EPISTEMIC VIRTUOUS MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT: What distinguishes virtue reliabilism from virtue responsibilism is that the latter requires that epistemic virtues involve epistemically virtuous motivation, whereas the former denies that motivation is needed for virtue. But although epistemically virtuous motivation is what distinguishes virtue responsibilism not only from virtue reliabilism but also from other types of virtue, such as aesthetic, athletic, and moral virtue, it is far from clear how this motivation is to be understood. One of the most promising accounts of epistemically virtuous motivation is put forward by Linda Zagzebski (1996). She states that two motivational components are involved: the motivation for truth and the motivation to act in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question. This paper aims, first, to clarify the relationship between the two motivational components. I argue that the two motivational components are distinct and can come apart. The motivation for truth should be understood as the fundamental motivation and the motivation to act in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question should be understood as a distinct, proximate motivation. Second, the paper seeks to refine the notion of epistemically virtuous motivation in such a way that it is not only viable and resilient to objections raised against it, but also psychologically plausible. Akin to John Greco (2006), I argue that the motivation for truth should be understood as our default state of trying to believe what is true and that one can, but need not, be consciously aware of either the motivation for truth or the motivation to act in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question.

KEYWORDS: virtue epistemology, virtue reliabilism, virtue responsibilism, virtuous motivation, motivation for truth

Introduction

There are two distinct conceptions of epistemic virtue: virtue responsibilism and virtue reliabilism. Virtue responsibilists conceive virtues as good intellectual character traits. Examples of these traits include attentiveness, fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, and courage. Virtue reliabilists, by contrast, understand virtues as cognitive faculties or powers that reliably lead to attaining more true than false beliefs. While advocates of virtue reliabilism strongly reject a motivational component for virtue – and even state that a motivational component is psychologically implausible (Sosa 2015) – one of the central and defining features of responsibilist virtues is the requirement of epistemically virtuous motivation.

The motivational component essential to epistemic responsibilist virtues is not only what distinguishes responsibilist virtues from reliabilist virtues but also

from other virtues, such as moral, aesthetic, and athletic virtues (Driver 2003; Zagzebski 1996; Baehr 2011). However, even though the epistemically virtuous motivation is the core requisite of virtue responsibilism, there is no consensus on how this motivation is to be understood (for different accounts of the required virtuous motivation, see Montmarquet 1993; Zagzebski 1996; Driver 2003; Battaly 2008; Baehr 2011).

One of the most compelling accounts of the required epistemically virtuous motivation is provided by Linda Zagzebski (1996). She states that the motivational component essential to responsibilist virtues involves two elements: the motivation for truth and the motivation to act in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question. In this paper, I explore the relationship between these two motivational components and offer a new way of understanding them. By considering insights from vice epistemology, I argue that the motivation to act in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue should not be understood as part of the motivation for truth. Instead, the motivation for truth should be understood as the fundamental motivation, and the motivation to act in accordance with the epistemic end as the proximate and distinct motivation. Akin to John Greco (2006), I argue that the motivation for truth should be understood as our default state of trying to believe the truth. Furthermore, I argue that one can, but need not, be aware of the motivation to act in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question. This revised understanding of the two motivational components involved in responsibilist virtue makes the motivation not only viable and resilient to objections raised against the motivational component, but also psychologically plausible.

I proceed as follows. I begin by clarifying what epistemically virtuous motivation concerning responsibilist theories amounts to. More specifically, I argue that an agent needs to be motivated for truth – or, as Zagzebski puts it, the agent needs to have a "motivation for truth or cognitive contact with reality" (Zagzebski 1996, 167). However, being motivated for truth alone does not explain why the agent acts in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question, or, for short, acts ψ-ly (ψ representing any epistemic virtue). Therefore, the agent, in addition to being motivated for truth, needs to be motivated to act ψ-ly (§1). By discussing the most well-known objections to the motivational component involved in and required for any virtue responsibilist theory, I propose a novel, weak understanding of epistemically virtuous motivation. Specifically, I understand the required motivation for truth as our default state of trying to believe what is true and argue that one can, but need not, be consciously aware of either the motivation for truth or the motivation to act in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question (§2). These considerations allow me to specify the relation between the two motivational components. The

relation between the motivation for truth and the motivation to act ψ-ly is causal: to have the required epistemically virtuous motivation for responsibilist virtue, the agent needs to be sufficiently motivated for truth to lead the agent to be motivated to act ψ-ly (in a variety of situations) (§3).

1. Responsibilist Virtues Require Epistemically Virtuous Motivation

Central to virtue responsibilism is that virtues require epistemically virtuous motivation. According to virtue responsibilists, reliably attaining good epistemic ends cannot be what matters for being an excellent person; or at least not the only thing (Battaly 2008). To be epistemically blameworthy or praiseworthy, one must be responsible for one's acts in the relevant sense. Concerning virtue responsibilism, epistemically virtuous motives reveal what a person cares about and values. They are what make one praiseworthy.

To briefly illustrate this point, consider a virologist who investigates the long-term effects of a viral infection but is motivated solely by a desire to enhance their reputation, rather than by a genuine interest in discovering the truth about the disease. According to responsibilists, the doctor is not virtuous since they lack epistemically virtuous motivation. Virtues express something about our character – what we care about, and what we value. Virtues are credited to a person. Regarding responsibilist virtue epistemology, this means that virtues derive their positive value from the motivation for truth (Montmarquet 1993, 20) or, as Zagzebski argues, from the motivation for truth and the true beliefs they produce (Zagzebski 1996, 85). For a person to be epistemically virtuous, or to perform a virtuous act, they need to be motivated in the right way and act upon their epistemically virtuous motivation. But how exactly is the required epistemically virtuous motivation to be understood?

As Zagzebski forcefully puts it, epistemic responsibilist virtues are fundamentally rooted in a deep and abiding desire for truth, understanding, and knowledge.

> [T]he motivational basis for intellectual virtue needs to be described as the *motivation for truth* or *cognitive contact with reality*. (Zagzebski 1996, 167, my emphasis)[1]

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[1] There is an ongoing debate about whether epistemic virtues are a (proper) subset of moral virtues, independent of moral virtues, or whether epistemic virtues just are moral virtues. Regarding the ultimate motivation, one might argue that epistemic responsibilist virtues, which are necessarily based on the motivation for truth, are rooted in a more fundamental moral motivation, such as the motivation for *well-being* or *human flourishing.*

Zagzebski (1996) compellingly defends a unified account of virtue in *Virtues of the Mind*, arguing that epistemic virtues just are a subset of moral virtues. Moral virtues do not differ from epistemic

Why do we care about epistemic virtues? We care about epistemic virtues because we desire to attain knowledge; because we desire to gain understanding; and because we want to have more true than false beliefs. Hereafter, for simplicity, I will refer to both "the motivation for truth or cognitive contact with reality" simply as the *motivation for truth*. The motivation for truth should not be understood as singling out a specific motivation but rather as encompassing a range of epistemic aims – such as the motivation to attain knowledge, the motivation to acquire more true than false beliefs, and the motivation to gain understanding.

Being motivated for truth alone, however, does not suffice to explain how or why one is motivated to act courageously, attentively, open-mindedly, or what have you. For this reason, Zagzebski argues that virtues include not only the fundamental motivation for truth but also the motivation to exercise certain intellectual virtues. She states:

> We generally speak of a motive as an occurrence used to explain a particular act. In such usages, a motive is understood as *occurring at a particular moment of time or span of time, although I have also said that motives tend to be persistent.* It is useful, then, to have a concept for a motive in the dispositional sense. I suggest that we use the term 'motivation' in this way. Let us define *a motivation as a persistent tendency to be moved by a motive of a certain kind.* I propose that a virtue has *a component of motivation that is specific to the virtue in question.* So the virtue of benevolence involves the tendency to be moved by benevolent motives, which is to say, it involves a disposition to have characteristic emotions that direct action in a particular direction, probably the well-being of others. A benevolent motivation is, therefore, a disposition to have a benevolent motive. (Zagzebski 1996, 132–133, my emphasis)

According to Zagzebski, motivations are dispositions to have a motive, and motives are action-guiding emotions. Although I agree that motivations can be dispositions of action-guiding emotions that manifest in motives of action-guiding emotions, I will use, in contrast to Zagzebski, a broader understanding of what the motivation consists of. Henceforth, I understand motivation not only as a disposition of action-guiding emotions but also as including dispositions to have certain

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virtues any more than they differ from other moral virtues. She states that "the processes related to the two kinds of virtue do not function independently, and that it greatly distorts the nature of both to attempt to analyse them in separate branches of philosophy" (Zagzebski 1996, 139). Fortunately, nothing hinges on whether we understand epistemic virtues as a (proper) subset of moral virtues, as independent of moral virtues, or whether we think that epistemic virtues just are moral virtues. The account of epistemically virtuous motivation I develop here is, in principle, compatible with either option. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between moral and epistemic virtues, see Baehr (2011, 206–222).

propositional attitudes, perceptual experiences, desires, mental images, impressions of a situation, and so on. That is to say, I understand motivation as a *bundle of dispositions* to have the relevant mental states or cluster of mental states, including propositional attitudes, perceptual experiences, emotions, desires, mental images, impressions of a situation, etc.[2]

Further, Zagzebski distinguishes between *motive* and *motivation*. While the former is to be understood as an occurrence, the latter is to be understood in the dispositional sense, as a persistent tendency to be moved by a motive of a certain kind.[3] I adopt this distinction.

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[2] I adopt the usage of *cluster* from Miller (2013; 2014). On the term 'clusters' he notes that there are "uses of the term 'cluster' in certain areas of philosophy of language which imply that no single member of a cluster of properties is either necessary or sufficient for, in this case, possessing the [relevant character trait], but to have sufficiently many of the properties in the cluster is necessary and sufficient for possessing the trait" (Miller 2013, 32). It should be noted that the term 'cluster' here is not used in this technical sense.

[3] It might be helpful to distinguish the motivation even further. Friedrich Waismann (1983), for example, distinguishes between an occurrent motive and the dispositions that manifest in a motive. Moreover, he differentiates between conscious and unconscious motives. The former he calls *motivational reasons (Beweggründe)*, as they are connected with purpose and consciousness. The latter he terms *driving force (Triebfeder)*, such as jealousy and ambition (Schulte 1983, 374). In addition to these, Waismann identifies a third category of motive, which he calls *drives (Antriebe)*. Drives, in contrast to the other two, do not follow a goal and are not conscious intentions but are nevertheless something conscious; in contrast to reasons, drives lack a specific goal for action. In contrast to driving forces, drives are somewhat conscious. Examples of drives are, for instance, *acting out of anger*, *acting out of arrogance*, etc. (Schulte 1983, 374). Waismann further concludes that any attempt to find a characteristic common to all motives necessarily fails. He states:

> Die Wahrheit ist die, daß in den verschiedenartigen Motiven nichts Gemeinsames zu entdecken ist, weil sie nichts Gemeinsames haben; es ist vielmehr so, daß die Sprache eine große Anzahl verschiedenartiger Gebilde, die auf die mannigfachste Art und durch verschiedene einander kreuzende Beziehungen verwendet sind, zu einer lockeren, unscharf begrenzten Gruppe vereinigt hat. (Waismann 1983, 105)

> The truth is that there is nothing in common to be discovered in the various motives because they have nothing in common; it is rather the case that language has united a large number of different forms, which are used in the most diverse ways and through various intersecting relationships, into a loose, blurred group, a loose, indistinctly defined group.

According to Waismann, it is hopeless to find a complete division and classification of the existing types of motives. Nevertheless, the distinctions between motivational reasons, drives, and driving forces remain helpful and philosophically illuminating.

Distinguishing and classifying the motivations of every virtue would indeed be helpful and valuable for any virtue responsibilist theory. However, such an undertaking exceeds the scope of this paper

Central to Zagzebski's account is the idea that every virtue includes a motivational component specific to the virtue in question. Put differently, every virtue involves not only the underlying motivation for truth but also *a motivation to act in accordance with the epistemic end of that particular virtue* – i.e., *a motivation to act ψ-ly.* The motivation for truth is the *fundamental motivation* since it concerns the *ultimate* epistemic end of a virtue, such as knowledge, understanding, justified belief, etc. (Crerar 2017, 3). The motivation to act ψ-ly – i.e., the motivation to act conscientiously, open-mindedly, attentively, etc. (Zagzebski 1996, 132–133) – is the *proximate motivation*, as it concerns the *proximate* epistemic end of the *particular* virtue in question (Crerar 2017, 3). To clarify the motivation to act ψ-ly further, consider the following passage:

> Virtuous persons have *motives associated with the particular virtue.* A courageous person is motivated out of emotions characteristic of the virtue of courage to face danger when something of importance is at stake. The courage, then, includes both an element of emotion and the aim to protect something of value. It has, then, an intentional element. A fair person is motivated out of emotions that make him like to see others treated equitably, and this leads him to want to produce a state of affairs in which the relations among people have this characteristic. In the same way, an open-minded person is motivated out of delight in discovering new truths, a delight that is strong enough to outweigh the attachment to old beliefs and to lead to the investigation of previously neglected possibilities. *In doing so, she is drawn by the desire to form more true beliefs* or, at least, to *get closer to the truth than she was previously.* (Zagzebski 1996, 131, my emphasis)

Zagzebski (2000) also thinks:

> A motivation is best defined, not as a way of acting in circumstances specifiable in advance, but *in terms of the end at which it aims* and the emotion that underlies it. The easiest way to identify a motivation is *by reference to the end at which it aims.* (Zagzebski 2000, 443, my emphasis)

The proximate motivation is the motivation to act in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question – or, for short, the motivation to act ψ-ly. Every virtue can be characterized in terms of its specific epistemic end. The epistemic end of the virtue of intellectual courage, for example, is the willingness to overcome fear (e.g., fear of criticism of their views) and to act with aplomb in the face of intellectual dangers (e.g., by defending their views appropriately) (Battaly 2008, 660). A person who possesses the virtue of courage "engages in a certain sort of activity despite the appearance of a threat or harm, and more specifically, despite a judgment or belief to the effect that the activity in question is dangerous or

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and requires further research.

threatening" (Baehr 2011, 170). The motivation to act courageously is to be understood as the motivation to act in accordance with the epistemic end of courage. To be motivated to act courageously is, thus, for example, the *desire* to overcome fear (e.g., of criticism of their view) or the *wish* to act sovereignly in the face of intellectual danger, etc.

The same holds for other virtues. The epistemic end of the virtue of attentiveness, for example, can be characterized as exhibiting "a general alertness concerning the object of inquiry" (Baehr 2011, 19). A person who possesses the virtue of attentiveness pays "close attention and focus[es] on the task at hand. An attentive person has a sustained focus when performing some cognitive task, say, writing an essay or reading a text. He or she has a sustained attention to important details, and processes these details in an adequate way" (Heersmink 2017, 4). The motivation to act attentively, then, is likewise the motivation to act in accordance with the epistemic end of attentiveness. To be motivated to act attentively is, thus, for instance, the *longing* to focus on the task at hand, *wanting* to process details in an adequate way, etc.

To give yet another example, the epistemic end of open-mindedness can be characterized as acting to "restrain the natural impulse to ignore or be unreceptive to the views contrary to one's own" (Zagzebski 1997, 10). A person who possesses the virtue of open-mindedness is "willing to consider alternative views, and if these seem more accurate or well founded, then she is willing to change and revise her initial beliefs. This is epistemically beneficial because it allows us to form the best, most reasonable and most accurate beliefs we can" (Heersmink 2017, 4). The motivation to act open-mindedly is the motivation to act in accordance with the epistemic end of open-mindedness. To be motivated to act open-mindedly is, thus, for example, the *aspiration* not to ignore contrasting views, the *inclination* not to be biased in one's favour, etc.

The motivation to act ψ-ly, as well as the motivation for truth, does not single out specific internal states. Rather, the motives to act ψ-ly include *wishes*, *desires*, *longings*, *wantings*, *aspirations*, *inclinations*, and so on, that are in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question. Motivations are action-oriented and are therefore best understood, in line with recent findings in psychology and neuroscience, as "physiological internal states in the organism that play an important role in initiating behaviour, selecting actions to perform, and orienting the actions to achieve desired goals" (Alarcón 2021, 4437).

The two motivational components stand in a specific relationship to one another. The motivation to act ψ-ly should not be understood as being part of the motivation for truth, but rather as a separate and distinct motivation. To possess the

epistemically right motivation, the two components need to be connected in a certain way: the agent needs to be motivated to act ψ-ly because they are motivated for truth (see §3). Furthermore, in contrast to Zagzebski, I do not understand motivation only as a disposition to have action-guiding emotions but more broadly as a bundle of dispositions to have the relevant mental states or clusters of mental states, including propositional attitudes, perceptual experiences, emotions, desires, mental images, or impressions of a situation. Nonetheless, I agree with Zagzebski that these mental states or clusters of mental states occur at a particular moment of time or span of time and tend to be persistent (Zagzebski 1996, 132).

Before elaborating on how the motivation for truth and the motivation to act ψ-ly are connected, I will, in the next section, more precisely define the motivational components and establish their psychological plausibility. I begin by addressing a prominent objection.

2. Specifying the Motivational Component

A common objection to the motivation required in virtue responsibilism is that it sets an unreasonably high bar. Ernest Sosa (2015), for example, points out that within the "epistemic dimension, love of truth plays a negligible role *at most*, if any at all. [...] It is not love for truth that routinely drives [agents] in their professional activities" (Sosa 2015, 71, author's emphasis).

The first thing to note is that, according to both Baehr (2011) and Zagzebski (1996), the motivational component of intellectual responsibilist virtues does not need to be understood in strongly desiderative terms; it can also take a purely volitional form (Baehr 2011, 109). The motivation for truth does not consist solely in a *desire* for epistemic goods, such as the desire "to reach, maintain, or convey the truth" (Baehr 2011, 178). The motivation involved can also take a volitional form, such as an epistemic *duty* or *obligation* or "having a kind of *respect* for the epistemic good" (Baehr 2011, 109, my emphasis).[4] Put differently, the required motivation of

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[4] Baehr uses the intellectual virtue of conscientiousness to illustrate that the motivational component involved might not always be desiderative but can also take a volitional form. What he means by volitional probably becomes most vivid in the following passage from Roberts and Wood (2007):

> [At the point] where the mature, spontaneous attraction to the intellectual goods fails or partially fails us, we *may still be virtuously motivated to do what we ought to do*, if we have a sense of *intellectual duty* – a sense of *'ought'* about intellectual actions. Intellectual conscientiousness is the susceptibility to be motivated by the considerations that behaving well epistemically is *required* of us, is what we *ought* to do, is our *duty* (Roberts and Wood 2007, 79, my emphasis).

epistemic responsibilist virtues might be a volitional commitment, a commitment that is not rooted in a strong desiderative or affective attachment (Baehr 2015, 78). However, all virtue responsibilists such as Zagzebski (1996), Montmarquet (1993), and Baehr (2011) maintain that "[virtuous intellectual activity] must be motivated at least partly by an intrinsic concern with epistemic goods like truth and knowledge – a concern or desire for these goods as such or considered in their own right, not merely for the sake of some additional (potentially non-epistemic) good that might result from their acquisition" (Baehr 2015, 78). The motivational requirement of intellectual virtue, is, therefore, not "quite as 'high-minded' or demanding as one may think" (Baehr 2015, 78).

That being said, I aim to weaken the motivational condition even further by insisting that the motivation for truth should be understood as a *default state which one manifests when one is trying to believe what is true.*

This understanding of the motivation for truth closely parallels the motivational component in Greco's account of epistemic virtue, which he calls *Agent Reliabilism* (Greco 1999). More specifically, although Greco advocates a reliabilist approach to epistemic virtue, according to which, briefly put, virtues are reliable, that is truth-conducive cognitive faculties such as memory, introspection, or vision, he nevertheless maintains that the motivation for truth plays a role in epistemic justification and knowledge. He states:

> The fact that a person interprets experience one way rather than another, or draws one inference rather than another, manifests an awareness of sorts that some relevant evidence is a reliable indication of some relevant truth. Or at least this is so if the person is trying to form her beliefs accurately in the first place – if the person is *in the normal mode of trying to believe what is true*, as opposed to what is convenient, or comforting, or politically correct. We may use these considerations to define a sense of subjective justification that is not too strong to be a requirement on knowledge. (Greco 2005, 304, my emphasis)

The claim that the motivation for truth is a default state when one is trying to believe what is true is quite intuitive. As humans, we have a natural urge to inquire. Why do we do science? Why do we spend our time conducting research? Why do we read scientific papers or books? Why do we investigate physical laws, biochemical structures of organisms, symptoms of diseases, economical structures, differences in sociological structures, intrinsic capacities, and so on? We do so because we want to have more true than false beliefs. We want to know. We are driven by an urge to understand. We do not want to go through life holding false beliefs about the world. We want cognitive contact with reality. To be motivated for

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For further discussion, see Baehr (2011; 2015).

truth is our default state of trying to form "beliefs accurately in the first place" (Greco 2005, 304).[5]

At this point, one might object that activities such as reading scientific papers, studying books, or investigating physical laws are not activities that most people frequently engage in. If participating in these activities indicates a motivation for truth, then it suggests that only a selected group of individuals possess this motivation, rather than it being a default state. However, while scientific inquiry and theoretical investigations are the clearest expressions of the motivation for truth, it should be understood more broadly. In everyday life, we naturally desire to hold true beliefs about the world. We strive for accurate beliefs about ourselves, our surroundings, our friends, and our family members. Whenever our beliefs appear to conflict with the evidence we receive from our environment, we aim to discover the truth. Epistemically virtuous activity is not limited to scientific practices.

For instance, if a stranger, contrary to what you believe, tells you that your favorite band is playing a gig next Thursday, you are likely to search the internet for evidence of the claim. Similarly, if a stranger or friend informs you, contrary to what you think you know, that a new legislation requires all houses in your city to install solar panels, you will likely consult the news or read the newspaper to verify this information. Although the motivation for truth as a default state is most clearly exhibited in the virtuous acts of scientific practice and inquiry, it is not limitied to such cases. The motivation for truth is involved in our everyday activities.[6]

Understanding the motivation for truth involved in virtue responsibilism as our default state – "the state of trying to form one's beliefs accurately" (Greco 1999, 289) – is indeed quite weak. In fact, it is so weak that one might wonder whether understanding the motivation for truth in this way is too weak a requirement for responsibilist virtue. After all, conceiving the motivation for truth as a default state seems to diverge from the views of Zagzebski (1996), Baehr (2011), Battaly (2008), and Montmarquet (1993), at least insofar as it does not require time and effort to acquire (Battaly 2008, 647). But if this motivation does not take time and effort to acquire, then the agent does not seem to be responsible for it and, hence, not praiseworthy.

To counter this objection, it is important to note, first, that even Zagzebski understands the motivation involved in virtue responsibilism in relatively weak

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[5] I do not appeal to Greco's considerations about the motivation for truth to define subjective justification or knowledge.

[6] Note, however, that understanding the motivation for truth as a default state does not imply that an agent cannot act from different (epistemically deficient) motivations. These cases will be discussed in detail in §3.

terms. She states that the required motivation does not need to be explicit or conscious (King 2014, 249). More specifically, she defines the motivation as "a persistent tendency to be moved by a motive of a certain kind" (Zagzebski 1996, 132) and further observes that "many [motives] are almost continually operative and do most of their work at moderate or even weak levels of intensity" (Zagzebski 1996, 131–132, my emphasis). Although the motivation for truth defined here as a default state of trying to believe what is true, is indeed weaker than the accounts offered by Zagzebski, Baehr, Montmarquet, and Battaly, it was never intended to be an overly demanding notion. Moreover, while the motivation for truth may be a default state, it must nonetheless be connected in a specific way to the motivation to act ψ-ly. It is this connection between the two motivational components – that is, being motivated to act ψ-ly, *because* one is motivated for truth – that takes time and effort to acquire. It is precisely cultivating this connection for which the agent can be praised or blamed. Before elaborating on this connection in detail in §3, let us now turn to the second motivational component.

Regarding the motivation to act conscientiously, open-mindedly, attentively, and so on, Zagzebski (1996) notes that the motivation of, for example, "kindness, justice, fair-mindedness also operate for extended periods of time *without the agent's having much if any, awareness of them*. The fact that our attention is drawn to them in extreme circumstances does not indicate that they *operate only or even modestly in such circumstances*" (Zagzebski, 1996, 132, my emphasis). Zagzebski thus understands the motivation to act ψ-ly as one that one *can, but need not be, consciously aware of*. I agree and adopt her way of understanding the motivation to act ψ-ly.

In light of these considerations, the motivational component – consisting of the motivation for truth and the motivation to act ψ-ly – required for any responsibilist theory and involved in any performance of a virtuous act, should be understood in a very weak sense:

> The motivation for truth is our default state and one can, but need not be, consciously aware of either the motivation for truth or the motivation to act ψ-ly.

It is not required that an agent needs to be aware, or even become aware, of either motivational component. Nor is it required that some external features or events are present that afford either motivation. An agent can certainly be motivated for truth and motivated to act ψ-ly without any particular reason – that is, without the presence of any specific external features or events of the situation present. As Nathan King (2014) notes, "one might manifest a motive for truth while walking through the grocery store looking for milk, trying to remember a phone number, or doing arithmetic" (King 2014, 249). All that is required for the motivation for truth

and the motivation to act ψ-ly to count as epistemically virtuous is that these motivations are present in the form of mental states or clusters of mental states at a particular moment of time t or previous time t* or span of time t or previous span of time t*. Thus, both the motivation for truth and the motivation to act ψ-ly can manifest in a variety of situations, of which an agent may be more or less consciously aware – or not aware at all.

By understanding the motivational component in this way, it becomes clear that it is operative in our most everyday endeavours. Understanding the motivation required for responsibilist virtues in this proposed weak sense allows us to respond to the objection that in the epistemic domain, love of truth plays a minimal role, if any at all (Sosa 2015, 71). It is not merely the desire for professional standing, the wish to help others, or trying to make a living that routinely drives humans (Sosa 2015, 71). We seek truth. In our daily pursuits, we are often consciously or unconsciously motivated to act ψ-ly because we are motivated for truth.[7]

In the next section, I will elaborate on the connection between the two motivational components by discussing four cases. These cases will not only clarify why both the motivation for truth and the motivation to act ψ-ly are necessary for responsibilist virtues but also demonstrate that the two can come apart. The examples show that the motivation for truth and the motivation to act ψ-ly not only need to be present but that they also need to be connected in a certain way: the *fundamental* motivation for truth needs to *give rise* to the *proximate* motivation to act ψ-ly.

3. The Relation Between the Motivation for Truth and the Motivation to Act ψ-ly

To clarify why both the motivation for truth and the motivation to act ψ-ly are required, and how these two motivations are connected, I will consider four examples.

Let us begin with Penelope. Penelope is a journalist investigating whether the 2024 Varzaqan Helicopter Crash, which included passengers such as Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, was an accident or a planned incident. Penelope meticulously reads every article available on the crash, investigates the circumstances, and exchanges views with other experts. They are driven by their motivation for truth, which leads them to be

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[7] I do not exclude the possibility that an agent might have different motivations for their acts, such as a desire for professional standing, wanting to help someone, or trying to make a living. The claim here is merely that, at least in some cases, an agent acts as they do because they are motivated for truth, and this motive, in turn, gives rise to them being motivated to act ψ-ly. This connection will be explored in greater detail in §3.

motivated to act thoroughly, because of which they thoroughly investigate the events surrounding the helicopter crash. That is, their motivation to act thoroughly arises out of their motivation for truth.

Now consider the second example of Watson and Crick, who discovered the molecular structure of the DNA molecule in 1953:

> Imagine that Watson and Crick cared only about winning the Nobel Prize, not at all about truth. If so, they lacked epistemic virtue. Their motives were sub-par, even though their discoveries were momentous. (Battaly 2014, 55)

In this scenario, we may grant that Watson and Crick conducted their scientific research carefully, exchanged views with other experts, and demonstrated willingness to engage with opposing views. We may also grant that they acted in these ways because they were motivated to act open-mindedly or attentively. However, despite their epistemically commendable behaviour, we would not consider their acts virtuous. The reason is that their motivation to act open-mindedly or attentively did not arise out of the motivation for truth, but rather from the desire to win the Nobel Prize – or so the exaggerated example goes. There is something *epistemically defective* about agents who are motivated to act ψ-ly, and even act ψ-ly, not because they are motivated for truth but rather because they are motivated by fame, appraisal, recognition, or external reward.[8] We do not, and should not, regard acts based on such motives to be virtuous. Nor do we praise agents who act from these motives, regardless of the epistemic success of their acts.

It should be noted that to say that the motivation to act ψ-ly did not arise from the motivation for truth but from the motivation for fame, appraisal, or recognition is not to claim that an agent in such cases is never or not at all motivated for truth, although that may sometimes be the case (as in Battaly's example of Watson and Crick). Rather, the point is that the motivation for truth in such a case is *not the most salient factor* giving rise to the agent being motivated to act open-mindedly, attentively, or what have you. We do not consider an agent's motivation to be virtuous or praiseworthy, if they are ultimately not driven by a concern for truth,

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[8] Some have argued that acts based on defective epistemic motives or the absence of epistemically virtuous motives are *epistemically vicious*, even if they lead the agent to acquire true beliefs, knowledge, or some other epistemic good. More specifically, it has been suggested that epistemic vice consists in "failing to take epistemic goods, in certain appropriate cases, as one's ultimate end" (Crerar 2017, 6). I do not engage in a detailed discussion of epistemic vices here. Nevertheless, *any adequate account of epistemic virtue should avoid the epistemically virtuous motivation to succumb to the concerns raised by vice epistemology*. For a more detailed discussion of how defective epistemic motivation, or the absence of epistemically virtuous motivation, constitute epistemic vice, see Battaly (2014) and Crerar (2017).

but by wealth, fame, recognition, appraisal, or external reward. It is *epistemically defective* when an agent acts as they did, not because they want to find out the truth, desire to gain knowledge, wish to attain understanding, or pursue any other epistemic good. To possess the epistemically virtuous motivation, the agent needs to be ultimately motivated for truth.

Consider at this point the (slightly overstated) third example of Galileo Galilei:

> As brilliant and productive a scientist as Galileo Galilei was, his work was impeded by his arrogance […] His sense of intellectual superiority led him to disregard the work of other scientists who disagreed with him, and the incorporation of which could have improved his own work. He overestimated the probative force of his arguments for heliocentrism, and thus underestimated the justification of those who hesitated to accept his hypothesis (Roberts and Wood 2007, 254).

Galileo Galilei was ultimately motivated for truth. "However, no character is blemish free, and Galileo's dealings with other scientists paint the picture of an *archetypical arrogant genius*, keenly aware of his own intellectual superiority and thus closed-minded in his dealings with others" (Crerar 2017, 7, my emphasis). Galileo's motivation is epistemically defective. This time, however, the defect cannot be attributed to a lack of motivation for truth. Rather, the problem lies in the fact that, although he was motivated for truth, this motivation did not give rise to him being motivated to act open-mindedly.[9] We do not and would not praise an agent for acting based on such motives. Even if Galileo managed to perform an act in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question, his act happened by accident or on a whim. Such an act would not count as epistemically virtuous, nor would it merit the praiseworthiness associated with virtuous acts.

What the three examples show is that epistemic defects can occur at two levels: at the level of the *fundamental* or *ultimate* motivation for truth, or at the level of the *proximate* motivation to act ψ-ly. *Having a defective epistemic motivation, thus, amounts to lacking either the motivation for truth or the motivation to act ψ-ly, or both.* Having epistemically virtuous motives, therefore, requires both the presence of a motivation for truth and the presence of a corresponding motivation to act ψ-ly – where the former gives rise to the latter in a salient and guiding way.

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[9] Crerar (2017) discusses the example of Galileo Galilei in more detail. He refers to the motivation for truth as the ultimate motivation and the motivation to act ψ-ly as the proximate motivation. He argues that an agent has defective epistemic motives if he lacks the ultimate motivation (i.e., the motivation for truth), the proximate motivation (i.e., the motivation to act ψ-ly), or both. He further contents that such defective epistemic motives are *epistemically vicious*.

However, although Galileo Galilei, and Watson and Crick exhibited defective epistemic motives in some situations, it would be far-fetched to claim that they only performed acts on defective epistemic motives. Undoubtedly, they must have acted on epistemically virtuous motives on various occasions to make their intellectual achievements possible. Clearly, a person who fails to exhibit epistemically virtuous motives in some situations, either on the ultimate level (the motivation for truth) or on the proximate level (the motivation to act ψ-ly), can nonetheless have the required epistemically virtuous motivation in other situations. To make this explicit, consider the fourth example of Olivia.

Olivia, like Penelope, is also a journalist. Unlike Penelope, however, they do not investigate the Varzaqan Helicopter Crash. Their expertise lies in the political shift to the right within the European Union, with a particular focus on France. In investigating the victory of the Rassemblement National (RN) in the 2024 European Parliament Elections in France, Olivia is motivated for truth and for that reason motivated to act thoroughly. They read every newspaper article on the European Parliament Elections and the RN and regularly exchange views with other experts. However, when it comes to other inquiries such as the Varazaqan Helicopter Crash, Olivia is neither motivated for truth nor motivated to act thoroughly. Their expertise lies elsewhere, or they might simply not be interested in this subject matter.

The example of Olivia, alongside the other examples, illustrates that whether an agent is motivated in the relevant sense depends both on the agent and the situation or topic under dispute. We can, and indeed do, evaluate whether an agent is motivated for truth and is for this reason motivated to act ψ-ly in a particular situation.

The examples of Penelope, Watson and Crick, Galileo Galilei, and Olivia demonstrate that whether the motivation for truth is the most salient factor to give rise to the motivation to act ψ-ly depends on three features: (i) the agent, (ii) the epistemic end of the virtue in question, and (iii) the situation.

With these three features (i)-(iii) in place, the definition of the required *epistemically virtuous motivation* which accounts for the connection between the motivation for truth and the motivation to act ψ-ly can be given as follows:

> *The Epistemically Virtuous Motivation*: Let ψ be any virtue. An agent S has the required epistemically virtuous motivation if and only if S is motivated to act ψ-ly because they are motivated for truth (in a variety of situations).[10]

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[10] Variety of situations is included in the definition to indicate that the required motivation is to be understood in the dispositional sense – that is, as something that would manifest in form of the respective motives across a range of different situations. Since the definition does not employ a modal operator, it refers simply to a variety of situations rather than possible situations. Introducing a modal operator here would render the definition unnecessarily complex.

Because the motivation for truth and the motivation to act ψ-ly are distinct, the two can occur independently of one another. The account offered thus allows that an agent is motivated by fame, recognition, external reward, or some other epistemically defective motive, and that this motive gives rise to being motivated to act ψ-ly. Further, it also allows that an agent is motivated for truth but that this motivation does not give rise to the motivation to act ψ-ly, perhaps instead giving rise to the motivation to act dogmatically or negligently. As illustrated by the examples of Watson and Crick and Galileo Galilei these motivations are epistemically defective. For an agent to have epistemically virtuous motives they need to be motivated for truth and because of that motivated to act ψ-ly.

Since both the motivation for truth and the motivation to act ψ-ly depend on the three features – (i) the agent, (ii) the epistemic end of the virtue ψ in question, and (iii) the situation – the epistemically virtuous motivation also depends on these features. For an agent to have the required epistemically virtuous motivation, the two motivational components need to be connected in the right way: the motive to act ψ-ly arises and therefore depends on the motive for truth, which is the most salient factor (in a variety of situations). This is captured in that the 'because' in the definition is factive: for an agent to have the required epistemically virtuous motive, it needs to be the case that they are motivated for truth from which the motive to act ψ-ly arises.

Conclusion

I have argued that the motivation for truth needs to be the *most salient factor* to give rise to the motivation to act ψ-ly. However, the motivation to act ψ-ly also needs to be *the most salient factor* for an agent to act upon that motivation. It is possible that an agent is motivated to act ψ-ly because they are motivated for truth, but that this motivation is not the most salient factor that leads to an action, behaviour, or thought. The agent might have contrasting and more salient motivations that lead them to or prevent them from acting in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question, such as being motivated by wealth, fame, recognition, or appraisal.

As the cases of Watson and Crick, and Galileo Galilei illustrate, an adequate virtue responsibilist theory needs to exclude cases where the ψ-ly act of an agent is not based on the motive to act ψ-ly or where the motive to act ψ-ly is not based on the motive for truth. We want to avoid attributing virtue to agents who act in accordance with epistemic ends by accident, on a whim, or because of stronger, non-epistemic motives. Only if the agent is motivated for truth, and because of that

motivated to act ψ-ly does the agent have the epistemically virtuous motives essential to responsibilist virtues.

It is important to emphasize that the view defended does not deny or exclude that agents can act in accordance with the epistemic end of the virtue in question based on defective epistemic motives, which amounts to lacking either the motive for truth or the motive to act ψ-ly, or both. As the case of Watson and Crick illustrates, one can act ψ-ly because one is motivated by fame, recognition, or some other external good. As the case of Galileo Galilei illustrates, an agent might be motivated for truth, and although this motive does not give rise to being motivated to act ψ-ly, they can still act upon epistemically defective motives. In both cases, the agent acts in accordance with the epistemic end of a virtue, but not because of epistemically virtuous motives.

Such acts may, in some cases even lead to good epistemic ends – such as to acquire more true than false beliefs, attain knowledge, or gain understanding – and can therefore be assessed as instrumentally valuable. However, they are not performances of virtuous acts. For an agent to perform an epistemically virtuous act, the agent needs to have the required epistemically virtuous motives and act upon them: the agent needs to be motivated to act ψ-ly because they are motivated for truth. Only if the act is based on epistemically virtuous motives does it confer the kind of praiseworthiness required by virtue responsibilism.[11]

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