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THE SOCIAL VIRTUE OF BLIND DEFERENCE

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Abstract: Recently, it has become popular to account for knowledge and other epistemic states in terms of *epistemic virtues*. The present paper focuses on an epistemic virtue relevant when deferring to others in testimonial contexts. It is argued that, while many virtue epistemologists will accept that epistemic virtue can be exhibited in cases involving epistemically motivated hearers, carefully vetting their testimonial sources for signs of untrustworthiness prior to deferring, anyone who accepts that also has to accept that an agent may exhibit epistemic virtue in certain cases of *blind deference*, involving someone soaking up everything he or she is told without any hesitation. Moreover, in order to account for the kind of virtue involved in the relevant cases of blind deference, virtue epistemologists need to abandon a widespread commitment to *personalism*, i.e., the idea that virtue is possessed primarily on account of features internal to the psychology of the person, and accept that some virtues are *social virtues*, possessed in whole or in large part on account of the person being embedded in a reliable social environment.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, it has become popular to account for knowledge and other positive epistemic states in terms of *epistemic virtues*.[1] While much of traditional epistemology has focused on features of *belief* (e.g., evidential relations between belief contents), virtue epistemology focuses on features of *persons*, and on their dispositions to think, reason or believe in certain ways in particular. Virtue epistemologists disagree about whether the relevant dispositions need to be *reliable*, *acquired* (as opposed to innate), and accompanied by an appropriate kind of *motivation* in order to qualify as virtues. We will consider these disagreements in due course. The relevant disagreements will be discussed in the context of a particular epistemic virtue,

[1] While philosophical theorising about virtue goes all the way back to Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, current interest in epistemic (or intellectual) virtue as a means to shedding light on questions about epistemic status can be traced back to Sosa (1991*a*) and Zagzebski (1996). Notable recent contributions include Sosa (2007, 2009, 2011), Greco (2010), and Baehr (2011).

namely the one involved in testimonial knowledge had on account of deferring to the word of others. To get started, consider what should be an uncontroversial case of knowledge on the basis of such deference:

> (DEFERENCE) Larry is motivated to believe the truth out of a desire for truth as such. As a result, when Larry's fellow inquirers tell him that *p*, he carefully vets them for signs of untrustworthiness. Having failed to discover any such signs, Larry believes that *p*. Larry's fellow inquirers are reliable testifiers, both in the actual world and in all nearby worlds, on the matters that he consults them on.[2]

If there are any cases of knowledge through deference, this is surely one of them. Indeed, any virtue epistemological theory that does *not* have Larry's belief that *p* come out as an instance of knowledge, would seem to be one that we have good reason to reject—at least if we assume the following:

> **Universality**: Virtue epistemological theory is *universal*, in that it should be able to account for all instances of knowledge.[3]

Universality might seem a strong assumption. Still, it captures fairly well the ambition of many virtue epistemologists. As we shall see in Section 1.1, two important pieces of evidence to this effect are as follows. First, many virtue epistemologists are explicitly in the business of accounting for knowledge. Second, among those virtue epistemologists, the two most popular strategies for handling cases of knowledge that do not seem to fit certain conceptions of virtue—particularly conceptions requiring that possessors of virtue are appropriately motivated—involve arguing either that (*a*) those cases under closer scrutiny *do* fit the relevant conception, or that (*b*) there are several *kinds* of virtue, one of which can accommodate the problematic cases of knowledge. Had the relevant epistemologists *not* accepted universality, we should expect to have seen a third strategy in response to the problematic cases, consisting simply in a denial that all instances of knowledge need to be accounted for in terms of epistemic virtue. But that is not what we are seeing.

[2] Reliability is a matter of generating a high truth-to-falsity ratio, and is usually spelled out in terms of ratios of true to false beliefs. Notice, however, that DEFERENCE is formulated in terms of reliable *testifiers*—i.e., testifiers generating a high ratio of true to false *statements*—rather than reliable *believers*, in order to account for the fact that someone might be (*a*) a reliable believer but an unreliable testifier, on account of an inability or (in the case of deception) unwillingness to communicate what she believes, or (*b*) an unreliable believer but a reliable testifier, as in the case of Jennifer Lackey's creationist teacher (see Lackey, 2008: 48).

[3] I will remain neutral on the question of whether the universality thesis should be extended to other epistemic notions, such as justification, understanding, wisdom, and rationality.

The present paper has two goals. First, by progressively stripping DEFERENCE of putatively necessary conditions for knowledge, part 1 argues that anyone who accepts that Larry possesses an epistemic virtue in DEFERENCE—which, given widespread acceptance of universality together with the fact that Larry's testimonial beliefs clearly amount to knowledge in DEFERENCE, should include many virtue epistemologist—also has to accept that Larry is instantiating an epistemic virtue in the following scenario:

> (BLIND DEFERENCE) When Larry's fellow inquirers tell him that *p*, Larry believes that *p*. In fact, Larry believes absolutely everything that he hears. He is a veritable doxastic sponge, soaking up everything he is told without any hesitation. Larry's fellow inquirers are reliable testifiers, both in the actual world an in all nearby worlds, on the matters that he consults them on.

As for the paper's second goal, part 2 argues that, in order to account for the epistemic virtue possessed by Larry in BLIND DEFERENCE, we need to reject a widespread commitment to *personalism*, i.e., the idea that all epistemic virtues are *personal virtues*, or virtues possessed primarily on account of features internal to the psychology of the person. More specifically, we need to leave conceptual room for *social virtues*. Social virtues are *not* possessed primarily on account of features internal to the psychology of the person, but in whole or in large part on account of her being embedded in a reliable social environment.

PART 1. FROM DEFERENCE TO BLIND DEFERENCE

1.1 Deference and Motivation

What is it to have epistemic virtue? Several virtue epistemologists take it that epistemic virtue requires an epistemic motivation on the part of the possessor of virtue. For example, Jason Baehr suggests that 'an intellectual virtue is a character trait that contributes to its possessor's personal intellectual worth on account of its involving a positive psychological orientation toward epistemic goods', where the relevant orientation consists in 'a concern with intellectual values or disvalues *as such* or considered in their own right'.[4] Similarly, Linda Zagzebski suggests that a virtue requires 'a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end', and that all epistemic virtues are based in a motivation for 'cognitive contact with reality'.[5] According to Zagzebski, one way to be motivated thus is to be motivated by a love of truth or an aversion to falsehood, and that being motivated thus is intrinsically valuable, and thereby makes for 'a

[4] Baehr (2011: 102 and 101, respectively).

[5] Zagzebski (1996: 137 and 167, respectively).

kind of value that is capable of conferring additional value on the acts that it motivates',[6] provided that the motivation is grounded in a love of truth or aversion to falsehood *as such*.[7] For example, someone who shuns false beliefs simply because believing falsely might give her a bad reputation in her epistemic community is not motivated by an aversion to falsehood as such.

The relevant kind of motivation is present in DEFERENCE. Larry is motivated to believe the truth out of a desire for truth as such. But we might worry that the relevant kind of motivation will not be present in other cases in which we nevertheless are hesitant to withhold an ascription of knowledge. For example, it seems perfectly possible to know something on the basis of reliable perceptual faculties without being in any relevant sense motivated to believe truly or to be in 'cognitive contact with reality'. One way to respond to this worry would be to reject universality. Some virtue epistemologists do indeed reject universality because they deny that their virtue epistemology is in the business of shedding light on traditional epistemic categories like knowledge.[8] But many virtue epistemologists take themselves to be in exactly that business, and it is with these virtue epistemologists that I will be concerned in what follows.[9] Moreover, insofar as they also take motivation to be necessary for virtue, they have tended to opt for either of two strategies in response to the problem posed by perceptual knowledge.

The first strategy involves maintaining that the relevant kind of motivation is present in perceptual cases. For example, Zagzebski suggests that the relevant cases involve an intellectual attitude in the form of a 'presumption for truth'.[10] The nature of the relevant attitude is fairly undemanding: it can be manifested by intellectually mediocre agents, as well as by young children and possibly also by animals. In fact, Zagzebski suggests that failing to manifest the relevant attitude would amount to a form of intellectual paranoia. While lowering the bar for the relevant kind of motivation thus makes possible its presence even in simple perceptual processing, it retains very little of what might have seemed attractive about the motivation requirement in the first place. As Baehr points out, '[c]haracter virtues […] are typically thought to pick out a rather high and distinguished level of personal excellence—something that is not exhibited by the average cognitive agent or by young children (and certainly not by animals!)', which is why Zagzebski's response, according to Baehr, 'appears unpromising'.[11]

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[6] Zagzebski (2003: 147).

[7] See Zagzebski (2003: 148).

[8] See, e.g., Roberts and Wood (2007) and Kvanvig (1992).

[9] I have in mind, primarily, Sosa (1991*a*, 1991*b*, 2007, 2009, 2011), Zagzebski (1996), Greco (2010), and Baehr (2011). The case of Baehr is less straightforward, but see footnote 17 for the rationale for including him here.

[10] See Zagzebski (1996: 280).

[11] Baehr (2011: 42).

This brings us to the second and recently more popular strategy for the virtue epistemologist attracted to the idea of motivation as necessary for epistemic virtue: bifurcate epistemic virtue. For example, Heather Battaly proposes that the distinction between virtue epistemologists who impose a motivation condition on virtue, and those who do not, suggests that there are 'different sorts of intellectual virtues, which ties to different sorts of knowledge', namely what she refers to as 'high-grade' and 'low-grade' knowledge.[12] Similarly, while Baehr suggests that, 'a fully or broadly virtuous person can […] be counted on to care deeply about ends like truth, knowledge, evidence, rationality, and understanding',[13] but does not need to be reliable,[14] he also acknowledges that 'some knowledge is acquired independently of any virtuous motives or actions at all'[15] and that 'a trait's being epistemically reliable […] is sufficient for its counting as an intellectual virtue in an alternative but also legitimate and pretheoretical sense'.[16]

For present purposes, I am not interested in the question of whether such a distinction in virtue is warranted. What I am interested in is the dialectical fact that *neither* of the two theoretical moves made in relation to the challenge posed by perceptual knowledge involves giving up on universality.[17] Indeed, many virtue epistemologists seem so inclined to account for the variety of ways in which we can know things that, in light of the failure to locate a motivational component in all instances of knowledge, they prefer postulating a variety of *kinds* of virtues to giving up on universality. This also suggests that many virtue epistemologists—including epistemologists who take motivation to be a necessary condition on (one kind of) virtue—would have to accept that Larry can be taken to possess an epistemic virtue in the following scenario:

[12] Battaly (2012: 17).

[13] Baehr (2011: 2).

[14] See Baehr (2011: 123).

[15] Baehr (2011: 44).

[16] Baehr (2011: 135). See also Baehr (2011: 124).

[17] Baehr (2011) might appear to pose an exception. Baehr rejects what he refers to as *strong conservative virtue epistemology*, i.e., the kind of virtue epistemology that takes epistemic or intellectual virtue to play a fundamental role within traditional epistemology. But what Baehr is denying is that *character* virtue, i.e., the kind of virtue accompanied by epistemic motivations, can be expected to play a central and important role in the analysis of knowledge (44-6). Since Baehr grants that there is a fully legitimate reliabilist notion of virtue (124), which does not require any epistemic motivation for its exercise, rejecting the idea that character virtues are to play a central and fundamental role in answering traditional epistemological questions in the analysis of knowledge, falls short of denying that a virtue epistemology acknowledging a wider set of virtues should be able to account for all instances of knowledge.

> (NON-MOTIVATED DEFERENCE) When Larry's fellow inquirers tell him that *p*, he carefully vets them for signs of untrustworthiness. Having failed to discover any such signs, Larry believes that *p*. Larry's fellow inquirers are reliable testifiers, both in the actual world and in all nearby worlds, on the matters that he consults them on.

In this scenario, we can imagine that Larry vets his fellow inquirers for any number of non-epistemic reasons. For example, we can imagine that he does so, not because he cares about truth as such, but because he doesn't want to be made a fool of. Hence, we here have a case of *epistemically non-motivated* deference, in the sense of a case wherein the deferring subject is *not* motivated to attain true belief, or cognitive contact with reality, out of a desire for those things *as such*. And as we have seen, several virtue epistemologists accept the idea that there is *a* kind of virtue that can be had in the absence of such motivation, given their commitment to universality together with the failure to locate a sufficiently robust motivational component in every case of knowledge. That is why Larry can be said to possess a kind of epistemic virtue in NON-MOTIVATED DEFERENCE, even by the lights of those who maintain that a motivation to attain true belief as such is necessary for another kind of virtue.

1.2 Deference and Gullibility

In NON-MOTIVATED DEFERENCE, Larry carefully vets his fellow inquirers for untrustworthiness before believing what they tell him. Why is that a good thing? Because it suggests that he is not *gullible*, to borrow a term from Elizabeth Fricker. According to Fricker, 'the hearer should always engage in some assessment of the speaker for trustworthiness. To believe without doing so is to believe blindly, uncritically. This is gullibility'.[18] When pressed by Sanford Goldberg and David Henderson on the issue of what exactly gullibility amounts to, Fricker suggests that someone is gullible 'if she has a disposition or policy for doxastic response to testimony which fails to screen out false testimony'.[19] She moreover claims that this corresponds to an interpretation suggested by Goldberg and Henderson on which someone is gullible if she, 'in circumstances C, is disposed to acquire a good deal of unreliable (unsafe; insensitive; etc.) testimony-based belief'.[20]

This tells us two important things about gullibility. First, it is situation specific. That is, a doxastic disposition might make for gullibility in one set of circumstances, but not in another. Second, what determines whether or not someone is gullible in any given situation is whether her doxastic dispositions are unreliable, unsafe, insensitive, or the like. A doxastic disposition is *reliable* to the extent that it tends to

[18] Fricker (1994: 145).

[19] Fricker (2006: 620).

[20] Goldberg and Henderson (2006: 602).

generate a high ratio of true to false beliefs; *safe* to the extent that, were it to issue in a belief that *p* in nearby possible worlds, *p* would (most likely) not be false; and *sensitive* to the extent that, if *p* were false, then the disposition would (most likely) not issue in a belief that *p*. For present purposes, we may follow the majority of epistemologists in taking reliability to be necessary for justification, and being open to the idea that safety might be necessary for knowledge.[21]

Consider, first, the relationship between gullibility and reliability. It is not hard to imagine cases in which deferring to people without first vetting them for trustworthiness will lead one astray epistemically, on account of insincerity or incompetence on the part of one's sources. However, remember that Larry's fellow inquirers are reliable testifiers—i.e., they tend to speak the truth—on the matters on which he is consulting them. This means that, even if Larry were disposed to simply believe what they told him, without first vetting them for signs of untrustworthiness, he would not thereby be any less reliable. So, if gullibility is a matter of acquiring beliefs in an unreliable fashion, Larry is *not* gullible for failing to vet his fellow inquirers for untrustworthiness. Moreover, since Larry's fellow inquirers are reliable testifiers not only in the actual world but also in all nearby worlds—we might say that their reliability is *modally robust*—it follows that Larry will form beliefs in a way that is not only reliable but also safe. After all, were Larry's disposition to believe whatever his sources tell him to issue in beliefs in a nearby possible world, he would be unlikely to form false beliefs, given that his sources are reliable in all nearby possible worlds. In other words, as far as gullibility is concerned, there is no difference between NON-MOTIVATED DEFERENCE and the following case:

> (RELIABLE DEFERENCE) When Larry's fellow inquirers tell him that *p*, Larry believes that *p*, without first vetting them for signs of untrustworthiness. Larry's fellow inquirers are reliable testifiers, both in the actual world and in all nearby possible worlds, on the matters that he consults them on.

But if that's so, then Fricker is wrong; it is *not* the case that 'the hearer should always engage in some assessment of the speaker for trustworthiness'[22]—at least not if Fricker means to say that failing to do so rules out one's testimonial beliefs qualifying as knowledge. If what was just argued is correct, performing

[21] This is in line with the fact that few (if any) epistemologists today embrace a sensitivity condition on knowledge, although see Nozick (1981) for a classic defense. See also Sosa (1999) for a critique of the idea that knowledge requires sensitivity, and a defense of a safety condition on knowledge. Another defense of safety can be found in Pritchard (2005). More recently, Sosa (2007) has denied that safety is necessary for knowledge, at least in the sense of *animal* knowledge, i.e., roughly, true belief formed by way of a reliable competence.

[22] Fricker (1994: 145).

such an assessment is not necessary for testimonial knowledge, nor consequently for whatever kind of epistemic virtue is involved in knowing on the basis of deference.

1.3 Deference and Positive Reasons

We might worry that someone who defers to people without having attained any reasons for thinking that they are in fact reliable testifiers—be it by vetting them for untrustworthiness or otherwise—is not so much gullible as *irrational*. This much has been suggested by Jennifer Lackey.[23] Lackey makes her point in terms of an example suggested by Fricker, in which a person receives reliable testimony over the Internet, while lacking any relevant epistemic information about the source of that information.[24] In fact, RELIABLE DEFERENCE can easily be re-imagined along these lines. We can imagine that the only way in which Larry communicates with his fellow inquirers in RELIABLE DEFERENCE is through the Internet, and that he moreover has no information whatsoever about their epistemic credentials on the relevant matters. As it happens, however, they are highly reliable on these matters, in the modally robust manner outlined above. Still, Lackey would say that it would be irrational for Larry to trust his fellow inquirers in this kind of situation. But is that the right thing to say here? To answer this question, we need to consider what it is for someone to be irrational in the relevant sense.

The term 'irrational' is sometimes applied to actions, and specifically to actions that are detrimental to the actor's ends. That, however, is not the notion relevant here, as we—Lackey included—are interested in irrationality in an *epistemic* (or theoretical) rather than in a practical sense. A better candidate is therefore epistemic irrationality as *doxastic inconsistency*. However, since the case imagined does not involve Larry believing any contradiction, that notion of irrationality cannot be the one relevant here either. A third candidate notion identifies epistemic irrationality with what it is reasonable for the agent to believe, given her evidence. The problem with invoking this notion, however, is that it amounts to simply restating the original demand for positive reasons, as follows: As far as Larry's (non-existent) evidence is concerned, he lacks any reason to consider his source reliable. But this observation goes no lengths whatsoever towards answering the question relevant here, namely: Why should we take the absence of such reasons to indicate any irrationality on his part in the first place?

One possible answer is that there is something *epistemically blameworthy* about trusting sources when one lacks any positive reasons for thinking them reliable. In other words, on this answer, we spell out the reasonableness of believing on one's evidence in epistemically deontological terms. The relevant

[23] See Lackey (2008).

[24] See Lackey (2008: 170, fn. 32) and Fricker (2002). Lackey also discusses a case involving someone encountering an alien diary. However, I will address her concerns in terms of the Internet case, since it maps more neatly onto RELIABLE DEFERENCE.

target of blame in Lackey's example is the subject's *acceptance* of the relevant reports,[25] where I take it that the relevant kind of acceptance involves the subject *believing* what is reported. However, we can only be blamed for what is up to us, and belief-formation is not up to us—belief formation is something that *happens* to us rather than something that we *do*—given the truth of doxastic involuntarism, so that cannot be it either.[26]

Another possible answer grants the above point about epistemic blameworthiness, but calls attention to the fact that there is still something *epistemically good* about rationality as a matter of believing on the basis of one's evidence. This answer calls our attention to the possibility of rationality being related to our epistemic goals in either of two ways. On the one hand, rationality might be related to our epistemic goals *instrumentally*. In that case, however, our pursuit of rationality should fall in line with our pursuit of truth, with the consequence that Larry is *not* irrational for trusting his sources, since they are reliable. On the other hand, rationality might be taken to be an epistemic goal in its own right. If so, it might be that Larry is irrational when believing on the basis of the online communications from his fellow inquirers in the sense that, while doing so might promote his reliability, it fails to promote some separate, *sui generis* goal of rationality. As I have argued elsewhere, however, it is not clear that we have reason to assume any epistemic goals beyond the dual goal of believing truly and not believing falsely.[27]

Any lingering feeling that Larry still is irrational needs to be accounted for, of course. Just like trust without vetting might in some—indeed, perhaps in many—cases lead to false belief, so might belief in the absence of any positive reasons for thinking one's sources trustworthy. Consequently, it should come as no surprise that pondering cases wherein agents have neither vetted their sources nor otherwise acquired any positive reasons to take them to be reliable testifiers will raise certain red flags. The problem as far as epistemological theorizing is concerned, however, is that of promoting this *empirical hypothesis* about what might often be the case to a *conceptual necessity*, and in effect maintaining that one *cannot* know things on the basis of someone's testimony without having vetted her for trustworthiness, or in any other way attained positive reasons to believe her to be reliable. If what has been argued above about rationality is on point, such a promotion should be resisted.

1.4 Deference and Credit

What we are trying to determine is whether Larry can be said to have testimonial knowledge in RELIABLE DEFERENCE. What we have seen so far is that he can not be said to *lack* such knowledge on account of not being motivated to believe truly as such (Section 1.1), failing to vet his fellow inquirers for

[25] See Lackey (2008: 170).

[26] See, e.g., Alston (2005) and Nottelmann (2006).

[27] See Ahlstrom-Vij (2013).

trustworthiness (Section 1.2), or not having positive reasons to believe that those deferred to are reliable sources (Section 1.3). Assuming that Larry knows in DEFERENCE, and given that the elements removed from DEFERENCE in the previous sections have turned out not to be necessary conditions for testimonial knowledge, Larry also knows in RELIABLE DEFERENCE. Moreover, if all instances of knowledge are to be explained in terms of epistemic virtue, as per universality, then it follows that motivation, vetting, and positive reasons are *not* necessary conditions on knowing *through epistemic virtue*.

What *is* necessary for having testimonial knowledge on the basis of virtue, then? What has been argued in the previous sections might be taken to suggest that what matters is simply whether the agent's doxastic dispositions are such that she forms beliefs in a reliable fashion. Some virtue epistemologists have resisted this conclusion. What matters, they argue, is not merely whether or not the agent forms beliefs in a reliable fashion, but also whether her so doing is in any relevant sense to her *credit*—and only when it is can the agent be said to know on the basis of virtue. For example, John Greco suggests that the relevant kind of credit is earned when an agent's 'getting it right can be put down to [her] own abilities, rather than to dumb luck, or blind chance, or something else'.[28] In that sense, 'knowledge is a kind of achievement, as opposed to a merely lucky success'.[29]

Does Larry deserve credit for his belief in RELIABLE DEFERENCE? If he does not, and credit is necessary for knowledge, then he doesn't know. However, the idea that credit is necessary for knowledge is independently questionable. As pointed out by Lackey, we can imagine cases wherein someone has knowledge, despite not deserving credit for getting the relevant matter right. Here is one such case:

> Having just arrived at the train station in Chicago, Morris wishes to obtain directions to the Sears Tower. He looks around, approaches the first adult passer-by that he sees, and asks how to get to his desired destination. The passer-by, who happens to be a Chicago resident who knows the city extraordinarily well, provides Morris with impeccable directions to the Sears Tower by telling him that it is located two blocks east of the train station. Morris unhesitatingly forms the corresponding true belief.[30]

According to Lackey, 'what explains why Morris got things right has nearly nothing of epistemic interest to do with him and nearly everything of epistemic interest to do with the passer-by'.[31] For that reason, 'though it is plausible to say that Morris acquired knowledge from the passer-by, there seems to be no

[28] Greco (2003: 116).

[29] Greco (2010: 12).

[30] Lackey (2007: 352).

[31] Lackey (2007: 352).

substantive sense in which Morris deserves credit for holding the true belief that he does'[32] This suggests that credit is not a necessary condition on knowledge.

Greco contests this claim. According to Greco, 'testimonial knowledge requires that the *believer* is a reliable *receiver* of testimony'.[33] If Morris knows—and Greco agrees with Lackey that he does—that means that 'it is also to Morris's credit that he forms a true belief to that effect.'[34] But if the passer-by is doing virtually all of the epistemic work, that seems implausible. Consequently, Greco denies that the passer-by is doing virtually all of the epistemic work, and suggests that Morris's 'success is grounded in his ability to discriminate good from bad testimony and is therefore attributable to him'.[35] But what, Lackey asks, is it to be able to discriminate thus?[36] Consider the two most plausible readings:

First, Greco might have in mind a requirement to the effect that Morris should be sensitive to defeaters—i.e., considerations speaking against belief—and possess some positive reason for believing his interlocutor to be reliable. But in that case, he is in agreement with Lackey. However, as we saw in the previous section, having positive reasons is not a necessary condition on knowledge, and as we shall see in the next section, neither is being sensitive to defeaters. Consequently, if these are the things that credit requires, then credit isn't necessary for knowledge.

Second, Greco might mean something different, and more substantial by credit than a mere sensitivity to defeaters and the possession of positive reasons. His talk about the necessity of being a reliable receiver of testimony suggests a requirement to the effect that the receiver is able to discriminate between trustworthy and untrustworthy interlocutors, where someone is trustworthy to the extent that they are both competent and sincere, and untrustworthy otherwise. But in that case, Lackey points out, Greco would be committing himself to a limited form of skepticism about testimonial knowledge:

> Most of us […] are not very reliable at discriminating reliable testimony from unreliable testimony when people whom we first meet report their names, occupations, family histories, and so on. For in such circumstances, liars and incompetents typically fail to have identifiable marks announcing their deception and incompetence, and those who are honest and competent in such matters rarely can be picked out as such. To put this more concretely, how on earth would you be able to tell that the

[32] Lackey (2007: 352).

[33] Greco (2010: 81).

[34] Greco (2010: 81).

[35] Greco (2010: 81).

[36] See Lackey (2012: 310-312).

> woman next to you on the airplane is lying when she tells you that her name is Amanda, or that she is a nurse, or that she has 3 children, or that she lives in Albuquerque?[37]

Given the frequency with which we find ourselves in situations of the kind highlighted by Lackey, and the undesirability of the relevant skeptical implications, Lackey's conclusion stands: credit is not a necessary condition on knowledge.

That said, there might be a notion of credit that survives Lackey's objections. Notice that Greco juxtaposes credit with *luck*: credit is earned when an agent's 'getting it right can be put down to [her] own abilities, rather than to dumb luck, or blind chance, or something else'.[38] The idea that believing in a manner for which one deserves credit rules out success through luck can also be found in other defenders of virtue accounts of knowledge. For example, Ernest Sosa maintains that 'knowledge is true belief out of intellectual virtue, belief that turns out right by reason of the virtue and not just by coincidence'.[39] Similarly, Wayne Riggs suggests that the kind of credit due in cases of knowledge is a kind of credit that would not be due had the person in question 'only accidentally happened upon a true belief'.[40] Let us refer to this notion of credit as 'anti-luck credit'.

Why care about believing in a manner that rules out lucky success? As in the case of gullibility, it seems that there is a probabilistic and a modal element to the relevant kind of luck.[41] As noted above, according to some epistemologists, in so far as we are concerned with knowledge, we might more specifically be concerned with our beliefs not being true in an unreliable or unsafe manner. If *p* is true and I form a belief that *p* on the basis of an unreliable process, then there is a sense in which I got lucky. And to the extent that we do not want our beliefs to be true in an unsafe manner, we want it to be the case that, if I believe that *p*, that belief could not easily have been false, had the world just been slightly different. If *p* is true and I come to believe that *p* in an unsafe manner, then there, too, is a sense in which I got lucky.

[37] Lackey (2012: 312-313).

[38] Greco (2003: 116).

[39] Sosa (1991*b*: 277).

[40] Riggs (2002: 93).

[41] The modal element of luck corresponds to what Pritchard (2005) refers to as *veritic* epistemic luck. Pritchard suggests that there is an additional kind of luck, namely *reflective* epistemic luck. A person forms a belief in a reflectively lucky fashion if she cannot know by reflection alone that her belief is not veritically lucky. Reflective luck will not be discussed here, the reason being that, as Pritchard (2005: 173-177) makes clear, reflective luck is the kind of luck that is supposed to be ruled out by the type of virtuous conduct that virtue epistemologists like Zagzebski (1996) are concerned with. As such, reflective luck pertains to the kind of virtue set aside in relation to the bifurcation of virtue discussed in Section 1.1 above.

In other words, the kind of luck we are concerned with ruling out when understanding knowledge in terms of true belief for which we deserve the relevant kind of anti-luck credit is the one ruled out by reliable and safe belief-formation. But on that notion of credit, there's no worry about Larry in RELIABLE DEFERENCE. That scenario involves Larry forming beliefs in a reliable and safe manner, owing to the fact that he is deferring to sources whose reliability is modally robust. As a result, in so far as he believes truly, he is *not* thereby lucky.[42] This, moreover, suggests that anti-luck credit is not an *independent*, necessary condition on knowing on account of virtue. If the purpose of credit is to rule out luck, then credit is entailed by reliability and safety. Differently put, every time I form beliefs in a reliable and safe manner, it follows that I am not lucky and thereby can be credited for believing truly in so far as I do. That is why we do not need to invoke anti-luck credit as a necessary condition on testimonial knowledge, *in addition* to that of reliability and safety.[43]

1.5 Deference and Defeaters

Some epistemologists might still resist the conclusion that all that matters for exhibiting the kind of epistemic virtue relevant to testimonial knowledge is whether or not our doxastic dispositions are reliable in a modally robust manner. More specifically, someone might take RELIABLE DEFERENCE not to be spelled out in sufficient detail, in at least the following way: In order to know what his fellow inquirers are telling him, it is *not* sufficient that Larry's sources are reliable sources in a modally robust manner,

[42] We might, of course, still want to say that he is lucky for finding himself among such a reliable group of people, and in so doing we might mean two different things. On the one hand, we might mean that he easily could have found himself among a significantly less reliable group of people, had the world just been slightly different. However, since his fellow inquirers are reliable in a modally robust manner, and Larry's testimonial beliefs thereby are safe, that's not the case in RELIABLE DEFERENCE. On the other hand, we might mean that he is lucky in the sense that he (we can imagine) can't take credit for finding himself among such a reliable group of people. Perhaps he was simply born into the relevant community. However, that cannot be the notion of 'luck' that credit theorists have in mind. Credit theorists want to be able to say that we can be credited with what we reliably believe on the basis of perception, memory, etc. But these are, of course, faculties we are born with, and as such not ones that we can take credit for having.

[43] It might be objected to that anti-luck credit fails to account for the sense in which knowledge is an *achievement* (Greco 2010: 12). There are two problems with this objection. First, as argued by Pritchard (2005: 191-193), we *can* account for the idea that knowledge is an achievement in terms of safety, and as such also in terms of (what I have called) anti-luck credit. Second, the idea that knowledge is an achievement is questionable. The latter idea is typically invoked to explain why knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief (e.g., in Greco 2010). However, this assumes that we have reason to believe that knowledge *is* more valuable than mere true belief, which is something that I have argued elsewhere that we lack reason to believe (see Ahlstrom-Vij 2013).

and any disposition on his part to rely on their word thereby is reliable in the actual as well as in all nearby possible worlds; in addition, Larry needs to be properly sensitive to (normative) *defeaters*, i.e., considerations that speak against forming belief, were such considerations to arise.

To evaluate this claim, we may consider two cases discussed by Lackey. To be *properly* sensitive to defeaters, one needs to be endowed with a *capacity* for picking up on defeaters in the first place, whether or not one exercises that capacity. Lackey imagines a compulsively trusting person, Bill, who is unable to distrust the object of his romantic affection, Jill, to such an extent that he is 'simply *incapable* of being sensitive to the presence of defeaters regarding her reports'.[44] As a result, Lackey suggests, the beliefs Bill forms on the basis of Jill's testimony are '*evidentially insensitive* in a way that is clearly incompatible with justification, warrant, and knowledge'.[45] Lackey also considers a more general case, involving Stuart, who is incapable of being sensitive to the presence of defeaters with respect to *anyone's* reports.[46] Lackey rightly stresses that this is not simply a matter of gullibility. A gullible person has the capacity to pick up on defeaters, but fails to exercise it. Stuart, however, 'is psychologically incapable of appreciating counterevidence and thus he is epistemically defective in a much deeper way than the merely gullible'.[47]

If Lackey is right, then Larry cannot possibly have testimonial knowledge in the following reimagining of RELIABLE DEFERENCE:

> (BLIND DEFERENCE) When Larry's fellow inquirers tell him that *p*, Larry believes that *p*. In fact, Larry believes absolutely everything that he hears. He is a veritable doxastic sponge, soaking up everything he is told without any hesitation. Larry's fellow inquirers are reliable testifiers, both in the actual world an in all nearby worlds, on the matters that he consults them on.

If Stuart is epistemically defective in Lackey's case, then the same goes for Larry in BLIND DEFERENCE—and neither of them can have testimonial knowledge on account of believing their sources, even if those sources are reliable in a modally robust manner. And like in the case of Stuart, the reason that Larry cannot have such knowledge is that he lacks a capacity for picking up on defeaters. Which raises a question: Why care about that capacity? Arguably, because we care about picking up on any defeaters that there are in any given case. But what if we were to postulate that there are no normative defeaters in BLIND DEFERENCE, and consequently no normative defeaters for Larry to pick up on? In that case, it would seem that Larry would be picking up on any normative defeaters that there are, namely *none*. Ac-

[44] Lackey (2008: 67).

[45] Lackey (2008: 67).

[46] See Lackey (2008: 160).

[47] Lackey (2008: 161, fn. 20).

cording to Lackey, however, this will not do. There might be a *trivial* sense in which Larry thereby would satisfy any requirement to pick up on defeaters. That is, he will have failed to pick up on defeaters, not because there are none—which would amount to satisfying the requirement in a *substantive* sense—but simply because he lacks a capacity to pick up on defeaters.

Which raises another question: Why care about substantively rather than trivially satisfying any requirement on picking up on defeaters? According to Lackey, because 'trivial satisfaction of [the condition on picking up on defeaters] does not indicate any sort of *sensitivity* on the part of the subject to evidence either for or against her own beliefs' and that, 'without a proper sensitivity to one's epistemic surroundings, it is merely a *lucky coincidence* that one ends up satisfying [that condition]'.[48] In other words, in so far as we require substantive satisfaction of a condition on picking up on defeaters, and consequently also a capacity for so doing (in order to rule out trivial satisfaction), we do so because of a concern with the kind of luck ruled out when sensitive to our surrounding. But this brings us right back to the points already made about luck in Section 1.4 in relation to anti-luck credit. Specifically, knowledge might require the absence of the kind of luck ruled out by reliability and safety. But that kind of luck is ruled out in BLIND DEFERENCE by the fact that Larry's fellow inquirers are reliable in a modally robust manner. Consequently, if the purpose of being sensitive to defeaters is to rule out luck, then Larry's inability to pick up on defeaters in BLIND DEFERENCE does not rule out him having testimonial knowledge, contrary to what Lackey suggests.

PART 2. FROM BLIND DEFERENCE TO SOCIAL VIRTUE

Let us recapitulate. The strategy of part 1 has been to progressively strip DEFERENCE of putatively necessary conditions on testimonial knowledge, all the way down to BLIND DEFERENCE. If what has been argued so far is correct, anyone who accepts that Larry has testimonial knowledge in DEFERENCE should accept that he also has such knowledge in BLIND DEFERENCE. This is because, as it turns out, none of the conditions removed from DEFERENCE to get to BLIND DEFERENCE correspond to conditions necessary for testimonial knowledge. Moreover, all virtue epistemologists who accept that Larry has testimonial knowledge in DEFERENCE, and who also accept universality, thereby have to accept that BLIND DEFERENCE involves the possession of an epistemic virtue. The burden of the remainder of the paper is to argue that, in order to account for the virtue involved in BLIND DEFERENCE, we need to abandon a commitment regarding the nature of epistemic virtue found among virtue epistemologists across the theoretical spectrum, and make room for what will be referred to as *social virtue*.

[48] Lackey (2008: 199; emphasis added).

2.1 Personalism

As we have seen in previous sections, different virtue theorists have different suggestions as to what a person needs to do or be like in order to possess epistemic virtue. At the same time, there is also a substantial commonality. The commonality, it will be suggested, is captured by the following thesis:

> **Personalism**: Epistemic virtues are *personal virtues*, in the sense of being possessed primarily on account of features internal to the psychology of the person.

I will be providing some specific evidence regarding individual virtue epistemologists' commitment to personalism in a moment. But before so doing, a few notes of clarification are in order.

First, to ask whether a virtue is possessed primarily on account of features internal to the psychology of the person is to ask whether an *explanation* of why the person in question is virtuous will have to make significant reference to *psychological features* of the person in question. For example, as we shall see, when explaining why some particular person is virtuous, virtue epistemologists might make reference to facts about her motivations, desires, abilities, and the like. These all correspond to psychological states or dispositions of the person.

Second, to say that any explanation of why some particular person is virtuous needs to make *significant* reference to features internal to the psychology of the person, is not to say that no reference can be made to non-psychological features. For example, as we have seen, some virtue epistemologists explain virtue in terms of *reliable* intellectual abilities or dispositions. The reliability of dispositions will, in turn, depend on features external to the person's psychology, such as features of her physical environment (e.g., normal lighting and noise levels) or her social environment (e.g., reliable and sincere informants). As we shall see, whether the virtue epistemologists in question are still committed to personalism will depend on their views on *the extent to which* someone's reliability can be explained with reference to such external factors, as opposed to factors internal to the psychology of the person. For example, can someone qualify as virtuous, even if her reliability can be explained more or less *completely* with reference to her social environment? Someone committed to personalism is going to want to say 'no'.

Third, a commitment to personalism does not entail a commitment to *internalism* either about justification or knowledge. Features may be internal to the psychology of the person, without that person having any kind of privileged access—i.e., access by way of introspection, *a priori* reasoning, or the like—to those features.[49] For example, Greco maintains that, for a person to know something, the relevant belief needs to be (*i*) a product of a belief-forming disposition that tends to generate true belief, as well as (*ii*) true *because* it's a result of that disposition.[50] As Sosa puts the point, knowledge requires not just *adroitness* (a manifestation of skill) but also *aptitude* (success on account of a manifestation of skill).[51] Howev-However, the person will typically not have privileged access to such etiological facts about her beliefs, nor does she need to in order to know. This is not to say that personalism is *incompatible* with internalism—the claim is simply that personalism doesn't *entail* internalism.

Having clarified personalism, we may now return to the claim made a moment ago, to the effect that it's a thesis to which virtue epistemologists across the theoretical spectrum are committed. What is the evidence for that claim? Since no one has to my knowledge *explicitly* committed him- or herself to personalism, the evidence provided will be indirect. More specifically, my arguments in what follows will take either of two forms. In some cases (Section 2.2), I will argue that we can infer an implicit commitment to personalism from explicit commitments about the nature of virtue. In the remaining cases (Sections 2.3-4), I will argue that we can infer such a commitment from certain responses to hypothetical cases—responses that could *not* be given in the absence of a commitment to personalism. Since my arguments cannot be exhaustive, I will focus on the views of five representative virtue epistemologists—Baehr, Zagzebski, Greco, Riggs and Sosa—under the assumption that the points made by them apply *mutatis mutandis* to other virtue epistemologists.

2.2 Zagzebski and Baehr on Personalism

According to Baehr, inquiry often has a 'personal source' in that it 'makes substantial personal demands on inquirers'[52] in the specific sense of demanding that we exercise a range of intellectual virtues. Such virtues are 'personal intellectual excellences' that 'plausibly bear on their possessor's "personal worth," that is, to their possessor's goodness or badness qua person'.[53] Moreover, 'where the concern is personal worth, what seems relevant are certain "internal" or psychological factors, for example, what the person aims at, desires, or strives to achieve'.[54] More specifically, intellectual virtue is 'rooted in' or 'flows

[49] This corresponds to what Alston (1985) refers to as *access internalism*, and Greco (2010) refers to as *privileged access internalism*.

[50] See Greco (2010).

[51] See, e.g., Sosa (2007).

[52] Baehr (2011: 1).

[53] Baehr (2011: 88 and 23, respectively).

[54] Baehr (2011: 97-8).

from'[55] an admirable epistemic motivation on the part of the person, on account of which 'a fully and broadly virtuous person can […] be counted on to care deeply about ends like truth, knowledge, evidence, rationally, and understanding'.[56] Indeed, Baehr maintains that 'the primary basis of intellectual worth, and thus of intellectual virtue, is a positive psychological orientation or "love" of epistemic goods like knowledge and understanding'.[57]

All of this pertains to personalism as follows: on Baehr's picture, any explanation of why a particular person is virtuous is going to have to make reference to that person's motivation, where that motivation moreover explains that person's possessing the particular kind of personal worth had on account of being virtuous. A person's motivation is a psychological feature. Moreover, on Baehr's account, failing to mention this feature—'the primary basis' of intellectual virtue, as he says—would mean failing to make clear *why* the relevant person is virtuous. Hence, it seems reasonable to say that, on Baehr's picture, an explanation of why someone is virtuous would have to make *significant* reference to features internal to the psychology of the person in question. We can thereby infer an implicit commitment to personalism from Baehr's explicit commitments.

Let us turn to Zagzebski. According to Zagzebski, '[a] virtue […] can be defined as a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end, and reliable success in bringing about that end'.[58] Focusing for the moment on the motivational component, Zagzebski takes a motivation to be 'a disposition to have a certain motive',[59] and a motive to be 'an emotion or feeling that initiates and directs action towards and end'.[60] The motivation, moreover, is 'an internal property of human agents',[61] which means that the same would have to go for the dispositions, emotions, and feelings that make up motivations. Motivations, dispositions, emotions, and feelings are all features internal to the psychology of the agent. Consequently, since any explanation of why a person is virtuous will have to make *significant* reference to such psychological features, on Zagzebski's account, she is committed to personalism.

It might be argued that any attempt to demonstrate a commitment on the part of Zagzebski to personalism with reference to the motivational component of her account, will be complicated by the fact that she, unlike Baehr, also requires that virtuous agents be reliable in bringing about the ends they're moti-

55 Baehr (2011: 103).

56 Baehr (2011: 2).

57 Baehr (2011: 14).

58 Zagzebski (1996: 137).

59 Zagzebski (1996: 136).

60 Zagzebski (1996: 131).

61 Zagzebski (1996: 209).

vated to pursue. As noted above (Section 2.1), the reliability of a disposition will not be a function solely of its psychological makeup. Consequently, it might be that whether Zagzebski is committed to personalism depends on whether the reliability component of her account also implies such a commitment. The following two sections will attempt to make plausible the claim that it does, by arguing that three virtue epistemologists—namely Greco, Riggs, and Sosa—who reject Zagzebski and Baehr's motivational component while defending a reliability component, are still committed to personalism. In that respect, the following sections will do double duty: they will demonstrate *both* that Greco, Riggs, and Sosa are committed to personalism, *and* that Zagzebski is, too, on account of how she would be committed to personal-personalism, *even if* she were to drop her motivational component.

In fact, the following two sections can be taken to do triple duty, by also addressing the following concern: Remember that Baehr (and others), while rejecting a reliability condition on character virtue,[62] accepts that there is a legitimate, reliabilist notion of epistemic virtue that does not necessarily involve a motivational component.[63] Consequently, taking Baehr's account of *character* virtue to imply a commitment to personalism is not to say that Baehr accepts personalism for *all* virtues. In light of this concern, together with the double duty mentioned in the previous paragraph, let us consider the three reliabilist virtue epistemologists mentioned a moment ago, to see if we can reveal a commitment to personalism in relation to their theories as well.

2.3 Greco and Riggs on Personalism

According to Greco, virtue epistemological theories are *person-based* theories in that they 'define the normative properties of beliefs in terms of the normative properties of persons'.[64] The particular features of persons that Greco takes to be relevant to explaining knowledge are intellectual abilities. Intellectual abilities are psychological dispositions on the part of the person, such as the psychological dispositions involved in perceiving, remembering, or reflecting on things. When a person forms a true belief through an intellectual ability, she deserves credit on account of how her success 'can be put down to [her] own abilities, rather than to dumb luck, or blind chance, or something else'.[65] Differently put, credit is earned when 'an intellectual ability *explains why S* has a true belief'.[66] The relevant kind of explanation is a

[62] See Baehr (2011: 123).

[63] See Baehr (2011: 124 and 135).

[64] Greco (2010: 43).

[65] Greco (2003: 116).

[66] Greco (2010: 74).

causal one. That is, the intellectual ability explains why the person has a true belief, because that ability is 'an *important* or *salient* part of the causal story'[67] behind the relevant belief.

When do intellectual abilities explain why the person formed a true belief in this manner? When the causally operative ability behind the relevant belief is *reliable* and as such tends to generate true belief. Virtues consist in such reliable abilities. In that respect, Greco's account 'makes agent reliability an important condition on epistemic normativity'.[68] In other words, the relevant kind of explanation goes something like this: In cases of knowledge, the belief involved is or has been causally formed through a reliable intellectual ability—i.e., a *virtue*—and the reliability of that ability is what explains why a true belief was formed rather than a false one, and the agent possessing that ability thereby also deserves credit for getting it right. In other words, what accounts for knowledge is ultimately the possession of a virtue, which in turn consists in (*a*) the having of an ability, understood as a psychological disposition, and (*b*) that ability being reliable, and as such being able to (causally) explain success in the form of true belief.

As we have seen, Riggs, too, defends a credit theory of knowledge. According to Riggs, credit is a matter of attributability, as contrasted with luck: 'To say that something is due to luck *just is* to say that it is not attributable to whomever is assumed to be the beneficiary (or victim) of said luck. "Credit," then, is simply shorthand for saying that some event, state of affairs, or consequence thereof is attributable to an agent, as an agent'.[69] What exactly is required for the relevant kind of attributability? Riggs is sceptical about Greco's requirement of causal saliency on the grounds that 'it seems to explain the obscure by the obscure'.[70] Still, I will discuss Riggs's theory in terms of that requirement. For one thing, Riggs claims both 'that the causal prominence of one's cognitive abilities is an important measure of the degree to which your having arrived at a true belief is attributable to you as a cognitive agent' and that 'the salience requirement does provide a handy way to determine in particular cases whether that causal prominence is sufficient for attribution or not'.[71] For another, Riggs doesn't spell out an alternative way to determine attributability, which leaves us with what he himself acknowledges to be the important measure provided by causal prominence and saliency. In light of this, I will assume that Riggs, too, takes it that virtue possession consists in (*a*) the having of an ability, understood as a psychological disposition, and (*b*) that ability being reliable, and as such being able to (causally) explain success in the form of true belief.

If personalism is true, both (*a*) and (*b*) have to be accounted for with significant reference to features internal to the psychology of the person. This requirement is straightforwardly satisfied in the case of (*a*),

[67] Greco (2010: 74).

[68] Greco (2010: 7).

[69] Riggs (2009: 203).

[70] Riggs (2009: 202).

[71] Riggs (2009: 202).

since intellectual abilities are psychological dispositions. But what about (*b*)? Whether or not our abilities are reliable is not going to be a function simply of their psychological structure, but also (among other things) of the extent to which that structure 'fits' with our social environment. For example, a disposition to trust people is not reliable in a situation where a great majority of people are insincere, incompetent, or both. Still, if personalism is true, any account of why some particular ability or disposition is reliable has to make *significant*, albeit not necessarily *exclusive*, reference to features internal to the psychology of the person, such as the nature of that disposition and sensitivities manifested by the person on account of possessing the relevant disposition.

What does it mean to make *significant* reference to features internal to the psychology of the person when explaining why some particular disposition or ability is reliable? In answering this question, we may return to Lackey's case involving Morris, as discussed in Section 1.4. As we saw, Lackey takes it that Morris knows, but doesn't deserve credit for knowing, and that credit therefore cannot be a necessary condition on knowledge. As she put it, 'what explains why Morris got things right has nearly nothing of epistemic interest to do with him and nearly everything of epistemic interest to do with the passer-by'.[72] It should be noted that this is not incompatible with Morris possessing and maybe even manifesting some intellectual ability in the relevant situation, even if that ability only is whatever minimal ability is involved in taking on board testimonial input. In so far as we want to say that Morris *knows* where the Sears Tower is located, however, and moreover want to account for that knowledge in terms of epistemic virtues (which we would have to do, if committed to universalism), Lackey's take on his situation is incompatible with personalism. While Morris's (minimal) ability can be accounted for with exclusive reference to psychological factors, the fact that that ability enables him to form a true belief in the relevant scenario cannot. Any account of the latter would have to make significant reference, not to some psychological feature of Morris, but to his surrounding, and to features of the passer-by in particular.

Or consider the matter from the opposite side: if we *reject* personalism, then there would be nothing to rule out the following possibility: Morris possesses the relevant minimal ability, Chicago happens to contain a great many sincere and geographically competent people, and his ability is thereby not only *his* ability, but also a *reliable* ability which, on that account, would qualify as a virtue. If Morris moreover forms his geographical beliefs by way of that ability, then Greco and Riggs would have to say that he deserves credit for getting it right, and can as such be said to know. Consequently, we should expect any virtue epistemologist *accepting* personalism to either deny that Morris knows, or claim that, contrary to what Lackey is suggesting, any account of why Morris formed a true belief makes significant mention of an intellectual ability on his part, the reliability of which depends to a non-trivial extent on psychological

[72] Lackey (2007: 352).

facts about Morris, and not more or less exclusively on his social environment. And, as it happens, these two responses correspond exactly to the responses that Riggs and Greco give, respectively.

We saw Greco's response already in Section 1.4: Morris's 'success is grounded in his ability to discriminate good from bad testimony and is therefore attributable to him'.[73] We noted that the two most plausible ways to cash out the relevant ability failed to support the idea that credit is necessary for knowledge. At this point, however, we are interested, not in the plausibility of a credit condition on knowledge, but in the fact that Greco's response provides evidence of him being committed to personalism. This is so on account of how Greco's response suggests that he holds that any account of why Morris knows (if he does), and as such manifests virtue, would need to make significant reference to psychological facts about Morris, and in particular to facts about how he will be prone to look out for as well as pick up on certain testimonial cues relating to sincerity and competence, and moreover have his belief-formation be influenced by what those cues are telling him about the caliber of his testimonial sources.

Riggs, unlike Greco, is sceptical about the claim that Morris knows.[74] That said, Riggs's reasons for scepticism are very similar to Greco's reasons for spelling out the case as one involving a discriminatory capacity on the part of Morris. Riggs writes:

> You acquire testimonial knowledge when you acquire a true belief that is attributable to you. The truth of your testimonial belief will not be attributable to you unless you exercised the relevant ability when acquiring it, and this will not be the case unless you did all the things that constitute exercising that ability (watch for signs of insincerity, check information against background beliefs, etc.).[75]

Indeed, Riggs suggests that there are *two* discriminatory capabilities relevant to the case of Morris: 'Whether or not Morris's coming to have a true belief via testimony is attributable to him depends not merely upon how good he is at choosing people to approach, but also on how discriminating he is about what he believes from such people'.[76] Consequently, any account of why Morris knows (assuming that he does), and as such manifests virtue, would need to make significant reference to facts about Morris' psychology, and in particular to his tendency to look for signs for insincerity, to be sensitive to those signs, and to bring background information, encoded in memory, to bear on questions both regarding whom to talk to and whom to trust.

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[73] Greco (2010: 81).

[74] Riggs (2009: 209).

[75] Riggs (2009: 212).

[76] Riggs (2009: 214).

As noted a moment ago, these are exactly the kind of responses we should expect from virtue epistemologists accepting personalism.[77] By contrast, were Greco and Riggs *not* committed to personalism, it's not clear that they would've been able to rule out the kind of scenario they seem so keen on ruling out, namely one in which Morris deserves credit, despite it being that case that 'what explains why Morris got things right has nearly nothing of epistemic interest to do with him and nearly everything of epistemic interest to do with the passerby', as Lackey puts it.[78] As noted above, in the *absence* of a commitment to personalism, we can ascribe to Morris a minimal ability to take on board testimonial information, and then maintain that Morris knows on account of an ability that's reliable owing, not to any substantive fact about the psychology of Morris, but more or less exclusively to the sincerity and competence of the people he happens to encounter. In other words, given that Greco and Riggs not only give exactly the kind of responses to the Morris case that we should expect from someone accepting personalism, but also would be *unable* to give those responses if they rejected personalism, we have good reason to believe that they're committed to personalism.

2.4 Sosa on Personalism

Like Greco and Riggs, Sosa identifies epistemic virtues with competencies or abilities, in turn constituting psychological dispositions.[79] When manifested in the formation of true beliefs, these abilities or dispositions causally[80] explain why someone knows, and thereby deserves credit for believing truly. More specifically, Sosa takes knowledge[81] to require *aptness*, which in turn 'requires the manifestation of a

[77] It's not being suggested that anyone requiring that the receiver or testimony needs to contribute something to the exchange, be it by way of a discriminatory capacity or otherwise, is thereby committed to personalism. As we have seen, Lackey (2008) requires something similar, but is not thereby committed to personalism, since not a virtue epistemologist and as such not in the business of accounting for knowledge in terms of virtues. The claim is simply that such a commitment makes the most sense of Greco and Riggs's dialectical moves, given that they are virtue epistemologists.

[78] Lackey (2007: 352).

[79] See Sosa (2011: 80).

[80] See Sosa (2011: 86).

[81] Sosa distinguishes between animal knowledge, reflective knowledge, and the kind of knowledge involved in 'knowing full well'. Here, I am focusing on animal knowledge, i.e., apt belief, since what can be said about such knowledge with respect to personalism extends to the other two kinds. In the case of reflective knowledge, which is 'apt belief that the subject aptly believes to be apt' (2007: 24), what holds for aptness in terms of features attributable to the person will hold for second-order aptness, too. Knowing full well involves animal and reflective knowledge, as well as a meta-competence for risk assessment that 'governs whether or not one should form a belief at all on the question at issue, or should rather withhold belief altogether' (2011: 12). Since Sosa (2011: 9) claims

competence, [where] a competence is a disposition, one with a basis resident in the competent agent, one that would in appropriately normal conditions ensure (or make highly likely) the success of the any relevant performance issued by it'.[82] However, Sosa also maintains that manifesting such a competence is insufficient for knowledge: 'In believing one might or might not be endeavoring to attain truth. Believings whereby one is not so endeavoring cannot constitute knowledge'.[83] Sosa makes clear that such endeavoring doesn't have to involve consciously aiming at something,[84] but simply involves a desire for truth.[85] In contrast with Baehr and Zagzebski, however, Sosa doesn't seem to take the relevant kind of desire to be a condition on epistemic *virtue*—i.e., on possessing the relevant kind of intellectual ability—which is why the relevant type of desire will be ignored in what follows.[86]

Let us focus, instead, on the fact that Sosa takes the reliability of a competence under appropriately normal conditions to be a necessary and sufficient condition on it amounting to a virtue. As we saw in the previous section, defining virtues in terms of reliability does not necessarily amount to rejecting personalism—at least not on account of acknowledging that explaining why some particular ability is reliable might in some cases need to make reference to the person's *social* environment, for example in testimonial contexts. Accepting personalism simply rules out explanations of virtue that more or less *exclusively* account for reliability in terms of social factors. Greco and Riggs seem to hold that such explanations are ruled out. Moreover, it is not clear that they would be able to do that if they rejected personalism. This was taken as evidence of a commitment to personalism.

Sosa's formulation of the relevant reliability condition calls attention to another type of factor, the acknowledgement of which stands in potential conflict with personalism: external, physical conditions. Just like explanations of the reliability of intellectual abilities sometimes cannot be made without reference to one's social environment, such explanations can rarely be made without reference to external, physical conditions, including to conditions being suitably normal for the ability's exercise. Does this observation make for a conflict with personalism? In analogy with what was said about social environments in the previous section, it does if it is ever the case that the reliability of some ability, and thereby also its

that beliefs that amount to knowing full well are *more* creditable than those we simply believe aptly, what holds for apt belief with respect to any personalist requirement about accounting for virtue with reference to features internal to the psychology of the person holds, if anything, to an even greater extent for knowing full well.

[82] Sosa (2007: 29).

[83] Sosa (2011: 15).

[84] Sosa (2011: 16).

[85] Sosa (2011: 25).

[86] Of course, if Sosa were to take such a desire to be a condition on virtue, this would count for, not against, him being committed to personalism, given that desires are psychological features of persons.

status as a virtue, can be explained more or less *exclusively* with reference to external conditions, and virtually without any mention of features internal to the psychology of the person possessing the relevant ability. Consequently, someone committed to personalism would want to deny that possibility.

Where does Sosa stand on the matter? At one point, when discussing the matter of credit, Sosa makes an analogy that speaks to the kind of possibility just mentioned:

> [C]redit can depend on the cooperation of appropriate external conditions, since the manifestation of the competence can depend on contingent externalities. Thus, if an archer shoots a metal-tipped arrow, and the target is a super-powerful magnet, he would earn minimal credit at most for his successful shot. Suppose any shot, in any direction, anywhere near that target would end up in the bull's eye.[87]

Large parts of Sosa's recent work on epistemic virtue relies on an analogy between the skill involved in activities like archery and that involved in virtuous belief-formation. As Greco and Turri put it, for Sosa, '[b]elief-formation is a psychological performance with an aim'.[88] While questions can be raised about this analogy, since archery involves a degree (and maybe even kind) of voluntary control that seems absent in the case of belief-formation, given doxastic involuntarism, I will not press this point here. Instead, I will grant Sosa the analogy, and simply assume that what he says about archery also goes for belief-formation. (This is, of course, exactly the assumption he wants us to make when repeatedly relying on the relevant analogy.)

Before looking more closely at what Sosa is saying in the passage quoted above, consider what someone accepting the relevant analogy but *rejecting* personalism might have said about the relevant scenario. She might have said that the archer possesses some minimal ability enabling her to shoot the bow but nothing more. Then, she might have suggested that such an ability amounts to a virtue under the relevant circumstances, on account of being an ability *possessed* by the person that moreover enables her to *reliably* hit the bull's eye. Of course, any explanation of *why* that ability is reliable, and as such amounts to a virtue, will make very little reference to features internal to the person—in the archery case, features pertaining to her physiology perhaps, and in the analogous, epistemic case, to her psychology. Instead, its reliability will be accounted for more or less completely in terms of the metal-tipped arrow and the powerful magnet, both of which are features external to the person. Still, the mere fact that the explanation for the ability's *reliability* makes significant reference to such external factors does not take away from the fact that, if credit is given to those who succeed through the exercise of reliable abilities, as per what Sosa

[87] Sosa (2011: 87).

[88] Greco and Turri (2011: Section 6).

suggests, and the person in question *exercises* that ability (adroitness) and hits the bull's eye *on account of that exercise* (aptness), then she deserves credit.

That's *not* what Sosa says in the passage quoted above, of course, and the reader might here be inclined to side with Sosa over our imagined critic of personalism. After all, how on earth can the person in the magnet scenario deserve any *credit* for hitting the bull's eye? That's a valid question—but notice that the question gets exactly to the matter of whether Sosa is committed to personalism or not. Knowledge, according to Sosa, is a matter of aptness, i.e., success through reliable ability. What the previous paragraph shows is that, if we reject personalism, and thereby accept that something can constitute a virtue more or less completely on account of external conditions, then there's nothing that rules out the conclusion that the person in the relevant scenario succeeds through reliable ability, and as such manifests virtue. There is a way to rule out that conclusion, of course. The way to rule it out is to commit to what I would thereby like to suggest that Sosa is implicitly committing himself to, namely personalism. After all, if personalism is true, abilities the reliability of which can *only* be accounted for by making more or less *exclusive* reference to features external to the person cannot constitute virtues. In the absence of virtue, there is no knowledge, nor consequently any, or at most very minimal, credit—which of course is exactly what Sosa suggests.

It might be objected that Sosa's concern in the case imagined is not so much that success in the case imagined would have to be explained with reference to features external to the agent, as that the conditions aren't appropriately normal: 'The success of an archer's shot is creditable, attributable to the exercise of a competence, only if the external conditions are appropriate for the manifestation of the competence, and this would include appropriate wind conditions, absence of powerful magnets, et cetera.'[89] Talking about conditions not being appropriate makes sense in the case of *unfavourable* conditions, as when strong winds and low visibility makes it virtually impossible for an archer to hit the bull's-eye. But it's harder to make sense of talk of conditions not being appropriate in the case of highly *favourable* conditions. After all, in the case where the agent possesses a minimal skill to shoot the bow and nothing more, and reliably hits the bull's-eye on account of the metal-tipped arrows and the powerful magnet, the external conditions *are* appropriate, in that the archer is highly likely to hit the bull's-eye under the relevant conditions. Sosa's desire to seem to want to say that those conditions somehow are *too* appropriate—too favourable, as it were—only makes sense if external conditions can't play *too* large a role in generating success, which as we have seen is exactly what they cannot do if personalism is true, and epistemic virtues must generate success to a significant extent on account of features internal to the psychology of the person involved.

[89] Sosa (2011: 87).

In other words, much like Greco and Riggs do in relation to the social environment in testimonial knowledge, Sosa acknowledges the role of features external to the psychology of the agent in his account of virtue. At the same time, his analogy between believers and the archer in the magnet scenario illustrates that he also seems to think that there's a limit to how *significant* of a role such external factors can play in the explanation of success without taking away from the credit due to the relevant believer. However, if what has been argued in this section is point, it's not clear that he can impose such a limit, unless he accepts personalism. In particular, were he to reject personalism, it's not clear why the archer in the magnet scenario is to be denied any degree of credit, for reasons just discussed. In light of that fact, we can infer a commitment to personalism from what Sosa has to say about the role of external physical conditions in the ascription of credit.

2.5 From Personal to Social Virtue

What has been argued so far provides us with reason to believe that virtue epistemologists across the theoretical spectrum—here represented by Baehr, Zagzebski, Greco, Riggs, and Sosa—are committed to the idea that epistemic virtues are *personal virtues*, in the sense of being possessed primarily on account of features internal to the psychology of the person. But here is the problem that arises if we factor in what we found in part 1: if we hold on to personalism, we cannot accommodate Larry.

To see the tensions between personalism and the claim that Larry possesses knowledge, remember what was argued in part 1: while it should be uncontroversial that Larry knows in DEFERENCE, anyone who accepts that Larry knows in DEFERENCE also has to accept that he knows in BLIND DEFERENCE. Consequently, Larry knows in BLIND DEFERENCE. Given universality, that means that he must possess some epistemic virtue in that scenario, since knowledge is to be accounted for in terms of epistemic virtues. However, if personalism is true, then virtues are possessed to a significant extent on account of features internal to the psychology of the person. To the extent that Larry possesses virtue—i.e., possesses a disposition to attain epistemic success, such as true belief—he does so more or less exclusively on account of being embedded in an epistemic environment wherein he happens to be surrounded by sources that are reliable in a modally robust manner. In other words, if personalism is true, Larry cannot possess epistemic virtue, and consequently cannot know.

This means that, if we want to hold on to personalism in the face of BLIND DEFERENCE, then we either have to deny that Larry knows in DEFERENCE, or else reject universality. Denying that Larry knows in DEFERNCE seems implausible. Moreover, as we have also seen, giving up on universality has not seemed a very attractive option to virtue epistemologists in other contexts, and there is no reason to think that it would be an attractive option in this case either. Consequently, it should be considered good news that there is a way to hold on to universality, while accommodating BLIND DEFERENCE. The way to do this is by rejecting personalism. By rejecting personalism, the virtue epistemologist can acknowledge the existence, not only of virtues possessed primarily on account of features internal to the psychology of the person, but also of *social* virtues. Social virtues are virtues possessed in whole or in large part, not on account of features internal to the psychology of the person, but on account of features of her social environment. As for Larry in BLIND DEFERENCE, the relevant feature would be that he is surrounded by reliable testifiers, in the actual world as well as in all nearby worlds. That is the feature that turns his doxastic disposition for blind trust into a virtue, and a *social* virtue in particular.

To be clear, to say that social virtues are had primarily *on account of* features of one's social environment is neither to suggest that social virtues are virtues of social *entities*, nor to deny that virtues are *psychological entities*. Social virtues are and remain doxastic dispositions had by *individuals*, but the relevant dispositions qualify as virtues wholly or in large part because of the social environment in which the agent finds herself. In other words, in limiting cases of social virtue, any answer to the question 'Why is this agent virtuous?' will not to any real degree be answerable by citing psychological features of the agent, since any explanation of why the relevant agent is reliable, and hence a candidate for virtue, needs to make substantive reference to features of her social environment. More specifically, such a reference needs to be made, unless we want to (*a*) deny that Larry knows in DEFERENCE, since accepting that Larry knows in DEFERENCE commits us to saying that he knows in BLIND DEFERENCE, and thereby also to the idea that he must possess a virtue in BLIND DEFERENCE; or (*b*) block that inference by denying universality. As noted a moment ago, neither option seems particularly attractive, which is exactly what motivates the introduction of social virtues.

Invoking the unattractiveness of (*a*) and (*b*) as a motivation for postulating social virtues assumes that there is no way to account for the virtue had by Larry in BLIND DEFERENCE *without* postulating social virtues. I have no argument to the effect that there *cannot* be another way. Instead, I will support the assumption that there is no other way with reference to the failure of what I take to be the two most promising alternative strategies.

2.6 Sosa's Socially Seated Competencies

The first strategy can be formulated in terms of Sosa's 'socially seated competencies'. Sosa postulates such competencies precisely to account for testimonial knowledge possessed in the context of testimonial beliefs 'whose correctness […] owes little to [the hearer's] own individual accomplishment, if all he does is to receive the information'.[90] To explain such situations, Sosa suggests that we need to say that the

[90] Sosa (2007: 93).

competence involved is 'socially seated, instead, in some broader social unit'.[91] Such a unit doesn't require social organization. All it requires is a certain joint effort. In testimonial contexts in particular, the unit involves the 'believer's own competence to trust testimony, which helps account, at least in some small part, for why his belief is correct'.[92]

Do socially seated competencies this still leave room for the hearer getting credit for success and, as such, for knowledge? Sosa seems to think that it does:

> In order to constitute knowledge, a testimony-derived belief must be accurate, and must manifest competence, which should not be thought to require that the most *salient* explanation of its being right must involve the individual competence manifested by the subject in holding that belief. The explanatory salient factors will probably lie elsewhere; what *mainly* accounts for the belief's correctness will likely involve others and their cognitive accomplishments.[93]

Given that knowledge is supposed to imply getting credit for success, and the fact that it's *not* clear that you can (or *should*) plausibly get credit for success that's mainly due to the achievements of others, it's not obvious that Sosa can both accommodate testimonial knowledge by rejecting the saliency requirement and at the same time hold on to his credit theory of knowledge. Indeed, at this point, it's helpful to remember Greco's response to Lackey's scenario (Section 1.4), and the manner in which he requires significant involvement by the hearer in testimonial contexts. Depending on where we put the bar for significant involvement, it's not obvious that hearers always *are* significantly involved (as we saw, that's Lackey's response[94]) but it's clear why Greco would *want* to say that they are, given his credit theory.

However, since we at present are more interested in what Sosa *does* commit to, rather than to what he *should* commit to, let us set this issue aside, and ask: Does what he says about testimonial knowledge amount to a rejection of personalism, contrary to what was suggested in Section 2.4? It's not clear that it does. Granted, one way of reading Sosa here is as denying that epistemic virtues are necessarily possessed *primarily* on account of features internal to the psychology of the person. However, note that the virtue Sosa is concerned with in testimonial contexts is 'socially seated […] in some broader social unit'.[95] On a strong reading, personalism is the view that virtues are had by individuals to a significant extent on account of features internal to the psychology of the person, *and that all virtues are had by individuals*. On

[91] Sosa (2007: 93-4).

[92] Sosa (2007: 94).

[93] Sosa (2011: 128).

[94] See Lackey (2012).

[95] Sosa (2007: 93-4).

that reading, Sosa wouldn't be able to accept both personalism and socially seated competencies as these are, at most, 'partially seated in [the] individual believer'.[96] However, on a weak reading, personalism is simply the view that all epistemic virtues *had by individuals* are had by those individuals primarily on account of features internal to the psychology of the person. On that reading, we wouldn't need to reject personalism in order to take on board socially seated virtues, since such virtues apply primarily, not to the individual, but to a social unit.

If the weak reading of personalism is plausible, it therefore seems we might be able to hold on to personalism, while accommodating a case like Larry's, so long as we take into account Sosa's socially seated competencies. However, appearances are misleading: even if the weak reading of personalism is viable, socially seated competencies do not help account for Larry in BLIND DEFERENCE. To see why, consider the case Sosa invokes for purposes of illustrating socially seated competencies. Having noted that, in testimonial contexts, the individual's competence helps account, at least to some extent, for success, Sosa writes:

> Something similar holds good of socially seated competence generally. A quarterback may throw a touchdown pass, for example, thus exercising a competence. But this individual competence is only one part of a broader competence, seated in the whole offensive team, that more fully explains the successful touchdown pass, the apt performance of that quarterback. The pass receiver's competence may be crucial, for example, along with the individual competences of the offensive linesmen, and so on.[97]

What this illustration makes clear is that Sosa's socially seated competencies really serve to account for *shared* credit. Indeed, Sosa refers to the credit had in the relevant contexts as 'partial' credit.[98] However, it's far less clear that such competencies can be invoked for purposes of explaining knowledge in what by all lights looks like that an *absence* of credit, such as in the case of Larry.[99] Larry is in no way analogous to the quarterback who is exercising a non-trivial degree of skill in throwing the ball to the receiver. Larry is more analogous to someone who is holding on to the ball while sitting in a wheelchair, and is then

[96] Sosa (2007: 97).

[97] Sosa (2007: 94).

[98] Sosa (2007: 97).

[99] Here, I'm ignoring the notion of anti-luck credit considered in Section 1.4, on which Larry can be said to achieve credit, so long as he forms beliefs in a reliable and safe manner, on account of (blindly) deferring to sources that are reliable in a modally robust manner.

pushed over to the end zone.[100] This is not to suggest that Sosa's acknowledgement of socially seated competencies is not a welcome virtue epistemological acknowledgement of the social aspects of knowing. It is, however, to suggest that it's not an acknowledgement that enables us to hold on to personalism while accommodating Larry, which is the possibility we are investigating here.

2.7 Fricker's Plural Virtues

Let us consider a second strategy for holding on to personalism while accommodating Larry. We may get a sense of this strategy by sticking with Sosa's football example, as just reimagined to involve Larry being pushed into the end zone in a wheelchair. We can imagine that this is something that the team in question has committed to doing; they want Larry to be a part of the game, even if involving him and still playing a good game will require great coordinative effort and skill on the part of the other players. And in so far as they pull it off, we might want to ascribe some virtue, not to Larry, but to the team, to acknowledge the success they have thereby achieved through a coordinated effort.

In fact, the team would under these circumstances arguably qualify for what Miranda Fricker has referred to as a *plural* virtue.[101] Plural virtues are virtues possessed, not by individuals, but by *groups* of individuals on account of a joint commitment to attain some goal, where the commitment enables the group to reliably attain the relevant goal. To use Fricker's example, a night-watch team of soldiers might possess the plural virtue of vigilance through a joint commitment to a certain division of labor that has them reliably detect intruders. Crucially, plural virtues may be possessed by groups without being possessed by all or indeed by any individual member of the group—all that is required is a joint commitment and reliable achievement.

Does taking there to be plural virtues imply a rejection of personalism? Again, that depends on how we understand personalism. As noted above, there is a weak reading of personalism on which it is simply the view that all epistemic virtues *had by individuals* are had by those individuals primarily on account of features internal to their psychology. On that reading, we do not need to reject personalism in order to take on board plural virtues, since plural virtues are not had by individuals. On a stronger reading, personalism implies that all virtues are had by individuals. On that reading, we cannot accept both personalism and plural virtue. Consequently, if plural virtues are to provide a way to both accommodate Larry and hold on to personalism, then we need to assume the weaker reading of personalism.

[100] Lackey (2012: 319) makes a similar point about the insufficiency of Sosa's socially seated competencies in accounting for the full range of testimonial knowledge in relation to Morris. Since Morris is more epistemically involved than Larry, then, if said competencies cannot account for Morris, they cannot account for Larry either. Lackey would deny that Larry knows, but we dealt with (and ultimately rejected) her reasons for doing so in part 1.

[101] See Fricker (2010).

So, assume for the sake of argument that the weak reading of personalism is the most plausible reading. If plural virtues, moreover, can account for Larry's knowledge in BLIND DEFERENCE, then we no longer have a reason to postulate social virtue. More specifically, we may hold on to both universality and personalism (on the weak reading), and account for BLIND DEFERENCE in terms of plural virtues. What would the relevant account look like? Plural virtues apply to groups of people, and involve a commitment by that group to attain some goal. Consequently, I take it that the most plausible account would assume a commitment on the part of Larry's fellow inquirers to arrange themselves in such a manner that he receives reliable testimony, in the actual world as well as in all nearby possible worlds, whenever he consults them. That is, we would explain Larry's knowledge in terms of a plural epistemic virtue of reliable testimonial coordination on the part of his fellow inquirers.

The problem with this account—or indeed with any account framed in terms of plural virtues—is the assumption of a commitment. The reason that this assumption is problematic is that we can imagine BLIND DEFERENCE to be a case wherein no one has made any commitment of the relevant kind. More specifically, we can imagine that Larry and his fellow inquirers in the case imagined just happen to be arranged, in the actual world as well as in all nearby possible world, in such a manner that Larry receives reliable testimony wherever he turns. Such a case is clearly *possible*. Moreover, if what has been argued in part 1 is on point, there is nothing about such a scenario that would rule out Larry having testimonial knowledge.[102] As a result, unless we are willing to reject universality, we need a virtue epistemological account of Larry's knowledge, and in the absence of any commitment of the kind required for plural virtue, any account framed in terms of such virtue will not be able to do the job.

2.8 Knowledge Through Social Virtue

We have now considered the two most plausible candidates for virtue theories that would enable us to hold on to personalism while also accounting for the virtue involved in BLIND DEFERENCE. The fact that they both fail gives us reason to look elsewhere, and specifically to the kind of social virtues introduced above (Section 2.5). After all, an account framed in terms of social virtue is able to account for Larry's testimonial knowledge in BLIND DEFERENCE with reference to him being embedded in a social environment, in the actual world as well as in all nearby worlds, that is such that he receives reliable testimony wherever he turns, rendering his disposition to trust without discrimination a social epistemic virtue.

This amounts to a quite 'thin' account of epistemic virtue, in that is framed in terms of nothing but reliable doxastic dispositions across the actual and all nearby possible worlds—no epistemic motivations,

[102] Beyond what was argued in Sections 1.1-5, see also footnote 42 above, about why the fortuitous nature of Larry's situation does not count against it being one involving epistemic virtue.

no vetting, no positive reasons, no credit[103], and no sensitivity to defeaters. But that's as it should be. Remember, anyone who accepts that Larry knows in DEFERENCE also has to accept that he knows in BLIND DEFERENCE. Given universality, it follows that the virtue epistemologist needs to provide an account of the kind of virtue involved in the latter case. When moving from DEFERENCE to BLIND DEFERENCE, the only epistemically relevant feature of Larry's situation that remains is a doxastic disposition that is reliable in a modally robust manner, on account of his epistemic environment. Consequently, if what has been argued in the preceding sections is correct, what we need to say is that having such a doxastic disposition is *sufficient* for virtue possession.[104]

At this point, it might be objected that there is nothing sufficiently novel about social virtues. In what way, the reader might ask, does the acknowledgement of the role of our social environment in us coming to know things really require a fundamental change in virtue epistemology? The answer is: on account of the widespread commitment to personalism. As was argued above, we cannot hold on to personalism, and still account for the virtue possessed by Larry in BLIND DEFERENCE. That's a problem, since part 1 of this paper argued that we need to be able to accommodate that virtue, unless we want to either deny that Larry knows in DEFERENCE, or reject universality. Moreover, since the evidence provided above suggests that personalism is a fairly central commitment for virtue epistemologists across the theoretical spectrum (see Sections 2.2-4), it seems fair to say that the change required in so far as we need to reject personalism is a fundamental one.

Another way to push the novelty worry is as follows: As we have seen, virtue epistemologists like Greco and Sosa already acknowledge both our dependence as individuals on other inquirers as well as the dependency of our competencies on appropriate external conditions. So what is novel about the present investigation's focus on social dependence? In answering this question, we should note that accepting that there are social virtues doesn't involve accepting some new *kind* of factor so far completely ignored by virtue epistemologists (although it seems fair to say that virtue epistemology has been *slower* to

[103] Or, at most, we have a case for anti-luck credit, in the sense discussed in Section 1.4. As argued in that section, this is because all there is to believing in a manner for which one deserves anti-luck credit is believing in a manner that rules out luck, and luck is ruled out by reliable and safe belief-formation.

[104] In this respect, the account of epistemic virtue defended here bears some resemblance to Driver's (2001) consequentialist account of moral virtue, as a matter of what traits systematically produce good consequences. However, while Driver notes that her view 'makes the attribution of virtue depend in part on factors external to the agent's psychology with respect to agency', she does not explicitly reject the moral analogue of personalism, noting simply that the external factors she has in mind are 'the systematic consequences of that psychology' (61). Since I am here interested in epistemic rather than moral virtue, I will not pursue the question whether Driver has reason to reject the moral analogue of personalism.

acknowledge our dependence on others, compared to other parts of epistemology). Rather, accepting that there are social virtues involves acknowledging the *extent* to which social factors can play a role in us coming to know things. In other words, the problem is that the relevant virtue epistemologists do not go far enough in their acknowledgement of the role of external factors, and of social factors in particular—far enough, that is, to accommodate cases such as the one involving Larry. And, again, that's a problem since we need to be able to accommodate Larry, unless we want to either deny that Larry knows in DEFERENCE, or reject universality.

By rejecting personalism and invoking social virtues, however, we can hold on to universality, while still accommodating cases wherein a commitment to personalism would render us unable to account for certain instances of knowledge. Consequently, if the above is on the right track, then another bifurcation of virtue is called for, in addition to the one discussed in Section 1.1 between virtues accompanied by epistemic motivations and virtues not (necessarily) accompanied by such motivations. The additional bifurcation called for is between personal and social virtues, the latter being virtues possessed in whole or in large part on account of the possessor being embedded in a social environment that makes for modally robust reliability. That is what we learn from reflecting on cases of blind deference. Granted, the success or failure of an inquiry sometimes has a personal source, as Baehr suggests.[105] But given our heavy epistemic dependence on others, such success or failure often has a *social* source, as has been acknowledged by many social epistemologists of late.[106] And by acknowledging that there are social virtues, virtue epistemology can help account for such successes or failures in a manner that it cannot if we hold on to personalism.

CONCLUSION

Recently, it has become popular to account for knowledge and other epistemic states in terms of epistemic virtues. The present paper focused on an epistemic virtue relevant when deferring to others in testimonial contexts. It was argued that, while many virtue epistemologists will accept that epistemic virtue can be exhibited in cases involving epistemically motivated hearers, carefully vetting their testimonial sources for signs of untrustworthiness prior to deferring, anyone who accepts that also has to accept that an agent may exhibit epistemic virtue in certain cases of blind deference, involving someone soaking up everything he is told without any hesitation. Moreover, it was suggested that, in order to account for the kind of virtue involved in the relevant cases of blind deference, virtue epistemologists need to abandon the wide-

[105] Baehr (2011: 1).

[106] See, e.g., Goldman (1999) and Goldberg (2010).

spread assumption of personalism, i.e., the idea that virtue is possessed primarily on account of features internal to the psychology of the person, and accept that some virtues are social virtues, possessed in whole or in large part on account of the person in question being embedded in a reliable social environment.[107]

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