allow us to attain further goods, by action.

*Direct* doxastic goods, by contrast, are those goods that we gain from exploration without action. What are direct doxastic goods? Some of the possible direct doxastic goods include the following: the non-instrumental value of true beliefs, of justified beliefs, of justified true beliefs, and of knowledge; the credit that I obtain when I am responsible for believing a truth; the value of experiencing an emotion whose appropriateness was informed by belief; the value of being characterized by a virtue which was informed by a belief; the value of a relationship which was made possible or better because of a belief; and the value of belonging to a group in virtue of one's doxastic states; the feeling of well-being or happiness that a belief can give us.

This is merely a *possible* list of direct doxastic goods. No member on this list, I suspect, will be uncontroversial. Indeed, it may be that the set of

direct doxastic goods is empty, and that exploration gives us nothing of value apart from the benefits that we gain from acting. While I find this position deeply implausible, I will not be questioning it in this paper. My primary concern will not be with the distinction between indirect and direct doxastic goods, nor with whether there are any of the latter. Rather, it is with yet another distinction within the set of doxastic goods, a distinction among doxastic goods with regard to their ability to motivate us to believe.

## 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 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.<sup>2</sup>

To see something as a good is, Raz suggests, to see it as something that one has reason to do something in order to attain or preserve 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 goes for goods that we attain by believing. 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 goods and 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, 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*.<sup>3</sup> In general, my claim is neutral with respect to the status of goods and reasons, and how anything gets to be a good or a reason. Rather it could be seen as a constraint on the relationship between goods and reasons in any acceptable account of them. *Whatever* the relationship between goods and reasons, it must turn out that the existence of a good is *prima facie* a reason to attempt to attain it.

There are familiar questions about the status of goods and reasons in certain complex contexts. In many contexts, if a behavior  $\phi$  brings pleasure to me, then that is a good and a reason to perform  $\phi$ . 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  $\phi$  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  $\phi$ . A second option is to say that  $\phi$ '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  $\phi$  in this context is good, then it provides a reason to do it (which is overridden); if performing  $\phi$  in this context is not good, then it does not provide a reason to do it.

### 3. Reasons and Motivation

Goods and benefits are things that we have defeasible reason to achieve. This relationship reflects the *normative* side of reasons; the side of reasons which favors an action, belief, or emotion. But reasons have another side; they can be that in the light of which we do something. 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 side.<sup>4</sup>

The nature of the motivating side of reasons is enormously controversial and widely-discussed. While I will in this paper remain neutral with respect to the various positions thrown up in the debate on the motivation of action, the debate reveals that how we see goods—indeed, whether something counts *as a good*—depends upon our view of the relationship between reasons and their ability to motivate the behavior that they favor.

No one denies that *some* reasons motivate; we are all, at least sometimes, guided in our behavior by the consideration of features of the world that favor what we do. Discord arises once we try to commit further than this. On one end, there are those who argue that the fact that a reason favors an action or belief does not mean that it is possible for it to motivate one. On this position, whether a reason can or cannot motivate behavior is dependent upon the psychological status of an agent; it is at least possible for there to be a reason that could motivate *no one* to behavior, a reason that cannot motivate *at all*. The relationship between reasons and motivation is contingent upon the agent and his situation.<sup>5</sup> Everyone else takes it to be *constitutive* of reasons that they be potentially explanatory of an agent's

behavior. A reason must be the sort of thing in the light of which someone could have behaved. If one could not have acted or believed given the consideration of  $\phi$ , then  $\phi$  cannot be considered a reason at all.<sup>6</sup> All reasons, hold the proponents of this view, can motivate.

Both of these positions are complicated by the various ways in which we understand the phrase 'can motivate'. This is strikingly true in the constitutive camp, in which reasons are necessarily potential motivators. According to this position, if something is not a potential motivator, it cannot count as a reason. By having a *stricter* conception of a potential motivator, a 'Constitutivist' about reasons as potential motivators might rule out certain things from counting as reasons; alternatively, by being more *liberal* in the ways in which a reason can motivate behavior, a Constitutivist can allow more things to count as reasons.

A vivid example of this arises in the debate between Bernard Williams and John McDowell—both of whom are Constitutivists—over 'internal and external reasons'.<sup>7</sup> Williams argues that nothing counts as a reason for Jones to do something unless it can be brought within what Williams calls Jones's 'motivational set' by Jones's own deliberation; an agent does not have a reason to  $\phi$  unless it is possible for that agent to come to desire  $\phi$ -ing or its possible result by deliberation. While McDowell agrees with Williams that all reasons can potentially motivate, he 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.

As we can see, questions regarding the motivation side of reasons include not just whether a reason *must* be a potential motivator, but what it *means* to be a potential motivator. The proponent of a *liberal attitude* towards what it means to be a potential motivator may end up regarding something as a reason than a proponent of a *restricted attitude* towards potential motivation. I intend these two categories to be *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. As a consequence, Williams denies the existence of certain reasons, those he calls 'external reasons'. External reasons are not reasons at all, Williams claims, because reasons must be potential motivators, but so-called external reasons do not meet his restricted criteria—that of being accessible *via* deliberation—for a potential motivator. With his more liberal view of potential motivation, McDowell accepts the possibility of external reasons.

Bringing the notion of a good—which, as we saw in the previous section, is a *prima facie* reason—back into the picture, we get the possibility of different attitudes towards goods with respect to their ability to motivate. The proponent of a more restricted attitude towards potential motivators may end up ruling out certain apparent goods as being *real* goods (just as Williams does with respect to certain reasons), because of their inability to potentially motivate. Similarly, the proponent of a more liberal attitude towards potential motivators may count these goods as *bona fide* goods 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 and reasons, one's attitude towards the notion of potential motivator can carry over into one's attitude towards goods. Whether something can or cannot motivate behavior may lead one to declare it to be (or not to be) a good at all. In the next two sections, I will introduce a feature of doxastic motivation that is likely to raise precisely this division with respect to doxastic goods.

#### **4. Doxastic Goods and the Motivation of Belief**

The nature of the rational motivation of belief deserves more attention than it has hitherto received.<sup>8</sup> Certain ostensible doxastic goods can only *surreptitiously* bring about belief. This results in a significant distinction between such goods and other doxastic goods that can motivate openly.

We can divide doxastic goods into two categories, *epistemic* and

*pragmatic*. 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. In an evidential or perceptual explanation of a belief, a believer is presented as being concerned with gaining epistemic goods. This is reflected, most explicitly, in the fact that when we offer an epistemic explanation of Jones's believing that  $p$ , we expect Jones to respond appropriately to challenges to the truth or justificatory status of his belief. If he is challenged, roughly, we expect him to meet that challenge or to put his belief on hold until he can answer it. This is the behavior indicative of an agent concerned to find a truth about the subject matter before him.<sup>9</sup> 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 the belief. In what we might call a pragmatic explanation of a belief, the believer is presented as believing because of a concern for non-epistemic gain. Jones believes that  $p$ , it is said, because it grants him acceptance into a social group, or because it makes him happy. In such explanations, the believer is presented as believing in the light of a concern for pragmatic goods.

Pragmatic goods are distinct from most (but as we will see below, not all) epistemic goods in their ability to motivate belief. A believer herself cannot recognize that she believes something in order to gain pragmatic benefit; my believing that  $p$  is incompatible with my believing that my doing so is dependent upon 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. When I guess or speculate, as when I believe, I am after a truth about the subject matter before me.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to belief, however, I can be fully aware that I am in any of these states right now (rather than waiting to do so) because of other benefits that they 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, a client, or a patient before me; 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. 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 writes, 'In so far as we doubt that grounds wholly determine our belief, so far is our belief itself subjectively insecure.'<sup>11</sup>

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.

The result of this is that we can draw a distinction between, on the one hand, *acknowledgeable* doxastic goods, and on the other hand, *incidental* or *hidden* doxastic goods. Incidental doxastic goods 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 incidental goods that I might get from such a belief, but my doing so must be hidden from me. All pragmatic doxastic goods are incidental goods.<sup>12</sup> However, it is not true that all epistemic goods are acknowledgeable. We will see in Section 6 that some epistemic goods are incidental as well.

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

In the light of this distinction between doxastic goods in terms of their ability to motivate, let us return to the *restricted* and *liberal* attitudes towards the relationship between goods and motivators. As we saw, these two attitudes involve having differing views of what it means for a good to be a potential motivator. Among those that I called the Constitutivists, who believe that goods are necessarily potential motivators, taking a restricted attitude may mean that one counts some apparent goods as not really goods at all, because they cannot (according to one's restricted view of potential motivation) motivate.

In the light of the feature of pragmatic doxastic goods discussed in the previous section, the proponents of the restricted and liberal views of the relationship between doxastic goods and doxastic motivation may pass differing judgments as to whether unacknowledged doxastic goods are going to count as goods. In particular, the proponent of a restricted attitude might

say something like the following:

In order for a doxastic benefit to be a *bona fide doxastic good*, it must be an acknowledgeable good; there is no such thing as an incidental good. As the pragmatic benefits of belief can only motivate incidentally, then they do not count as goods.

Just as Williams says that a good must be visible as such by deliberation, before it can count as a good, the proponent of the restricted attitude may say that a doxastic good must be such that it can consciously motivate me to believe. If my being aware of something I will gain by believing cannot lead me to believe, 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*. It must be possible for doxastic goods to consciously motivate belief.

The proponent of a more liberal attitude towards the motivating power of doxastic goods, on the other hand, might disagree, arguing that the fact that unacknowledged benefit must be hidden from the believer is irrelevant to whether it is a doxastic good or not. Just as McDowell says 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 the liberal view might say that the unacknowledged benefits that we get from believing are *bona fide* goods, and thus reasons to believe. A doxastic good can be a potential motivator even though it may only be an *unconscious* motivator.

This difference between the proponents of the restricted and liberal attitudes towards the possibility of pragmatic doxastic goods is reminiscent of a recent debate concerning the nature of the virtue of modesty. Julia Driver calls modesty a 'virtue of ignorance', claiming that it is one that we cannot recognize in ourselves: '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.'<sup>13</sup> This is because, Driver argues, modesty requires an underestimation of oneself. One is only modest when one is *ignorant* with regard to the worth of one's actions or self. As with

pragmatic believing, one cannot consciously aim to be modest; to do so would be, on Driver's account, to undercut one's modesty. If Driver's analysis of modesty is correct, then it follows that there are incidental ethical virtues; these are virtues such that, while they are good to attain, the knowledge of them is not going to motivate us to get into them. One will not be motivated to be modest by a conscious concern to be modest. Our possession of this virtue requires a certain lack of awareness that it characterizes us.

Driver's analysis of modesty fits nicely with the spirit of the liberal attitude towards goods and motivation; modesty is a good state to be in, but we cannot be modest in response to a conscious concern to be modest. We cannot, except by some tortuous method, *set out* to be modest. Accordingly, the proponent of a more restricted attitude will have to say that if Driver's analysis of modesty is right, then modesty is not a virtue. Modesty cannot be both a good-conferring state and a state that is only incidentally so. Just as there can be no incidental doxastic goods, there can be no virtues of ignorance.<sup>14</sup>

I will not defend either a restricted or a liberal attitude towards doxastic goods. Rather, my concern is to point out that even if we were to accept a more liberal attitude towards doxastic goods, and accept that incidental goods are *bona fide* goods, we would need to recognize the limited role that they can play in our doxastic economy. Richard Foley astutely observes that

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 ... 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 ...<sup>15</sup>

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. 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.

The fact that a pragmatic doxastic benefit cannot consciously motivate belief does not mean that it cannot consciously motivate *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 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', he tells 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.<sup>16</sup>

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.<sup>17</sup>

Even if we take the liberal attitude and consider pragmatic benefits as *bona fide* doxastic goods, we must acknowledge that such goods work unconsciously. 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. We will not immediately respond to the prospect of a pragmatic doxastic benefit; we can only seek them indirectly, and we cannot be aware of their workings. As with my desire to be modest, the incidental benefits of believing must bring about belief in a hidden or indirect way.

## 6. Searching for the Value of Knowledge

It is one thing to ask whether an incidental doxastic good is *really* a good, and another to ask whether an incidental doxastic good can be a *substantial* good. Unacknowledged goods may be *bona fide* goods, but not suffice when we turn to ask what doxastic goods can fulfill certain particular roles. Incidental goods may not be suitable for filling certain roles that we expect goods to fill.

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 the former is the latter gained by a good method of gaining the latter. 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.<sup>18</sup>

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.<sup>19</sup>

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.

Does this matter? It depends upon the role that you think the value of knowledge plays in our lives. And this is the point that I want to make in this final section. In defending credit as the value of knowledge, we are relegating our concern for knowledge to a concern for that which can only (i) incidentally motivate believing, and (ii) motivate epistemic action.<sup>20</sup>

What this leaves out is the interpersonal dialectical phenomena—testimony, advice, argument—in which we engage and which directly affects what beliefs we hold. Credit plays, at best, an attenuated role in these procedures. 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. They may work ‘behind the scenes’, as it were, but they will not directly affect belief as, say, an appeal to evidence would.

Put another way, on the credit account of the value of knowledge a concern for the value of knowledge gives us a reason to be knowers—someone who knows—but it 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.

This is not necessarily a strike against the credit account. Perhaps our valuing knowledge works in a similar manner to our valuing modesty. As we saw in the previous section, a concern to be modest can only work in an indirect way. The same is true, to a lesser extent, of other virtues, like 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.’<sup>21</sup> 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 it in, at best, a subsidiary motivating role. 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’.

The credit account works within a framework in which the aim of inquiry is true belief. The Value Problem arises because justification only looks instrumental here. 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. This is reflected in the fact that credit cannot play a primary role in epistemic discourse. If we want to allow our concern for knowledge to play a more fundamental role in inquiry, then we must throw out the framework in which we see inquiry as concerned only for truth. We would 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.

By working *within* the framework in which true belief is the aim of inquiry, the proponent of the credit account commits himself to an account in which knowledge is not itself an aim of inquiry. Without rejecting this framework, or at least adding another one, the proponent of the credit

account must see knowledge as a by-product of inquiry, and not one of its primary aims. This is dramatically illustrated, as we have just seen, by knowledge being relegated to a minor motivating role for belief. If one finds this unsatisfactory, then I suspect that one will have to explore a quite different view of inquiry, in which not (or not only) true belief, but knowledge is itself a goal of inquiry, and a concern that motivates our doxastic behavior.

What would such an alternative framework look like? Briefly ...

Is the search for an answer to the Value Problem a search for an acknowledgeable doxastic good, a good that can lead us to belief *in full reflection*? Must the doxastic goods 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 goods come in two kinds, those that are incidental and those that are acknowledgeable in their motivating power. A story in which some doxastic good explains the value of knowledge will have further commitments in so far as that good is incidental. 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 as we continue to explore doxastic goods.<sup>22</sup>

1. See Ward E. Jones, 'Is Scientific Theory-Commitment Doxastic or Practical?' *Synthese* 137: 3 (2003) 325-44, for the claim that theory-commitment is in fact belief. See Bas van Fraassen, *The Scientific Image* (Oxford University Press, 1980), for a defense of the claim that theory-commitment *should not* be belief.
2. *Value, Respect, and Attachment* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 164-5.
3. For this debate, see the first two chapters of T.M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (Harvard University Press, 1998).
4. 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.
5. David O. Brink, as I understand him, occupies this position. *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), especially Chapter 3.

6. 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.
7. 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.
8. Note that 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.
9. For more on the expectations involved in offering a doxastic explanation, see Ward E. Jones, 'The Pragmatic Explanation of Believing', *Critica* 36:108 (2004), pp. 3-36.
10. J. David Velleman, 'On the Aim of Belief', *The Possibility of Practical Reason* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 244-81.
11. *Locke* (Routledge, 1991) Volume 1, p. 148
12. This is the claim defended in Ward E. Jones, 'Explaining Our Own Beliefs: Nonepistemic Believing and Doxastic Instability', *Philosophical Studies* 111:3 (2002), pp. 217-249.
13. 'The Virtues of Ignorance', *Journal of Philosophy* 86 (1989), 380.
14. By pointing out their similarities, I do not mean to suggest that one cannot hold a liberal view of virtues and a restricted view of doxastic goods, or *vice versa*.
15. Richard Foley, *The Theory of Epistemic Rationality* (Harvard University Press, 1987), 214-15.
16. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, translated by A.J. Krailsheimer (Penguin, 1966) fragment 418 (Lafuma numbering).
17. 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.
18. 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).
19. 'Reliability and the Value of Knowledge', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 64:1 (2002), 92-3.
20. This is not to say that the credit view of the value of knowing cannot be combined with another view.
21. 'The Virtues of Ignorance', p. 379.
22. Thanks to ...