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## TESTIMONY AND VALUE IN THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE



## TESTIMONIO Y VALOR EN LA TEORÍA DEL CONOCIMIENTO

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**ABSTRACT**

The approach set forth by Edward Craig in *Knowledge and the State of Nature* has a greater explanatory value than it has been granted to date, and his suitably modified project can resolve a number of puzzling issues regarding the value of knowledge. The paper argues that a novel theory that relates knowledge to testimony is capable of explaining why knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief and why it has a distinctive value. Significantly, this theory avoids the recently advanced revisionism regarding the focus of epistemological research.

*Keywords:* E. J. Craig, knowledge, testimony, value.

**RESUMEN**

La aproximación de Edward Craig en *Knowledge and the State of Nature* tiene más poder explicativo del apreciado hasta ahora, y su proyecto, adecuadamente modificado, puede resolver un número de asuntos sobre el valor del conocimiento que parecen desconcertantes. Se argumenta que una novedosa teoría de conocimiento que lo relaciona con el testimonio puede explicar por qué el conocimiento es más valioso que la mera creencia verdadera, y por qué tiene un valor distintivo. Significativamente, la teoría evita un revisionismo, recientemente avanzado, con respecto al foco de la investigación epistemológica.

*Palabras clave:* E. J. Craig, conocimiento, testimonio, valor.

Epistemology has experienced a bit of a renaissance within the last fifty years and much of this can be traced back to Edmund Gettier's (1963) famous paper. Suddenly there was a puzzle that became the centre of attention, namely the nature of knowledge, and since then there has been no shortage of proposals attempting to identify what has to be added to true belief in order to get knowledge. But the standard method to develop these views relies very heavily on intuitions about cases and there are at least two reasons to be wary about it. First, these proposals have their own counterexamples with no sign of developing a successful one given their own standards (*cf.* Millar 2010). Second, they are anyway likely to be quite complex and gerrymandered (and the more successful they are at dealing with counter-examples, the more complex and gerrymandered they are likely to be), making it hard to understand why we would have a concept that referred to such a thing (*cf.* Hyman 1999), let alone care about it (*cf.* Kvanvig 2003).

The central proposal of Edward Craig's highly influential book, *Knowledge and the State of Nature* (1990), is to offer an alternative approach to the study of knowledge, which is born of a sense of dissatisfaction with the standard epistemological projects of mainstream analytical theory of knowledge while anyway allowing intuitions to play a significant role in epistemological theorising. Craig's approach has much more explanatory power than has been so far realised and a suitably modified Craigian project can satisfactorily address a number of otherwise puzzling features of our epistemological practice. Here I intend to exploit a Craig-inspired approach to address a family of problems in contemporary analytical epistemology concerning the value of knowledge. In particular, this approach can explain why knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief and why it has a distinctive value. Significantly, the independently motivated account avoids a substantial revisionism with regard to the focus of epistemological inquiry that has recently been advanced, due to the growing pessimism concerning the ability of accounts of knowledge to capture what here I will call the value desideratum, a set of widespread ordinary intuitions and related commonsensical beliefs about the value of knowledge.

The paper proceeds as follows. In section I, I introduce the value desideratum. In section II, I present the first key component of a Craigian approach and a novel practical explication of the concept of knowledge. In section III, I present the second main element of the approach and derive an account of knowledge from the previous practical explication. In section IV, I consider various value challenges. In section V, I show how the proposed account meets these challenges. In section VI, I offer some concluding remarks.

## 1. The Value Desideratum

The value desideratum identifies pre-theoretically appealing phenomena we ideally want to capture and explain. So this is a desideratum that we would prefer an account of knowledge to accommodate and it sets a specific explanatory goal for any such account. There are other desiderata, such as factivity (*i.e.* knowledge requires truth) and non-accidentality (*i.e.* knowledge requires some sort of anti-luck condition), that are perhaps more widely recognised than this one, but recently “value-driven” epistemologists have rightly started to take it into account (*cf.* Riggs 2008). This renewed interest in the value of knowledge is a step in the right direction and any satisfactory account of knowledge should address the challenges set by this value desideratum (*cf.* Kvanvig 2003; Zagzebski 1996). So let us introduce the relevant phenomena.

Knowledge is ordinarily thought to be valuable. Now, it seems easy to explain this phenomenon if we accept that we value the truth and knowledge requires it. Knowledge then is instrumentally valuable. Having said that, knowledge, we think, is also meant to be more valuable than true belief, as Plato notes (*cf. Meno* 97d). Indeed, Plato uses this fact to challenge us to explain why this is so, given that true belief is just as useful as knowledge. This challenge can suggest an explanation that gives knowledge a non-instrumental kind of value (if no greater instrumental value can be given to it), which would be in line with a widespread conviction that knowledge has a special kind of value (*cf.* Greco 2011; Pritchard 2010). Indeed, the fact that “knowledge has been the focus of so much of epistemological theorising, rather than some other epistemic standing like justified true belief,” (Pritchard 2009 19) is meant to suggest this. Nevertheless, we need to make sure that our explanation of the phenomena is compatible with the apparent lack of value of, say, immoral knowledge (*cf.* Baehr 2009; Fricker 2009).

This desideratum for accounts of knowledge helps us evaluate their success and allows us to adjudicate between them. But this does not mean that an account is successful only if every desideratum is captured. A given desideratum may be given up if no reflective equilibrium can be achieved and other options are more costly. So a set of desiderata should be seen more as a wish-list than a must-do-list. For example, with regard to the value-desideratum, Plato in the *Meno* briefly flirts with the idea of giving up the claim that knowledge is more valuable than true belief. But after *Meno* wonders whether this common view is mistaken, Socrates immediately points out that he is wondering this because he is not aware of the explanation, which, Socrates suggests, is that knowledge is more valuable because it is

“tethered” or “stable” (Meno 97c-98a). We do not need to consider this view now, but just to notice that if an explanation that allows us to accommodate the desideratum is forthcoming, the account that delivers it is preferable to one that does not.

Anyway, a case could be made for abandoning a desideratum. But some desiderata (say, factivity) are less likely to be given up than others (say, value), if based on stronger convictions. Not doing so would be, as David Lewis would say, a bigger blow to the credibility of one’s account. Preferably, though, we would want to accommodate all desiderata. So they have a central role to play in the process of reflective equilibration when trying to reach the most explanatory fruitful account. Moreover, part of what this theoretical fruitfulness requires is to explain why knowledge enjoys such features. So we do not merely want our account to agree, say, with the value of knowledge desideratum, but also to explain why this is so.

## II. Practical Explication

One main methodological innovation of the Craigian project is the use of a “practical explication of knowledge” to help us make sense of features of the target phenomenon (*cf.* Craig 1990 8; Butchvarov 1970). Craig holds that we should ask “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” (2). According to Craig, this functional role, for epistemically interdependent social beings like ourselves, is to flag good informants (*cf.* 11; Williams 1973). Roughly, Craig’s story begins with the need for the concept of a good informant in a primitive state of humankind and attempts to show how such concept, through a process of “objectivisation,” becomes our concept of knowledge. But many other suggestions have recently been made about other (related) roles (*e.g.* understood in terms of signalling out targets for blame (*cf.* Beebe 2012), terminating inquiry (*cf.* Kappel 2010a and Rysiew 2012), and encouraging good testimony (*cf.* Reynolds 2002)).

The plausible hypothesis I wish to explore is that the concept of knowledge picks out cases where the testimonial procedures of competency to achieve the truth to be communicated are successful. So I implement the Craigian framework with a different hypothesis that is not susceptible to worries raised about Craig’s own (*cf.* Gelfert 2011; Kelp 2011) by doing without an imaginary state-of-nature genealogy and the need for an objectivisation of the concept (*cf.* Craig 1990 84 ff.; Williams 2002 32 ff.). That is, neither is the story here offered a state-of-nature story, since we will not be necessarily describing some primitive state of the human condition, nor does it rely on a process of conceptual development, since we will not be describing how a

state-of-nature concept (of a good informant) evolves into the current concept (of knowledge).<sup>1</sup> This seems in fact desirable since it is hard to assess the plausibility of state-of-nature and developmental stories, neither of which is anyway required for a practical explication (*cf.* Kappel 2010a). The offered hypothesis about the role of the concept of knowledge, just like Craig's own, might be rejected if not considered plausible, and the more controversial the claims are, the less plausible the explication will tend to be. But, if plausible, the hypothesis should be judged ultimately on its theoretical fruits.

### *The Concept of Knowledge*

Taking a cue from Craig then, the starting point is the hypothesis that the concept of knowledge is required to satisfy a certain need of ours. Of course, once we have the concept of knowledge, we might use it in a variety of different ways. But the idea is that there is a particular need that the concept is meant to satisfy that provides it with its point, which in turn helps us make sense of features of the target phenomenon (*cf.* Kappel 2010a 70-73). And the suggestion is that this need arises out of the development of our fundamental and pervasive testimonial practice. More precisely, the concept of knowledge is the result of a conceptual need related to this practice. But plausibly assuming that the practice is developed and shaped by our need for truth, the question arises as to why the concept of knowledge, as suggested, is needed.<sup>2</sup>

To answer this question, we need to think of the possibility of failure and success in testimony. From the speaker's side, she can fail to engage in felicitous testimony by not being either sincere or competent (or both). But, in felicitous cases, neither being sincere nor competent entails that what is being told (*p*) is true. More particularly, competent performance does not pick out only those cases in which one achieves the truth. After all, most testimonial procedures we exploit to work out whether *p* are not likely to be perfectly truth-conducive given a

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1 So while Craig's hypothesis requires objectivisation of a state-of-nature concept in order to deliver the concept of knowledge, the hypothesis here presented does not. For other differences between the hypotheses and for the need of the objectivisation in Craig's case, see below "The Concept of Knowledge".

2 Given our universal and inescapable need for truth (*cf.* Dretske 89) and our social and cooperative nature, the idea is that, in a socially interdependent lifestyle, the other members of the community can be sources of truths, which would be particularly beneficial for one in those cases in which they enjoy some "positional advantage" or expertise which one does not (one enjoys a "positional advantage" when one is better positioned, spatially and/or temporally, to find out whether *p* –Williams 2002 42–). Indeed, we constantly exploit each other's "eyes and ears" in order to achieve the truth for the success of our actions.

reasonable feasibility constraint (otherwise the practice becomes useless). So testimonial competence is not factive.

Nevertheless, if one competently and sincerely testifies that *p*, then even if *p* is not the case, one is not to blame for such unsuccessful testimony. But blameless testimony (*viz.* competent and sincere testimony) is not the aim of the practice. The practice is designed to deliver truth (or so we are assuming), and without it, the testimony, even if blameless, does not satisfy the practice's goal. We want more from testimony than blamelessness. Indeed, successful testimony requires truth. So, given that we want to be able to refer to those cases of competence in which we do achieve the truth (i.e. those cases in which competence is successful, given the practice's goal), we seem to need a new concept. This concept picks out those cases of testimonial competence that succeed in achieving the truth and the suggestion is that such concept is *knowledge*.

The concept of knowledge is needed to pick out those successful cases in which the truth is achieved by means of procedures that render the testifier competent, and we refer to those cases as being "knowledge" and to the individual who apprehends the truth in such a way as "knowing". The basic idea on which this hypothesis rests, is that the verb "know" is what Gilbert Ryle calls an "achievement word" (143), as opposed to a task word (compare finding to looking, and scoring to shooting). "Know" is a "verb of success" (*cf.* 125): a verb indicating the successful accomplishment of a task. The suggestion is that "know" is a verb that indicates success with regard to the competence task. That is, "know" indicates the possession of the truth by means of testimonial competence procedures to work out whether *p*.

So the concept of knowledge addresses a particular conceptual need generated by our universal and pervasive testimonial practice. This need can provide us with a practical explication of the concept of knowledge that allows us to explain why the concept enjoys such widespread use (all known cultures engage in such practice and have such concept). And, to repeat, given that testimonial competence does not entail truth, we need the concept of knowledge to pick out the successful cases of competence. So, some concepts are required in connection with our testimonial practice, one of which is the success concept *knowledge* that picks out cases of testimonial competence that deliver the truth: that allows us to refer to these successful cases.<sup>3</sup>

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3 For the sake of space, I will not of course have much to say about the nature of the testimonial procedures here. But notice that, given their regulatory function within this practice we foster, these are (socially) endorsed procedures that guide us in the acquisition of truths. So legitimate procedures will not only have to be *de facto* reliable (given the practice's goal), but also (reasonably) approved by the epistemic community (to regulate such practice). These moreover can be taken as principles of justification



Now, it is important to notice two things to appreciate the plausibility of the hypothesis. First, due to the connection between testimonial competence and acceptance, the concept of knowledge also applies to hearers who felicitously acquire the truth via testimony, since a competent way to acquire the truth (given the regulation of testimony and the usual scenario involving chains of testimony) is by means of testimony. This way of acquiring the truth renders it fit for further transmission by the hearer. That is, some cases of competence are cases of acceptance. So we can also talk of hearers as knowing when accepting testimony.<sup>4</sup>

Second, we can also refer to individuals who are not involved in a testimonial exchange as knowing. That is, potential testifiers as well as individuals who are not trusted or who will not testify or who deceive us, can be thought as knowing. This is because, regardless of whether one transmits the truth and whether someone accepts it, if one competently achieves it, one qualifies as knowing. So the Mafioso, the liar and the Boy-that-cried-wolf can all be said to know, as we would expect.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, even if we are right about the conceptual need that the concept of knowledge is meant to satisfy, the concept can still fulfill different roles. After all, once we have the concept, we might use it in a variety of different ways. Indeed, there are many other uses for it. Here are two: it allows us to flag good social sources of truth (*i.e.* those people who have knowledge: “She knows whether *p*,” when, say, one is aware of her positional advantage or expertise) and so to inquire for these social sources of truth (“Who knows whether *p*?”). But it does not seem needed, for this given *tell-wh* seems to be factive (consider:

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(in a very broad sense). This however does not mean that we can think that the concept of justified true belief, where justification is understood either traditionally or reliabilistically, is the concept being explicated here. After all, “epistemic justification” is a technical term (which has been variously understood within epistemology –*e.g.* Swinburne 2001; Alston 2005–): we do not ordinarily talk of justified belief (although we talk about justified actions, plans and decisions –and only in subject-matters heavily connected to philosophy, such as jurisprudence, we find such talk of justified beliefs). This in fact suggests that the concept being explicated is the universal concept of knowledge since, as mentioned, all known cultures engage in testimony and ordinarily exploit the concept of knowledge but not that of epistemic justification.

- 4 For similar reasons, we can also talk of hearers knowing when speakers are not competent or sincere but the hearer can compensate for such deficiency. This would again be another competent way of acquiring the truth, though in these cases the speakers are better regarded as instruments, rather than testifiers, which can reliably afford us the truth with the appropriate correction (like any corrected faulty instrument would).
- 5 Craig’s objectivisation is primarily required to capture these cases (*cf.* 82ff.). That is because the concept of a good informant concerns both the competence and the sincerity of the informant. However, the hypothesis here presented is only concerned with those cases of successful competence, hence there is no need for some such objectivisation.

“She can tell you whether  $p$ ,” “Who can tell me whether  $p$ ?”). The concept also allows us to refer to those cases of felicitous testimony that transmit the truth. That is, it can help us pick out and mark the success of testimonial exchanges (“She let me know that  $p$ ”); something that *tell-that* can’t do (“She told me that  $p$ ”), hence allowing us to refer to infelicitous cases (“I was told that  $p$  but not- $p$ ,” “I told her that  $p$ , but I lied”). However, once again *tell-wh* can do this job, so *know* is not required for this either.

So these are some of the things that the concept of knowledge can do for us, but still the idea is that there is a particular need that the concept is meant to satisfy that provides it with its point. And the point of the concept (or, what the concept is for) is to allow us to pick out the successful cases of testimonial competence: that is, its purpose is to fulfill the need to pick out those success-cases. After all, the testimonial practice is to satisfy our basic need for truth, so a concept that allows us to pick out the truth when competent seems required. Anyhow, this is the plausible hypothesis I want to put forward. Importantly, the account of knowledge that we can derive from this practical explication has great explanatory power when it comes to the value desideratum, a case that will be made below.<sup>6</sup> But, first, let us consider how this practical explication helps us understand what knowledge is.

### III. Knowledge as a Social Kind

A second main component of this Craigian project is that knowledge is a social kind: roughly, a category that human beings impose on the world (in response to central needs and interests). As Craig says, knowledge is “something that we delineate by operating with a concept which we create in answer to certain needs” (3). Hilary Kornblith complains that Craig does not give us “a reason to believe that the category of knowledge is socially constructed rather than a natural kind” (49). But, firstly, it is not clear that knowledge could be regarded as a natural kind (*cf.* Brown 2012 41-45) and, secondly and more importantly, this is to be taken as a plausible methodological presupposition and the best way to proceed is to assume its correctness and see where it

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6 Of course I am not suggesting this is the only plausible hypothesis available. In fact, we have mentioned others above. Those hypotheses might be equally plausible for all I have said here. But I am not here trying to argue against these candidates. The aim is to show that the proposed hypothesis, which intimately links the concept of knowledge to our testimonial practice, has great theoretical fruits with regard to the value desideratum. It is a further issue whether the alternatives do so too. But notice that the hypothesis offered can also help us make sense of two further theses: that knowledge terminates the *testimonial* inquiry and is the norm of *testimonial* assertion (although I cannot argue for this here, I think those restrictions are welcomed: consider opining that  $p$ ).

takes us (*cf.* Craig 4). After all, the most effective way to demonstrate the limitations of any approach, including the natural-kind one, is by developing a better alternative, and here I intend to contribute to the development of a Craig-inspired alternative. This approach should be judged ultimately on its theoretical fruits and my aim is to illustrate the great explanatory power it can enjoy with respect to central value issues regarding knowledge.

### *An Account of Knowledge*

Given this methodological presupposition, knowledge, although a natural phenomenon, is the kind of phenomenon that we shape. So the suggestion, echoing Craig, is that the above success-concept, which satisfies a specific conceptual need generated by our basic and universal testimonial practice, delineates the phenomenon of knowledge. I suggest then, rather schematically, that knowledge is the apprehension of the truth by means of truth-conducive procedures that are in place for testimonial competence. As mentioned, the best way to proceed is to assume its correctness and see where it takes us. I think that is a good place at least with respect to the value desideratum, and the case for this is presented below.

So, to know is to grasp the truth by means of certain norms, where these norms of knowledge are certain regulatory procedures of testimony. It would be important to consider in some detail the nature of the testimonial practice, and particularly the nature of its regulatory rules, if we are to adequately understand what knowledge is.<sup>7</sup> But that is not something we can do here and it is not something we need to do since, as it will become apparent later on, all we need to explain the value desideratum is this schematic proposal. So, with it on the table, we should now start considering the different value problems to which we would like answers.

## **iv. Value Problems**

We would prefer our account of knowledge to explain the distinctive value of knowledge that in turn explains why knowledge is valuable and more valuable than mere true belief. Again, the claim is not that any plausible account of knowledge must entail that knowledge is distinctively valuable. This desideratum is not non-negotiable. Having said that, it is preferable, given the widespread intuitions behind this desideratum, to explain why knowledge has such value rather than explain our intuitions away (*cf.* Pritchard 2010 46). In these final sections we

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7 As suggested (fn.3), procedures are legitimate only if they are *de facto* reliable and socially endorsed.

shall see that the present account can capture the value desideratum, while noticing that some competitors fail to do so. But let us first set the terrain for our explanation.

We ordinarily think knowledge is valuable and this can be easily explained by the fact that we value the truth and that knowledge requires it. But, knowledge, we think, is also more valuable than mere true belief. And, in the *Meno* (cf. 97d), Plato challenges us to explain why this is so given mere true belief is just as useful as knowledge (given that they seem equally instrumentally valuable with regard to the truth). We can respond to this challenge by either claiming a) that knowledge, which is merely instrumentally valuable because it delivers truth, does not have greater value than mere true belief, or b) that knowledge, which is instrumentally valuable because it delivers truth and “stability” or “resilience” over time, actually has greater instrumental value than mere true belief, or c) that knowledge is also non-instrumentally valuable.

I take the first strategy to be the least promising, given that it consists in denying a widespread commonsensical intuition about knowledge (cf. Greco 2010; Sosa 2010). Now, some disagree about the generality of the intuition, suggesting that this is not an exceptionless generalization (cf. Baehr 2009; Fricker 2009), and we shall come back to this below. But, granted that such denial of our ordinary thinking about knowledge is least desirable, the two main options are claiming that knowledge has greater instrumental value than mere true belief b) and claiming that knowledge is also non-instrumentally valuable c). The latter is the response the proposed account promotes, so let us first consider whether b) is a viable competitor to c) with respect to the above challenge.

Now, b) is in fact Socrates’ strategy in the *Meno*. He claims that knowledge, as opposed to mere true belief, is, metaphorically speaking, “tethered” and so it does not “run away,” like the statues of Daedalus. And this strategy has been adopted by others. Perhaps the most natural and plausible way to develop it is by suggesting that “mere true beliefs are typically more vulnerable to being lost in the face of misleading counter-evidence” (Fricker 129). This “stability” or “resilience” of knowledge (*i.e.* “the tendency to survive misleading counter-evidence owing to the subjects being in the position to weight it against positive evidence already possessed” (*ibid.*)) is meant to explain the added instrumental value over mere true belief, since one is more likely to hold on to the truth over time if one knows.

As Miranda Fricker points out, this explanation of the extra value of knowledge becomes available as soon as one gives up the “synchronic presumption” normally implicitly accepted in the current debate. This

is the presumption that “the value question is [...] a question about the comparative values of mere true belief and knowledge at a snapshot in time [or, at best,] in a very short time frame” (Fricker 127). I am sympathetic to Fricker’s approach; in particular to a change in perspective: in this case, from a synchronic to a diachronic one. And, the proposed Craig-inspired account promotes another change of focus: from an individualist perspective to a social one, where the “the realities of social interaction” (Kvanvig 1992 178) are not neglected. This change of focus, as we shall see, allows us to fully deal with the various value problems here considered (*cf.* Fricker 136-137).

Anyway, I also think this resilience can explain why *sometimes* knowledge can have more instrumental value than mere true belief. But, as Fricker is aware, if that is the *full story*, then the intuition (if correct) cannot be general: that is, knowledge is not *always* more (instrumentally) valuable than true belief. This is because, as Fricker and many others think, having evidence or reasons is not a necessary condition of knowledge.<sup>8</sup> We do not always have evidence for our knowledge and so such knowledge lacks the added instrumental value that resides in resilience. That is, we do not always enjoy, in cases of knowledge, the ability to retain truths over time in the face of misleading evidence.

Now, I think this resilience explanation is not the full story for two reasons: a) the independent reasons for thinking that the intuition is not general do not seem compelling, and b) it is not clear that this story can explain why we would have a widespread intuition that knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief. Let us take them in that order.

So let us consider whether the reasons for thinking that the intuition is not general are compelling a). Jason Baehr and Fricker provide some independent reasons for holding the non-generality of the intuition. Firstly, “there is nothing independently or inherently counterintuitive in the suggestion that there might exist, say, at least one item of

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8 Below we shall see that this seems correct, but for the time being note that Fricker is in good company from different epistemological standpoints: *cf.* Ayer 1956; Goldman 1979; Lewis 1996; Millar 2010. Notice too that the sort of evidence that concerns us here (i.e. the evidence that would allow us to defeat misleading counter-evidence by weighting them against each other) cannot simply be, say, the appearance of a memory, since mere true beliefs stored in memory will share this appearance. Neither can we take the truth-conducive procedures as evidence (or reasons) in the required sense unless they are “internalised” (in the sense of having reflective access to the fact that the procedure one is exploiting is truth-conducive), but we should not normally expect this to be the case (and neither does the above account suggest that to be the case). That “internalisation” would prove to be too demanding and taking the *de facto* truth-conducive procedures to be evidence would seem to flout ordinary usage and, more importantly, such external evidence would not count as the sort of evidence that can guide the maintenance of beliefs when presented with counter-evidence.

knowledge the value of which fails to exceed that of the corresponding item of true belief” (Baehr 48). Secondly, trivial knowledge and immoral knowledge are meant to be in fact cases where such possibility is actualised (cf. Baehr 49-50; Fricker 135).

Now, in response to the first point, one can say that, given that something’s value can be outweighed or defeated, there is no reason to think that knowledge is always valuable *all-things-considered*. So, for example, the *moral disvalue* of a certain belief could defeat any (instrumental or otherwise) epistemic value it may have and so bring the value of it as true belief and as knowledge to naught. In this way then, we would have a case where the item of knowledge is not more valuable all-things-considered than the mere true belief. So, given that epistemic value (instrumental or otherwise) can be defeated, we can agree that there is nothing inherently counter-intuitive with the idea that an item of knowledge can fail to be more valuable all-things-considered than the relevant true belief. But this does not rule out the possibility that knowledge is more valuable than true belief *within the epistemic realm*, which is the content of, what we might call, our *Meno* intuition.<sup>9</sup>

But, what can we say about cases of trivial knowledge where, say, no moral disvalue defeats the epistemic value? The thing to say is that it is not clear (at least to me) that trivial knowledge is not more valuable than the corresponding trivial true belief. That is, intuitively, trivial knowledge does not seem to actualise the possibility that the item of knowledge does not have more value than the mere true belief. But Baehr might protest. Indeed, he wonders why *I* would be better off knowing that *p* rather than merely truly believing it if the subject-matter is not of any epistemic interest *to me* (cf. 49-50). At this point, let me just say that when we consider the value of knowledge but do not only acknowledge the individual’s benefits and interests, Baehr’s concern seems misplaced. The extra value of knowledge need not be explained only in terms of the value it has to the individual. If one gives up the individualist presumption that is behind this concern, it is not clear that there is a problem: after all, what matters is not whether one is interested on some truth but whether someone can be.<sup>10</sup>

9 What I am calling the “*Meno* intuition” (exegetical issues aside) is not the claim that knowledge is more valuable all-things-considered than true belief. I take it there is a widespread intuition that knowledge is more valuable *as an epistemic good* than mere true belief.

10 Given that the testimonial practice is developed in order to satisfy the fundamental human need for truths *by means of other people*, testimonial competence aims at the truth that is then passed on to *someone else who needs it*. And one need not be too ingenious to think of cases in which even the most trivial or unbeneficial truth, from someone’s perspective, can be needed by someone else. Any truth is possibly needed

Let us now turn to the second reason why the above resilience explanation does not seem to be the full story, namely: that it is not clear that this resilience story can explain why we would have a widespread intuition that knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief b). Given that we do have such intuition, it is difficult to see how this resilience can explain why we have it unless such resilience is, at least, a typical feature of knowledge. But the possession of evidence required for resilience (*i.e.* the sort of evidence that would allow us to defeat misleading counter-evidence) does not seem to be a typical feature of knowledge. Indeed, much knowledge does not seem to require it.

A lot of our knowledge is stored in memory and a lot of knowledge is gained via testimony. But it seems that memory and testimony can require positive reasons (as opposed to the absence of negative ones) only at the expense of significantly reducing what we take to know. On the one hand, much testimony comes from strangers (about which we know nothing) and even in those cases where it does not, we do not normally seem to be able to provide positive reasons for the testimony. On the other hand, even if our beliefs were initially supported by reasons, we often, after a time (and perhaps so not to clutter the memory), lose them and retain merely the belief. So, assuming we can know what we remember even if we have forgotten the evidence for it and what we are being felicitously told when lacking evidence, having evidence of the sort required for resilience (*i.e.* evidence that would allow us to defeat misleading counter-evidence by weighting them against each other) seems neither a necessary nor a typical condition of knowledge (and there is no reason to suppose we would think so), which makes one wonder why we have the intuition that knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief. So we do not seem able to explain away the generality of the *Meno* intuition this way. That is, the extra truth-dependent value that resilience affords us by adopting a diachronic perspective is not enough to explain away the generality of the *Meno* intuition.

These considerations suggest that the above resilience explanation is not the full story. And it seems that if we are to capture the phenomena on the matter, we need to explain why knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief as a matter of *kind*: we need to explain how knowledge can (also) be non-instrumentally valuable c).<sup>11</sup> The

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by someone. So any truth, however trivial or unbeneficial for one, can be required to satisfy someone else's need. But this does not mean that truths that are, from one's perspective, trivial and unbeneficial are practically valuable for oneself.

- 11 Of course we have not considered all possible alternatives within strategy b), but just what I consider to be the most natural and promising development of such a strategy. To show that strategy c) is the only one available to explain the extra value of knowled-



present account, which is not incompatible with the above resilience story, suggests an answer to Plato's challenge that exemplifies the third strategy by exploiting the intimate connection between knowledge and testimony here suggested and so can do justice to our intuitions. That is, the proposed account provides us with an explanation that gives knowledge a non-instrumental kind of epistemic value that is enjoyed by *all* knowledge. So this story allows us to explain why knowledge is *distinctively* valuable: where the difference in value between knowledge and true belief is not (just) a matter of degree but of kind. This is also thought to be a widely held conviction (*cf.* Greco 2011; Pritchard 2009), and if it is so (as I think it is<sup>12</sup>), our account can capture it too.

But before I introduce the proposed explanation, let us make clear the different value problems that we would prefer an answer to (*cf.* Greco 2011; Kappel 2010b; Sosa 2010). First, we would like an answer to the General Value problem: that is, to explain why knowledge is valuable. Second, we would like an answer to the *Meno* problem: that is, to explain why knowledge is more valuable as an epistemic good than mere true belief. Third, we would like an answer to the Distinctive Value problem: that is, to explain why knowledge is distinctively valuable.

The latter is the challenge to explain why knowledge has non-instrumental value or "final value" (Pritchard 2010 8).<sup>13</sup> Now, significantly for our purposes, final value does not entail intrinsic value, since final value can be had due to relational, as opposed to intrinsic, properties. As Duncan Pritchard says, "intrinsic value concerns only the value generated by the intrinsic properties of the target item, and yet something can be finally –*i.e.* non-instrumentally– valuable because of its relational (and hence non-intrinsic) properties" (2010 fn. 30; *cf.* Kappel 2010b). So we want to explain how knowledge is finally valuable, so understood. These then are the three challenges to which we

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ge over mere true belief, we would also need to consider other plausible alternatives within b). Having said that, notice that if we also want to explain the distinctive value of knowledge, as I take it we should (but see fn.12), then neither the above resilience story nor any other story instantiating strategy b) will suffice to explain both the extra and the distinctive value of knowledge.

- 12 But not everyone agrees (*cf.* Fricker 127fn.9) and some have doubts (*cf.* Kappel 2010b 190–191). Note anyway the present account is not tailored to answer this challenge, so if there is no such intuition, it would not have moulded our account. Nevertheless, we shall see a reason for thinking there is one (§v).
- 13 While this challenge assumes that knowledge has a distinctive value, the *Meno* one does not. Although, as pointed out above, the *Meno* problem can be solved by positing some distinctive value. After all, the *Meno* problem consists in the challenge to explain the extra value of knowledge, which can be done (and perhaps should be done, given the above –Pritchard *cf.* 2010 8 fn.11–) by means of some extra non-instrumental value.



want an answer and which, as we shall now see, the present account satisfactorily addresses.

### v. The Final Value of Knowledge

As mentioned, the intimate connection between knowledge and testimony allows us to handle the above value problems: that is, to make sense of the value of knowledge including its distinctiveness and its extra value when compared to mere true belief. More precisely, the present account promotes an answer to the Distinctive Value problem that in turn allows us to address the other ones. After all, if knowledge has final value, knowledge is valuable and it is so finally and instrumentally, so it is more valuable than mere true belief given that such belief does not enjoy the final value as knowledge. Moreover, the fact that our account prompts us to posit some such final value is welcomed since, as seen, the *Meno* problem seems to require an explanation that gives knowledge a non-instrumental kind of value.

Now, the extra value of knowledge over true belief can derive from relational properties that the true belief in question enjoys as an item of knowledge but not as mere true belief. I want to suggest that such relational property, given that the proposed account states that the constitutive norms of knowledge are procedures of the testimonial practice, is that the true belief as knowledge is fit for the testimonial practice. In other words, an item of knowledge is finally valuable as a suitable item of the testimonial practice. This is an epistemic cooperative practice that is of fundamental importance in our lives. A social practice that we most certainly value (*cf.* Kusch 2009): after all, it seems required for both personal and communal flourishing, and so we value it both as individuals and as a community. And the fact that a true belief as an item of knowledge is fit for such practice renders it finally valuable. That is, just like a dress can enjoy final value because it was worn by Diana (a relational property of the dress), similarly a true belief can enjoy final value because it is fit for transmission in our testimonial practice.<sup>14</sup>

So, given the present account, all knowledge is essentially related to testimony and this relation is what makes a true belief that is knowledge distinctively valuable. Importantly, *all* knowledge enjoys such distinctive value. So by focusing on this relational property of all true beliefs as knowledge, we can handle both the *Meno* and the Distinctive Value

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14 This of course does not mean that *all* true beliefs enjoy such final value, but only that those true beliefs that are knowledge do: that is, a true belief fit for testimonial consumption. After all, what makes a true belief enjoy such value is that it is formed by means of a testimonial procedure (*i.e.* a competence procedure for the testimonial practice). But of course not all true beliefs are obtained in that manner (consider, for instance, forming a true belief by guesswork or wishful thinking).

problems. This is how we exploit a social perspective, which does not neglect the realities of social interaction, on the issue: by focusing on the essential connection between knowledge and testimony. The extra and distinctive value of knowledge is explained by reference to testimony.

This is the proposed explanation of knowledge's extra and final value, which moreover allows us to suggest that knowledge is a *common good*. Indeed, knowledge is a common good that is crucial, although contingently so, to the well-being of humans and communities: a fundamental exercise of our social nature (*cf.* Kusch 2009 61 ff.). And thinking of knowledge as a commons or a public good like shared natural resources (such as water, forests and fisheries), which is in line with our commonsensical idea of a social reservoir of knowledge,<sup>15</sup> allows us to easily pump (*pace* Fricker) the intuition that it enjoys some final value.

So we can handle, due to the nature of the proposed explanation, all three value problems. By explaining how knowledge enjoys final value, and so addressing the Distinctive Value problem, we can also explain the *Meno* problem: the extra value is this final value. And so, as required by the General Value problem, we can explain why knowledge is valuable: it enjoys both instrumental and final value. Consequently, the present account is to be preferred, *all else being equal*, to any account that fails to explain either why knowledge is valuable, or more valuable than mere true belief, or distinctively valuable. And it seems that other accounts of knowledge cannot do so. Some are not designed to do so (*cf.* Fricker 2009 127-128) and others designed to do so do not seem to be successful (*cf.* Greco 2010 91-101). More specifically, some believe that "the most promising account available of why knowledge [...] is finally valuable" (Pritchard 2010 48) seems unable to do so. The type of account being referred to understands knowledge as a cognitive achievement of the subject through her virtues.<sup>16</sup> But I will not rehearse the alleged problems of this type of account (*cf.* Lackey 2007, 2009; Pritchard 2010 34-43), since it is not my aim here to show that the proposed account is the only one able to handle fully the value-desideratum.<sup>17</sup>

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15 That is, a common fund, in which we differentiate different branches or fields, to be exploited by anyone. So, for example, London cab drivers speak of "the knowledge," and so does the British Library, but of course referring to other domains.

16 Given that knowledge is a cognitive achievement and that achievements are finally valuable, this account seems to have the resources to explain why knowledge is finally valuable and so also handle the other two value problems.

17 Plus doing so would require us, given the nature of the criticisms raised against the credit account (*i.e.* either it captures the value or the non-accidentality desideratum, but not both), to consider whether the proposed account also captures the non-accidentality desideratum. But I have anyway argued elsewhere (De Brasi, *forthcoming*) that this account can do so.

Instead, I am here mainly concerned with showing some theoretical fruits of the proposed account and one of its advantages is that it can explain, due to the distinctive value of knowledge, why epistemologists throughout the times have cared so much about knowledge. Moreover, it does not require a substantial revisionism with regard to such focus, like revisionist accounts demand. That is, revisionist accounts, which deny that all knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief and has final value and which explain away the relevant intuitions (cf. Pritchard 2010 66-88), demand a meta-epistemological revision with regard to the focus of the epistemological inquiry. But the proposed account can do justice to the value desideratum and so pessimism concerning the ability of an account of knowledge to capture our widespread ordinary intuitions and beliefs about the value of knowledge is misplaced. So we can explain why knowledge has enjoyed and still (correctly) enjoys the central focus it does in epistemology. And since we prefer an account that can capture the value desideratum, I suggest that, all else being equal, the proposed account should be preferred to value-revisionist accounts.

### *Fundamental Epistemic Goods and the Swamping Problem*

Before concluding, let me address one final and infamous problem that is normally thought to be an especially difficult problem for reliabilist accounts to handle (cf. Jones 1997; Zagzebski 1996). So, given that the proposed account has reliabilist elements, I want to make clear why it does not suffer from this problem.<sup>18</sup>

But first let me make clear that, given that a fundamental epistemic good is “any epistemic good whose epistemic value is at least sometimes not simply instrumental value relative to a further *epistemic* good” (Pritchard 2010 11-12) and granted that knowledge has final (non-instrumental) value, knowledge is a fundamental epistemic good. That is, since an epistemic good with final value also qualifies as a fundamental epistemic good due to the non-instrumental nature of its value, knowledge qualifies as some such good.

Now, given that the “swamping problem” is the problem to find an extra value for true belief as knowledge that “is not swamped by the value of truth itself” (Kvanvig 2003 46), it should be clear that the present account certainly does not suffer this problem, since we handled the *Meno* problem. But I want to make clear *why* the present account, does

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18 Recall that the competence procedures are legitimate norms of knowledge only if they are truth-conducive (cf. fn.3). After all, the testimonial practice is meant to deliver truths and its regulative procedures are meant to promote the satisfaction of the practice’s goal.

not suffer from it. And in order to appreciate this we need to introduce two crucial assumptions behind the alleged problem.

The first is that the end, and not the means, is all that matters: “there is no further value in the fact that some particular true belief was produced by the reliable mechanism” (Zagzebski 1996 302). A common way of developing the point is by means of analogy: just like a reliable espresso machine does not add value to a good cup of coffee, neither does a truth-conducive process to a true belief (Zagzebski 2003 15). In other words, the end (true belief) swamps the means (reliable method) of any value. The second assumption is that truth is the *only* fundamental epistemic good (*cf.* Kappel 2010b 187-188).

Given these two assumptions, simple reliabilist accounts seems to lack the resources to explain the *Meno* problem because, given that a true belief has already achieved the only fundamental epistemic goal, the fact that it is achieved by means of a reliable process will not add any extra value. That is, since knowledge is not “closer” to the goal of truth than mere true belief, there is no extra value to be had. This is the problem but, of course, there is room for the reliabilist to manoeuvre.

Mainly, she can reject either the first assumption (by introducing an extra value that is instrumental relative to the truth, say, along the lines of the above diachronic move) or the second one, just like we have done. Knowledge is a fundamental epistemic good: the property of being knowledge adds value to mere true belief. And the final value of knowledge, which exploits the relation between the true belief as knowledge and our testimonial practice, explains why the swamping problem does not apply to the proposed account. Moreover, this final value allows us, to repeat, to capture the value desideratum.

## VI. Conclusion

We have seen that the proposed account manages to deal with the different value problems that have recently troubled epistemologists. I, of course, anticipate costs to this account, but with regard to the value desideratum it seems to come up on top. Indeed, the proposed Craig-inspired approach provides a framework where various philosophical questions and puzzles about the value of knowledge become less problematic. I take this to be a sign of the fecundity of a Craig-style epistemological project to understand and explain a range of features of knowledge and a reason to further develop this sort of approach. Indeed, this approach grants a fuller engagement with the sort of social issues to which traditional epistemology is often blind given its strongly individualist orientation. It alleviates the worry that contemporary epistemology has missed an important component, aside from value considerations, to understanding the nature of knowledge by

not neglecting the realities of social interaction. After all, as Jonathan Kvanvig says, “we should never begin to think that the deepest epistemological questions concern the isolated intellect” (1992 177).

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