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## WHY DO WE VALUE KNOWLEDGE?

Ward E. Jones

It would seem that an account of why we value knowledge is a desideratum of any so-called 'theory of knowledge'. In the first two sections of this paper, I argue that a dominant approach to knowledge, which I call "epistemic instrumentalism," cannot account for the value we place on knowledge. At the very least such accounts will have to be supplemented. In the remainder of the paper I defend two complementary explanations for the value of knowledge. One explains why we value other people's knowledge, while the other explains why we value our own knowledge. Both of these explanations are based, however, on properties of knowledge which are neither necessary nor sufficient for knowledge. The value of knowledge, I suggest, derives from contingent properties of knowledge. I conclude that not only epistemic instrumentalism, but furthermore the entire necessary and sufficient conditions approach to knowledge, will not be able to offer us an adequate explanation of the value we place on knowledge.

### I. THE VALUE OF KNOWING

In asking about the value of knowledge, I am not asking for the value of knowledge *qua* true belief. Knowledge is a type of true belief, and it should be uncontroversial that we do and should value true believing. I want to know why we value knowledge over 'mere true beliefs', those true beliefs

which are not knowledge. Nor am I asking for the value of either the content or the concept of knowledge. I want to know about the value of the *state* of knowledge. Why is knowing a state which we want ourselves and others to be in? Why is it a state which we prefer over mere true belief? There are other familiar ways of asking the same question: 'Why do we think knowing is important?' 'Why do we care about knowledge?' 'Why do we think it is better to have knowledge that *p* than to have a mere true belief that *p*?'

My question has two presuppositions. First, I am assuming that knowledge is different from, or something more than, mere true belief. This first claim is the basis of the entire search for the conditions of knowledge. If I am hit over the head with a cricket bat, thus resulting in a true belief *B*, *B* is not knowledge.<sup>1</sup> The same holds for other types of belief-forming processes, like hypnosis, guessing, and clairvoyance. If it is possible that a true genuine belief can be brought about by such methods, then knowing is not merely true believing.<sup>2</sup> A second presupposition is that we *do* value knowledge over mere true belief. A number of considerations suggest that this is true. Surely it is the high value we place on knowledge which has motivated the extraordinary volume of philosophical work which has gone into setting out the conditions for knowledge as opposed to

true belief. As Crispin Sartwell, defending the value of knowledge, writes:

if knowledge is not the overarching epistemic telos with regard to particular propositions, why [has] such tremendous emphasis . . . been placed on the theory of knowledge in the history of philosophy, and just what function [does] that notion serve within that history? If knowledge is not the overarching purpose of inquiry, then why is the notion important, and why should we continue to be concerned in normative epistemology above all with what knowledge is and how it can be achieved?<sup>3</sup>

Even more telling than philosophical infatuation is our unwillingness to endorse or applaud those who succeed in guessing. What is more, those who repeatedly guess tend to gain our disapproval, even though they may succeed at guessing. At the very least, we lose trust in their reliability as informants. Even more than valuing others' knowledge, we value ourselves as knowers. For most (if not all) of my factual beliefs, I take it to be important that they are knowledge and not lucky guesses. I want all of my beliefs to be true — otherwise I would not believe them — but I would also rather they be known beliefs than mere true beliefs.

All this indicates not only a conviction that knowing is different from merely true believing, but also that it holds some value over and above merely true believing. Knowledge is not only distinct from but also more important than true believing. Given this, it would seem reasonable to demand from a theory of knowledge that it be able to explain why knowledge holds this value. In the next section, I will argue that a dominant approach to knowledge cannot give us such an account.

## II. EPISTEMIC INSTRUMENTALISM AND THE VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE

The instrumentalist accepts a means/ends approach to analysis. He groups processes or acts according to their goals, and then evaluates these processes or acts according to how well they achieve these goals. Ethical instrumentalists, or utilitarians, claim that the ethical goal of action is happiness, and they accordingly evaluate an action by how effectively and/or by how much, happiness is achieved. The epistemic instrumentalist evaluates a belief-forming process by its ability to bring about true beliefs. In accepting that a means/ends analysis is an appropriate approach to understanding knowledge, she accepts the following two claims:

- A. The end of belief-formation is to gain true beliefs.
- B. Justification is a means to attaining the end of true belief.

Reliabilism is the simplest and most popular of the instrumental theories of knowledge. The reliabilist evaluates belief-forming processes with respect to how reliable they are, that is, by the ratio of true beliefs to false beliefs that they bring about. A reliable process is one which brings about true beliefs in some respectable percentage of cases. Reliable processes play the central role in distinguishing knowledge from other true beliefs: only a true belief brought about by a reliable belief-forming process qualifies as knowledge. Thus, what makes a true belief knowledge is the process that brings it about. If a true belief is the result of an unreliable process — like guessing — then it cannot, according to the reliabilist, be knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

For the reliabilist, justification is a property which reliable belief-forming processes bestow on the beliefs they bring about. An unreliable process may be able

to bring about true beliefs some of the time, but it can never justify them. A belief is justified if it is brought about by a reliable process, and any belief brought about by a reliable process is justified, whether it is true or not. Thus the reliabilist can say that if a justified belief is true, then it is knowledge. So, in reliabilism, as in all epistemic instrumentalist theories, justification plays an instrumental role. It is a property of belief-forming processes. Belief-forming processes are justifying; they confer justification on the beliefs they bring about. We want justifying processes because we want true belief. Justification is our way of getting to truth, since a justified belief has a higher chance of being true than an unjustified belief. Given one belief, brought about by a reliable belief-forming process, and another, which was not so brought about, it is always a safer bet to rely on the former.<sup>5</sup>

The reliabilist conceives of belief-formation as we might conceive of crossing a river. In both cases we have a fixed goal: we want to end up on the other side of the river in the same way that we want to attain a true belief. The possible processes of getting to the other side of the river, like the processes of gaining true belief, are various. To get across the river we might take a ferry, or swim the current, or shoot ourselves out of a cannon, and to gain a true belief we might use perception, testimony, clairvoyance, or guessing. These processes can be compared with respect to how reliably they get us to our goal, and we can divide them into those processes which are reliable and those which are not. Reliable river-crossing procedures get us safely across the river most of the time just as justifying belief-forming processes get us true beliefs most of the time. Knowledge, for the reliabilist, is true belief brought about by a justifying process. The comparable state in our river

analogy would be that of *being across the river having used reliable means*. Getting across the river using the reliable ferry is like knowledge, while being lucky enough to get safely across by using the cannon is not. It is thus the process which distinguishes knowledge from true belief: knowledge is a true belief brought about by a justifying, or reliable, process.<sup>6</sup>

Now introduce the question of value. The reliabilist takes the goal of belief-formation to be true belief. The value of true belief is taken for granted. Justifying (that is, reliable) processes are valuable because they tend to end in true beliefs. So we could say that on a reliabilist account, we value truth intrinsically and reliable processes instrumentally. But where does this valuing of true belief and reliable processes leave knowledge? If we care about justifying processes merely because they lead to true beliefs, then why should we value the true beliefs gained from justifying processes over the ones that are not so gained? If truth is the goal of epistemic inquiry, then why do we care whether someone gets her beliefs via a reliable method or via an unreliable method? Again, if justification is only important because it gets us to truth, then why do we value justified true beliefs over any other true beliefs?

When we ask about the value of knowledge over mere true belief, we are asking not about belief-forming methods but about their products. We have clear reason to care about reliable methods of belief-formation, and the reliabilist is right to emphasize them. But it is unclear, on reliabilism, why we should divide the desired products of belief-formation, true beliefs, into those which were brought about by reliable methods and those that were not. The epistemic instrumentalist gives us no way of *evaluatively dividing* true beliefs into those which have been brought about by justifying methods versus those which have not. To

imagine a limiting case, we are given no reason to, or no account of why we might, put more value on a true belief brought about by a method which results in 51% true beliefs over a true belief brought about by a method which results in 49% true beliefs. If the methods involved were equal in cost and non-truth utility, we would all say that, given a choice of methods, we should use the 51% method. But that choice is easily explainable in terms of our valuing true beliefs and the methods which most often get them for us, and does not give us an explanation as to why we should value knowledge over true belief.

It may look as though I'm just poking reliabilism in a tender place, for it has long been asked where the reliabilist sets the lower limit to statistical reliability. Is the cut-off at 51%? Or is it at a much higher level, say at 90%? It is hard to see how intuitions are going to help us draw the line, but that is not my present worry. I'm asking an evaluative question, a question about our concerns and what epistemic phenomena we care about. Even if the reliabilist objects that the border between unreliable and reliable methods will necessarily be fuzzy, the significant question remains: why would we value a true belief brought about by a 60% reliable method over one brought about by a 40% reliable method? Or a belief brought about by a 70% method over one brought about by a 30% method? Or even a belief arrived at using a 99% method over one arrived at using a 1% method? In short, given the reliabilist's framework, there is no reason why we should care what the method was which brought about a true belief, as long as it is true? We value the better *method*, because we value truth, but that does not tell us why we value the true *beliefs* brought about by that method over true beliefs brought about by other less reliable ones.

Returning to the river analogy may be helpful here. For the reliabilist, belief-forming methods are like river-crossing methods; they are merely instrumental in gaining the real goal of true belief. But this gives us no account of why we value the state of *being safely across the river having used a reliable method*. We think that it is important to get safely across the river, and given that goal we value reliable processes because they help us achieve that goal. But this has left out any explanation of why we value *being safely across the river having used a reliable method* over *being safely across the river having used an unreliable method*. The reliabilist cannot evaluatively distinguish between these two states. For him, processes are only means to a desired end of true belief.<sup>7</sup>

It might be suggested that we value true beliefs arrived at by justifying methods — *i.e.*, knowledge — because such success makes those methods more reliable. The problem with this suggestion is that if there is a *fact of the matter* about how reliable a method is then using that method to arrive at another true belief won't change the reliability of that method. If the generalization 'method M is 95% accurate' holds, then using M to form another true belief will not change that accuracy. Alternatively, it could be suggested that the fact that I have knowledge *shows me* that the process I used to form a true belief is reliable. One problem with this suggestion is that success in belief-formation does not say anything about how reliable my belief-forming processes are. I have no access to the truth of my belief other than by the methods which I use to justify it. Any assessment of the truth of a belief depends ultimately upon the reliability of some belief-forming process.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, such an account makes the value of knowledge unduly parasitic on the value of justifying processes. Surely we value knowledge

independently of the fact that knowledge shows us which processes we are using are reliable. Nevertheless, though this suggestion fails, it is not too far off the target. The account I ultimately defend is not dissimilar. The present suggestion is right insofar as it identifies an *indicative* value for knowledge, giving it a role in our epistemic lives beyond the search for true beliefs and the methods which get them for us. Note, however, that once we give justification an indicative value, we will have gone beyond the two tenets of epistemic instrumentalism.

I have been discussing the reliabilist in particular, but I should reemphasize that I consider the reliabilist to be representative of the epistemic instrumentalists. Laurence Bonjour, a coherentist, writes:

If epistemic justification were not conducive to truth in this way, if finding epistemically justified beliefs did not substantially increase the likelihood of finding true ones, epistemic justification would be irrelevant to our main cognitive goal and of dubious worth . . . Epistemic justification is therefore in the final analysis only an instrumental value, not an intrinsic one.<sup>9</sup>

And Paul Moser, a foundationalist, writes:

Epistemic justification is essentially related to the so-called cognitive goal of truth, insofar as an individual belief is epistemically justified only if it is appropriately directed toward the goal of truth.<sup>10</sup>

Both comments reveal a commitment to epistemic instrumentalism. Instrumentalism in the theory of knowledge is consistent with internalism (foundationalism and coherentism) as well as externalism (*e.g.*, reliabilism). The internalists see justification as dependent upon evidence, grounding, and inference, but like the reliabilists they may still hold that justification has value only insofar as it gets us to our epistemic goal of true belief. The claims of this section apply to any instrumentalist theories of knowledge. The internalist instrumentalist

takes justifying evidence to be valuable because it leads to true beliefs. But this gives us no account of why we value true beliefs based on strong evidence over true beliefs which were guessed. The instrumentalist's resources are all-in-all too sparse to account for why we value knowledge over mere true belief, so he ends up giving us an account of what knowledge is without giving us an account of why it is a goal in and of itself. The instrumentalist's starting point leads him to conceive of knowledge as something which falls out of inquiry, a mere by-product of the attempt to gain true beliefs. If it is true that we value knowledge over mere true beliefs, then there must be more to the story than this. The instrumentalist has left something out.

### III. FINDING A VALUE FOR KNOWLEDGE

I have argued that, by themselves, the two basic premises of epistemic instrumentalism give us no reason to think that knowledge should be valued over mere true belief. This is so in spite of the fact that these two premises of instrumentalism are *prima facie* quite plausible.

There are two distinct responses we can make to this argument. (1) One is to accept that we either do not or should not value knowledge, exclaiming with Feyereabendian animation that we should let people get their true beliefs any way they please. This response would imply that philosophers, as well as most everyone else, have been deluded into thinking that knowledge is something to be valued over mere true belief. (2) Alternatively, we can agree with the long-standing tradition that knowledge is an important epistemic goal, and then conclude that instrumentalism is inadequate insofar as it can give no explanation of this fact.

For some, intuitions about epistemic instrumentalism may outweigh intuitions about the value of knowledge over mere

true belief. I am sympathetic to those who feel inclined to take option (1) and reject the value of knowledge. Yet this seems hasty at this point. We have not yet tried to find the source of the value of knowledge, and *ipso facto* we have not yet established that the source of the value of knowledge is incompatible with instrumentalism. We have only established that the instrumentalist framework will not, by itself, account for the value of knowledge. The possibility remains, at this point, that the explanation of the value of knowledge is compatible with instrumentalist approaches. I will argue that this is, in fact, true, that the correct account of the value of knowledge is compatible with epistemic instrumentalism. If I am right, then instrumentalism is not wrong, but merely inadequate.

What bare instrumentalism does not provide, and what an explanation of the value of knowledge needs, is an account of the *function* of knowledge. Knowledge is valuable because it serves some function that mere true belief, or mere true believers, cannot. A functional explanation of the value of knowledge would show how possessing knowledge does something for us or other believers, something that mere true belief cannot.

Both David Armstrong and Colin McGinn suggest that the answer may be easy. We merely have to recognize that knowers are better informants. Armstrong writes:

The man who has mere true belief is unreliable. He was right this time, but if the same situation crops up again he is likely to get it wrong . . .<sup>11</sup>

And McGinn, writing some years later, agrees:

. . . if someone is certified as a knower, then you can rely upon that person's beliefs in forming your own beliefs about the world. . . . Someone who knows can be depended upon on other occasions.<sup>12</sup>

For the reliabilist, the difference between knowledge and mere true belief is that the knower has used a reliable method to get her beliefs. Armstrong and McGinn, who are both reliabilists, suggest that knowers are more reliable than those who have mere true belief. We value knowledge because knowers make testimony a more reliable process of belief-formation. A knower can be trusted because she will (most likely) use reliable methods again.

Unfortunately, this account faces the same objections of the last section. Reliabilism can give us an account of why we value justifying belief-forming processes and true beliefs, but not knowledge. We can see that this is so once we divide instances of testimony into two types. One sort of testimony occurs when a person tells us what he already believes. Here, however, a true believer is just as dependable as a knower, as long as he has true beliefs. A knower is not more dependable than a mere true believer with respect to their true beliefs. A second sort of testimony occurs when we ask a person to go find out or discover some set of facts for us. In this case what matters is not the witness's belief system,<sup>13</sup> but what methods she will use. If I send someone out to discover the breeding habits of nuthatches, I am concerned not with her presently-held beliefs, but with the belief-forming processes that she will use in her investigation of nuthatches. Indeed, she may have lots of knowledge, and have in the past used very reliable belief-forming methods, yet still not know what methods are reliably used in investigations of nuthatches. Neither type of testimony, then, gives the instrumentalist reason to value knowledge over mere true belief.

Armstrong and McGinn may retort that once we know that someone is a knower, we know that she tends to use (or at least has used) justifying processes to get her

beliefs. Knowledge, they will say, indicates the use of justifying processes. This is right, but (as we have already seen) the epistemic instrumentalist has left out this indicative function of justification. On his own account of knowledge, the instrumentalist must admit that we can identify knowers — good informants — only if we can tell that they used justifying methods to get their beliefs. We can recognize that they are knowers only if we can recognize that they used justifying methods. This leaves us needing an account of how we can tell that someone has used justifying methods, and thus is a knower and good informant. In other words, if testimony provides a value of knowledge because knowers are good informants, then we need to be able to *identify* knowers. A mechanism for identifying knowers is not incompatible with epistemic instrumentalism, but nor is it provided by epistemic instrumentalism.

What we need for a testimonial account of the value of knowledge is an account of how we can tell that a knower is a knower. Edward Craig has recently provided us with such an account. Craig *begins* with a claim about the value of knowledge, maintaining that the value of knowledge should provide the basis for the analysis of knowledge.

We take some *prima facie* plausible hypothesis about what the concept of knowledge does for us, what its role in our life might be, and then ask what a concept having that role would be like, what conditions would govern its application.<sup>14</sup>

The function of knowledge is suggested first, and the conditions for knowledge are whatever allows a belief to fulfill that function. The concept of knowledge arose because of the need for, and more importantly, the need to recognize, reliable informants.

To put it briefly and roughly, the concept of knowledge is used to flag approved sources of information [*i.e.*, informants].<sup>15</sup>

Knowers are good informants, and the conditions for knowledge are the conditions for being, and being recognizable as, a good informant.

It is not just that we are looking for an informant who will tell us the truth about *p*; we also have to be able to pick him out, distinguish him from others to whom we would be less well advised to listen.<sup>16</sup>

Craig's search for the characteristics of knowledge begins there. Knowers have true beliefs and a property *X*: "*X* is any detectable property which has been found to correlate [in a lawlike manner] with holding a true belief as to whether *p*."<sup>17</sup> Knowers are those who we can tell have true beliefs. Knowers have a true belief whether *p*, and a property which leads us to think that they have a true belief whether *p*.

Knowledge in the state of nature is knowledge fulfilling its original function, and the characteristics of knowledge which allow it to fulfill that function are the characteristics which make knowledge important to us. The concept of knowledge arose so that we could identify those from whom we can gain true beliefs. The originality of Craig's approach is that throughout his analysis he never loses sight of the value of knowledge. His description of knowledge in the state of nature includes precisely the characteristics which make knowledge valuable, and his theory of knowledge is intended to tell us what knowledge is by telling us why we value knowledge. Knowledge is more valuable than true belief because knowers show us that they (most likely) have a true belief that *p*. What is important about knowers is that they wear their true beliefs on their sleeves.

Craig spends a significant amount of time criticizing the necessary and sufficient conditions approach to knowledge. It is easy to see the reason for this. His third condition

on knowledge, property X, is a detectable property which correlates with the possession of a true belief. It takes very little imagination to think of a knower who is bent on keeping her knowledge secret, and goes to great lengths to hide property X from us. Craig has an answer prepared for this type of counterexample: the concept of knowledge has evolved. It has, in his words, 'objectified' to a point where the nature of the concept no longer precisely reflects the function it originally served.<sup>18</sup> The objectification of the concept of knowledge means that there are no necessary and sufficient conditions on knowledge. Because of objectification, what originally made the concept of knowledge valuable — for highlighting good informants — is not identical with what leads us to call a believer a knower. We are willing to call persons knowers (in, for example, a thought experiment) even though their possession of knowledge is not in practice detectable. Objectification means that the characteristics which make a belief knowledge might not be the same characteristics which make knowledge valuable. In giving his function-based analysis of the concept of knowledge, Craig has to step outside of the necessary and sufficient conditions approach. In doing so he suggests a point I will develop in the next section of this paper: the source of the value of knowledge will not be found in the necessary conditions for knowledge.

As an explanation of why we value knowledge, however, Craig's account has a shortcoming which it shares with all testimonial accounts of the value of knowledge. Testimony can, at best, only account for the value we place on knowledge in other people. Yet we value knowledge not only in others but also in ourselves. We think that knowledge is an important state for us to be in, more important than being in the state of mere true belief, and any account

of knowledge will be inadequate insofar as it is unable to account for this value. While it is true that testimony can give us an account of why we value other person's knowledge, it is of no help in explaining why we value our own knowledge.

Craig might respond that we value ourselves as knowers insofar as we value ourselves as informants. Surely we do value ourselves as informants, but does this value match the value we place on our knowledge? It is not clear that it does. I value my knowledge beyond, and for reasons besides, my ability to inform other people of that knowledge. Indeed, Craig's account is particularly worrisome given his repeated use of the 'state of nature' metaphor. Certainly in Hobbes' state of nature, lacking any amount of altruism, we would not value ourselves as informants for others. Even if Craig's testimonial story of the third-person value of knowledge is plausible, it will have to be supplemented with another explanation before we can understand the first-person valuing of knowledge. The explanation I will look at now provides just that balance.

In the *Meno*, Plato writes:

Now this is an understanding of the nature of true opinions: while they abide with us they are beautiful and fruitful of nothing but good, but they . . . do not care to remain long, and therefore are not of much value until they are fastened by a reasoned understanding of causes . . . But when they are bound, in the first place, they attain to be knowledge . . . And this is why knowledge is more honorable and excellent than right opinion . . .<sup>19</sup>

Various internalist accounts of knowledge have followed him, proposing that someone who knows that p understands why she has the belief that p. This proposed property of knowledge has been called the 'internalist's intuition'.<sup>20</sup> The internalist's intuition (hereafter I/I) is an attempt to enunciate an idea implicit in all internalist theories of

knowledge. Known beliefs get their status at least partly from the subject's own awareness of why they are and should be believed. Knowers are aware of either the causal processes which brought about their known beliefs or of some support or grounding for their known beliefs. A knower's awareness of how her belief came about has played a role in her adoption and retention of that belief.

Those who find I/I appealing feel that there is something missing from all existing externalist theories of knowledge, something which internalists have long defended. The externalist framework leaves out the knower's viewpoint, his awareness of his own beliefs and how they have arisen. This constitutes a difference between knowledge and mere true belief which the pure externalist, with her limited vocabulary of causes and processes, cannot capture. In inference and testimony, for example, knowledge is the result of one belief of which we are aware — an evidential belief — bringing about another. In perception and, perhaps, memory, knowledge is partly the result of an awareness of — and belief in — the causal pathway leading up to the belief. The substance of I/I is that a knowing subject is aware (to a lesser or greater extent) of the sources, origins, grounding, or support for his known beliefs. When a belief fulfills I/I, we know why we believe it.

We can see that I/I explains the value we place on knowledge if we look at the indicative value of the evidence we have for beliefs. Evidence is not just a way to get to true beliefs, but is also an indicator or sign of true beliefs. It is by looking at a proposition's support or grounds — indeed, by looking at how the belief came about — that we pronounce on its truth. If belief in a proposition is deemed to be warranted or justified, then we proceed to call the proposition true; that is, we believe it. By

the same token, if we want to check on the truth of a belief which we already have, we check its justification. As Roderick Firth writes,

beliefs do not come labeled true and false. . . . To the extent that we are rational, each of us decides at any time *t* whether a belief is true, in precisely the same way that we would decide at *t* whether we ourselves are, or would be, warranted at *t* in having that belief.<sup>21</sup>

This is too strong: it is not true that we must always have a sign for truth. In optimal cases of perception, don't we just see that some fact obtains? And don't we sometimes just check the truth of our perceptual beliefs by looking again?

However, the point remains that our awareness of the source of a belief does play a role in the formation and retention of beliefs. This is true even in conscious perception. We are aware that, for example, we are seeing rather than hearing that something obtains. This is why when I remember a perceptual belief, I remember how I formed the belief. I remember, for example, not only that the people behind me in the restaurant last night were eating garlic bread, but also that I smelled it (rather than, say, saw it or tasted it or heard them talk about it). I can check the truth of that belief today because I can recall the justification for it; I can remember that I smelled it. This can only be done if I still have some grasp of why I have the belief at all. That is, beliefs can often be checked only if I/I is fulfilled. My belief that the couple behind me were eating garlic bread fulfills I/I because I am aware of why I believe it, namely that I smelled it. Furthermore, it is because I am aware that I smelled the garlic bread that I now trust, to the extent that I do, that the belief is true. The justification for my perceptual belief that *p*, which is that I smelled that *p*, is an indication to me of *p*'s truth.

We might say that conscious perception fulfills I/I because we monitor the justification for our beliefs.<sup>22</sup> Consciousness gives us some grasp of why we form our beliefs. Later, that monitoring can be used to check the truth of the beliefs, again playing an indicative role. In both cases, it is because I/I is fulfilled that we can scrutinize our perceptual beliefs. We do so via the support we have for those beliefs. Beliefs which fulfill I/I are valuable because when I/I is fulfilled we have some grasp of the source or grounds of our beliefs, and that gives us an indication of their truth. Our grasp of a belief's justification gives us an indication of its truth value, and determines the extent to which we should trust the belief. Beliefs which fulfill I/I are more valuable because they bring their justification with them, and when that justification is there we can check their truth. Firth is right that beliefs tend to show their truth value only via their justification, and thus only if they fulfill I/I. When my belief that *p* fulfills I/I, I know why I believe that *p* is true.

We saw that Craig's testimonial account of the value of knowledge explains the fact that we value other persons' knowledge, but it does not explain the value I place on my own knowledge. The value I place on myself as an informant does not match the value I place on my possession of knowledge. I/I accounts have the exact opposite virtue. The first-person story looks plausible: I value my own knowledge because when I have knowledge I have some grasp of the warrant for that knowledge, and thus have some indication of that belief's truth. I want to have knowledge and not just mere true beliefs, because I prefer having beliefs which I monitor, beliefs whose personal warrant is open to me. The correlative third-person story is not as credible. I/I by itself cannot account for the third-person value we place on knowledge. I have no

real reason, other than altruism, to be happy that the source of your belief is open to you. It is more plausible that the value I place on your having knowledge rather than mere true belief derives from my ability to gain true beliefs from you. This takes us back to a testimony account like the one we have seen Craig offer.

I/I may be a source of the value of knowledge, but like Craig's testimonial account, it is not a necessary condition on knowledge. There are numerous counterexamples to I/I, cases in which although the subject is a knower, she is not aware of the grounds or sources of her belief. My belief that my name is Ward is surely knowledge, and yet I have no idea of the source of, or evidence for, that belief. Common examples of forgotten knowledge, like historical dates, present the I/I theorist with the same problem. The accuracy of the belief leads us to want to call it knowledge, and yet I may have no awareness of evidence for the belief. Whether or not it is a source of the value of knowledge, I/I, like Craig's property X, is not a necessary characteristic of knowledge.

#### IV. CONTINGENT PROPERTIES AS THE SOURCE OF VALUE

An I/I account of the value of knowledge, I have suggested, nicely complements Craig's testimonial account. The I/I account tells us that we value our own knowledge because when we have knowledge we know why we believe it. Craig's account tells us that we value others' knowledge because when they have knowledge we can tell that they have it. Together these two accounts offer a plausible explanation of the value of knowledge over mere true belief.

A prominent feature of both Craig's and the I/I account of the value of knowledge is that the properties of knowledge they are based on are not necessary properties of knowledge. Since Edmund Gettier's "Is

Knowledge Justified True Belief?”<sup>23</sup> theory of knowledge has notoriously (but deservedly) gained a reputation for being overly concerned with the necessary conditions for knowledge. The goal of such searches is an elucidation of what all cases of knowledge have in common. The final product would tell us what conditions must hold before anyone is a knower. We would have found a reductive account of knowledge, we would know what the fact *S* knows that *p* consists in.

The methodology of the necessary and sufficient conditions approach primarily involves thought experiments in which we, as users of the concept knowledge, are led to declare that some subject either knows or does not know that *p*. By discovering the properties which must be present before we attribute knowledge, it is thought that we will grasp what knowledge is. Since a theory proposing necessary and/or sufficient conditions is rejected in the face of any counterexample, counterexamples have enormous power in such an approach. If a case of knowledge is possible without *C*, then *C* is not a necessary condition on knowledge; if a believer possesses *A*, *B* and *C* without possessing knowledge, then *A*, *B* and *C* are not sufficient for knowledge. Facing this prospect, theorists of knowledge have tended to make their theories more and more sparse. This is especially evident in prominent instrumentalist theories, like Goldman's causal and reliabilist theories and Nozick's counterfactual theory. These theories are not as vulnerable to counterexamples, but in order to be so they have sacrificed informative content. The resulting theories have, as Ayers has written, an 'almost superhuman aridity'. Even if one of these theories tells us the necessary conditions on knowledge, we will not know all that much about knowledge.

All this should make us more open to the possibility that the explanation of the value

of knowledge will come from contingent characteristics of knowledge, like Craig's property *X* or *I/I*. In the past thirty years, many theories have been discarded in the face of counterexamples. This move was justified as long as we were only looking for necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge. But in doing so we have thrown away some important contingent characteristics of knowledge. The theories we threw out did not include necessary conditions for knowledge, but the possibility remains that they did include aspects which we value about knowledge. They included characteristics which, while not necessary to knowledge, were important to knowledge and important to us. Craig makes precisely this point in discussing the belief requirement for knowledge.

If it can be argued that belief is not a necessary condition for knowledge, then belief will make no appearance on the final balance sheet . . . [We] can try to talk about it, just so long as the audience is prepared to listen to such periphra, as of something which very often accompanies knowledge. But when [we are] asked for the real outcome of the business, the analysis, anything not strictly a necessary condition simply vanishes without a trace. Of all its deep centrality nothing whatever remains — it could be as incidental as the fact that nearly all knowers are less than 150 years old.<sup>24</sup>

Further divisions of the properties of knowledge need to be made. We need to distinguish more than those that are necessary from those that are unnecessary. We also need to distinguish between those that are valuable and those that are not, and the two distinctions may cut across each other. The value of knowledge, I suspect, lies in its contingent properties, in properties which are not present in all cases of knowledge. We need to go and look again at the contingent properties of knowledge, and find the ones we value. We should now try to get the baby back from the bathwater.

The suggestion that contingent conditions provide the value of knowledge will not be uncontroversial. Derek Parfit has recently stated that if a fact *F* consists in a set of further 'lower-level' facts, then the value of *F* will derive from those lower-level facts.<sup>25</sup> For Parfit, the fact that a person survives over time 'consists in' a set of psychological and physical facts continuing over time.

[T]he fact of personal identity is distinct from these fact about physical and psychological continuity. But, since it just consists in them, it is not an independent or separately obtaining fact . . . [F]acts about people cannot be barely true. Their truth must consist in the truth of facts about bodies, and about various interrelated mental and physical events.<sup>26</sup>

The fact of personal identity is not the same fact as these psychological and physical facts, but it is nothing over and above these facts either. Once we know that the lower-level facts about psychological and physical continuity obtain, then all that we learn when we discover that the higher-level fact of personal identity obtains as well, is that a concept applies. "My only new information," Parfit writes, "is about our language." Given this relation, he continues, the importance of the higher-level fact will derive solely from the importance of the lower-level facts: "If one fact consists in certain others, it can only be these other facts which have rational or moral importance." Personal continuity consists in psychological and physical continuity, and likewise all the value of personal continuity derives from the value of psychological and physical continuity.

If there are necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge, then it is plausible that, as in personal identity, the fact that *S* knows that *p* will consist in these other facts. The higher-level fact of knowledge obtains when and only when the lower-level facts obtain; it is not the same fact,

but it is a dependent and inseparable fact. So the situation in knowledge is analogous to what Parfit thinks it is in personal continuity. However, I suggest that his conclusions about the location of value do not hold in the case of knowledge. If *S* knows that *p*, then this fact consists in certain lower-level facts, the set *S*1. These facts are the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge. The possibility is open, nonetheless, for there to be other facts, the set *S*2, any of which often (or sometimes) obtain when *S*1 obtains. *S*2 might be brought about by *S*1, or *S*1 might be brought about by *S*2. Or both *S*1 and *S*2 might brought about by a separate set of facts. In each case, it is possible that although knowledge does not consist in any of the facts in *S*2, they are, at times, present when knowledge obtains (and ipso facto when *S*1 obtains). The facts in *S*2 might then be thought of as contingent properties of knowledge.

Can a fact which is often but not always present when knowledge is present be said to explain the value of knowledge? I value going to fairs because I have fun when I go to them, even though I can distinctly remember occasions when I got sick on the rides and did not have any fun at all. The fact of my having fun at fairs is responsible for the value I place on fairs, but my having fun is only a contingent property of my attending them. Knowledge is like fairs. We value them both even though we do not always get what we want from them.

Perhaps this is not at all surprising. The thought that the value of knowledge is to be found only in the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge derives from a very particular, static view of the nature of the phenomenon. If the concept knowledge is not a necessary-and-sufficient conditions concept, but is, say, a family-resemblance concept, then there will be no necessary-and-sufficient conditions from which the value can come.<sup>27</sup> Alternatively, if Craig's

claim that our concept *knowledge* has changed over time is at all plausible, then we have reason to believe that the original purpose which the concept served no longer holds. And again, if the naturalized epistemologists are correct in treating knowledge as a natural kind, then the same point follows. Even if we were able to find the necessary and sufficient conditions for an instantiation of the natural kind *knowledge*, it would be surprising, to say the least, if it also turned out that every instance of knowledge possessed the characteristics which we found important. It is not clear, given certain possible accounts of what knowledge is, why we should think that every instance of knowledge would turn out to be valuable.

The possibility now emerges that there are beliefs which count as knowledge even though we do not care whether it is knowledge or not. This is not an unhappy consequence. On the contrary, surely we are not at all concerned with the epistemic status of some of our knowledge. If I have knowledge of some historical date without remembering why I believe the date, then is the fact that this is knowledge all that important? The same is true of a great deal of our knowledge of what we call 'trivia'. Is it important that the knowledge we have of trivia is knowledge and not mere true belief?<sup>28</sup> These are the sort of beliefs, of which there are surely many, we are willing to call knowledge even though we do not see any importance in their being knowledge and not just mere true belief. If there are such beliefs, then whatever facts are responsible for the value of knowledge are contingent properties of knowledge, properties which are not present in every instance of knowledge.

It will be objected that if the value of knowledge derives from contingent properties of knowledge, then we do not, *really*, value knowledge. We value knowledge-

which-also-fulfills-I/I or -which-also-fulfills-Craig's-property-X. I see no reason to deny this. Even if there are cases of knowledge which we do not value, it does not follow that the concept *knowledge* does not serve some purpose for us, nor that *most* cases of knowledge are important, nor that knowledge does not remain 'the overarching purpose of inquiry'. Discovering that contingent properties provide the value of knowledge should not lead to pronouncements that knowledge tout court is not, after all, important. I have not here provided a justification for declarations analogous to those made by Parfit regarding persons.

Both Craig and Ayers think that the necessary and sufficient conditions approach should be abandoned. I disagree. My suggestion that we pay more attention to the contingent properties of knowledge is not intended as a replacement for the search for necessary and sufficient conditions on knowledge. The necessary and sufficient conditions approach has an important goal — to tell us what must be true in order for there to be knowledge, what properties (if any) must hold before we apply the concept *knowledge* in a given situation. That goal is and has been worthwhile, in spite of the fact that the results may not tell us why we value knowledge. We should continue to search for features of knowledge, but as well as worrying about which features are necessary, we should worry about which are valuable. Both projects are well worth doing in the theory of knowledge.

#### V. EPISTEMIC INSTRUMENTALISM AND THE OPENNESS OF KNOWLEDGE

In the past two sections, I have looked at and defended two explanations of the value of knowledge. Edward Craig begins with the plausible thesis that a source of the value of knowledge lies in testimony, and he builds an analysis of knowledge on that

claim. A knower has a true belief and some detectable property X which has a lawlike correlation with having true beliefs. It is important that other people be knowers, because when a subject knows that p she is (often) a good informant with respect to p. Her knowledge is open to us. I also considered an explanation of the value of knowledge based on the internalist's intuition. Knowers who fulfill the internalist's intuition are aware of the support for our source of their known beliefs. It is important for us to be in a state of knowing, because when we know that p we have (often) some grasp of why we (should) believe that p. My knowledge is open to me. Both accounts see knowledge as 'showing itself'. My knowledge indicates that it is knowledge, both to me and to other people. Both are also based on contingent properties of knowledge, and thus will be missed by theorists who have limited themselves to looking among necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge.

We can now see why epistemic instrumentalism cannot provide any account of the value of knowledge. In the second section of this paper, I outlined the two basic tenets of epistemic instrumentalism. They were (i) that the goal of belief-formation is true belief, and (ii) that justification is valuable insofar as it gets us to true beliefs. Both are in disagreement with my explanation of the value of knowledge. The first tenet of epistemic instrumentalism may be true of the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge, but it is wrong in a fuller account of knowledge. The goal of belief-formation is not just true belief, but also knowledge. The first indication that epistemic instrumentalists are leaving out the value of knowledge is that they take only true beliefs to be the goal of belief-formation. For if knowledge has more value than mere true belief, then knowledge itself must be a goal of belief-formation.

It must be that we seek knowledge as well as true beliefs. This brings out the difference between the study of epistemic rationality and the study of knowledge, a difference which is hidden by epistemic instrumentalism. Instrumentalists say that a belief-forming method is rational if it tends to bring about true beliefs. Knowledge, they add, is a true belief brought about by such a method. Even if such an analysis of rationality is right, the analysis of knowledge is at best incomplete.<sup>29</sup> A full understanding of knowledge requires that we take more than an instrumental approach.

Secondly, justification is not merely instrumentally important; it is also *indicatively* important. The epistemic instrumentalist notices only the instrumental role that justification plays in getting us true beliefs. The accounts I have defended emphasize that justification is more than a way of getting to true beliefs. If we are aware of the justification for a belief, then we know why we believe it. An awareness of justification, that is, allows us to assess the beliefs we already have. Additionally, if other people can see that our beliefs are justified, then we are reliable informants. In accepting testimony and the internalist's intuition as sources of the value of knowledge, we come to appreciate the noninstrumental value of justification.

A means/ends analysis is not adequate for a full understanding of knowledge. Instrumentalism detaches means from ends in order to evaluate differing means to the same end. Instrumental evaluations of knowledge cleave the product of belief-formation — which is a true or false belief — from the process of belief-formation. But if I/I is an important property of knowledge, then one thing we value about knowledge is that its justification comes with it, that a knower is aware of the origins of, or the support for, her known beliefs. A known belief tends to carry its

support with it after it is formed. What is important about knowledge is that it *tends* not to come separated from the process which forms it.

None of what has been said provides evidence against epistemic instrumentalism. As a contender in the search for the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge, epistemic instrumentalism may be the best approach available. Nevertheless, understanding the value of knowledge will require that we see knowledge, as well as justification, noninstrumentally. Instrumentalist theories differentiate known beliefs from true beliefs by the means through which they are attained. A known belief is a true belief brought about by a certain favored subset of belief-forming

processes. Instrumentalism uses the means of belief-formation as the criterion for differentiating true belief from knowledge. In doing so, such theories separate the means from the ends in belief-formation, and give the means only instrumental value. The result is that even though we are given reason to value good belief-forming processes and the true beliefs they effectively achieve, we are given no explanation of our valuing true beliefs when they are achieved by reliable means over true beliefs achieved by unreliable means. As long as the goals of belief-formation do not include knowledge itself, and as long as the means to gaining these goals are merely means, then epistemic instrumentalism can give us no account of why we value knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

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## NOTES

1. Unless, of course, B is something like the belief that I have just been hit over the head with a cricket bat.
2. For a dissenter, see Sartwell (1992). Sartwell argues that since both true belief and knowledge are the goals of epistemic inquiry, they must be identical. The major flaw in Sartwell's argument is in never considering the possibility that there may be more than one such goal.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 174-75.
4. See Goldman (1976).
5. For this reliabilist view of justification, see Goldman (1979). Some reliabilists, like David Armstrong (and, at times, Goldman himself), have resisted introducing justification.
6. Thanks to Bill Newton-Smith for suggesting the river analogy.
7. The same point can be made comparing knowers to mere true believers. Why should we value the person who made it across the river on the ferry over one who made it across the river using a cannon?
8. See Section III for more discussion of this point.
9. Bonjour (1985), p. 8.
10. Moser (1985), p. 4.
11. Armstrong (1973), p. 173.
12. McGinn (1984), p. 540.
13. Except for her beliefs about what belief-forming processes are best.
14. Craig (1990), p. 2.
15. Craig (1990), p. 11.
16. Craig (1990), p. 18.
17. Craig (1990), p. 25.
18. Craig (1990), Section X.
19. The translation is Jowett's. See his Plato (1953) 97e-98a.
20. I first heard this phrase from Bill Brewer; see his (1997). His formulation is, however, different from mine. Michael Ayers provides a substantial defense of the internalist's intuition, in Ayers (1990), especially chapters 15 and 21. An earlier statement of something like I/I can be found in Bonjour (1980). Notice that Plato's notion of a belief's being 'bound' does not play a role in I/I.
21. Firth (1981), p. 19.
22. It is helpful to epistemologically compare the phenomenon of blindsight, which does not fulfill I/I, to conscious perception, which does. For the comparison, see Ayers (1990), Vol. I, p. 141. For blindsight, see Weiskrantz (1986).
23. Gettier (1963).
24. Craig, p. 14.

25. See Parfit (1995), p. 29. I take it that the 'importance' of a fact is not significantly different from the 'value' of a fact.
26. Parfit (1995), pp. 19-20.
27. Ayers (1990), Vol. I, chapter 15 defends a family resemblance account of the concept of knowledge.
28. I am not making a point about the value of the content of trivia (which is by definition unimportant), but about the value of whether our belief in trivia counts as knowledge.
29. For an instrumental account of epistemic rationality, see Foley (1987).
30. Thanks to Michael Ayers, T. W. Child, Martin Davies, Miranda Fricker, David Mackie, W. H. Newton-Smith, Stina Nordenstam, Tom Stoneham, and Bernard Williams.