

# Religious Faith and Intellectual Virtue

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# Preface

*Religious faith and intellectual virtue.* We suspect the title of this book will raise different questions and expectations in almost every reader. Is this merely an elongated moniker for that age-old topic, “faith and reason”? If not, how is it different? Some readers will assume these conjuncts are analogous to oil and water. Others may have in mind something more like air and flame. Philosophers scanning the table of contents may even come to different conclusions about whether this is meant to be a volume on some current issues in epistemology or the philosophy of religion.

This is a volume about whether and how having religious faith squares with the kind of reasoning—belief formation and revision—that sensible, conscientious people do. In bringing this idea for a volume to fruition, we have been guided by two thoughts. First, these are topics that religious and non-religious people tend to see rather differently. Accordingly, we sought input from authors of differing commitments. Second, this is a topic that is of interest not only to philosophers but also to a broad educated audience. To the degree possible, we have attempted to make these essays accessible to those with little technical background in philosophy. Our hope in this has been two-fold: that simple language would keep these essays honest to “layman’s” intuitions and that diverse readers might find the text useful. We are grateful to all of our authors for entertaining this request and responding to our encouraging nudges in feedback we gave them on multiple drafts of their essays.

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# Introduction

*Laura Frances Callahan and Timothy O'Connor*

## I.1 Intellectual Virtue

### *I.1.1 Epistemology in Brief Historical Context*

Assessing the intellectual ‘conduct’ of individuals is not the unique province of philosophers. We all make regular judgments about others (and—much less frequently—about ourselves) when it comes to how they or we come to have beliefs. Sometimes these judgments are holistic. Just as one may have a more or less fit body, so we often judge that another has a more or less ‘fit’ mind: one that functions in a way that approximates more or less strongly to a vague and implicit belief-regulating ideal or norm. We also draw more focused conclusions about particular qualities or tendencies of a person’s thinking processes: “You believe what you want to believe.” “You’re too quick to jump to conclusions.” “You’re gullible/too suspicious.” “You’re dogmatic” or “overconfident of your opinions.” On still other occasions, we focus on a person’s aptitude in specific domains of inquiry: “When Dad starts talking politics, suddenly it’s all crazy talk.” “When it comes to her boyfriend, she just can’t see the facts for what they are.” “He is given to accepting wholesale evidence-free fads concerning health and nutrition.” Finally, we evaluate particular beliefs or claims to knowledge or pieces of reasoning: “I don’t see that you have very much evidence to go on when you say that.” “You seem to be ignoring this other (countervailing) piece of information.” “I grant your observations: it’s just that your conclusion doesn’t seem to follow.” “There is no good evidence for extraterrestrial abduction.”

It is less common in everyday life to raise questions about the scope and limits of whole bodies of communal inquiry and knowledge: for example, history, science, morality, and religion. But philosophers and other scholars do probe such questions. How can a scientist reasonably believe in an explanatory theory, given that these are predictably supplanted over time? Are all religious people unreasonable (in their religious beliefs)? Generally, are there inherent limits on the scope of reasonable beliefs we might hope to have, in certain domains? Here we are abstracting away from the

particular strengths and weaknesses of individuals and asking questions about the human condition.

Still more generally—and now we are squarely in the domain of that branch of philosophy known as ‘epistemology’—we might ask the radical (‘root’) questions: so, just what is it to be reasonable or justified in believing something? Just what is it to know? Before we launch into investigating this or that particular topic, must we decide (and if so, how?) which methods for gaining knowledge are reliable ones? Does either ‘epistemic justification’ or knowledge require certainty?

Philosophers in the Western tradition have thought about these questions in a variety of ways from the time of the ancient Greeks. But it is no exaggeration to say that the framework for philosophical reflection about inquiry and knowledge set forth by the great philosopher, mathematician, and scientist René Descartes (1596–1650) has largely set the agenda for epistemology in much of the nearly four hundred years since. Descartes, wary of the multitudinous, contradictory ‘truths’ trotted out by authorities and scholars, sought to isolate what he could *know*, with certainty. He began by rejecting the necessity or value of reliance on others: “And yet a majority vote is worthless as a proof of truths that are at all difficult to discover; for a single man is much more likely to hit upon them than a group of people. I was, then, unable to choose anyone whose opinions struck me as preferable to those of all others, and I found myself as it were forced to become my own guide” (1637/1984: 119). Taking himself as a guide, he reflected on the fact that at least many of the basic capacities (such as our senses and memory) and methods (such as forming generalizations from limited experience) on which we rely in forming beliefs about reality are fallible. He thought it necessary to engage and overcome this barrier to certainty. Descartes’ ‘taking seriously’ the challenge of radical skepticism was for him no idle exercise: it came in the context of intellectual crises brought on by grounds for legitimate doubt or debate concerning the reliability of long-standing intellectual authorities in science (the Aristotelian teleological paradigm for physics) and religion (the Catholic Church). Descartes thought that a satisfactory response to the skeptic’s challenge, and thereby a resolution of the crises of intellectual authority, requires the solitary thinker to ground all reasonable belief in simple propositions that cannot (on reflection) be coherently doubted and to uncover a singular root method that could build in an infallible way upon the foundational certainties.

Few if any thought that Descartes succeeded in his heroic effort,<sup>1</sup> but the challenge he vividly articulated to ordinary claims to knowledge endured in the field of epistemology, as did certain features of his positive program: the rejection of intellectual authority, the focus on the solitary thinker and her direct bases for her beliefs, and seeing the architecture of knowledge as that of a foundation of the most trustworthy

<sup>1</sup> That is, if success is defined as non-circularly proving the reliability of our cognitive faculties; we do not deny that his project may have had other, realized aims.

beliefs, on which rests others that can be derived from it—with high probability, if not always deductively.

Zooming ahead to more recent times, a marked shift took place beginning in the 1960s. A number of epistemologists rejected Descartes' view that the challenge of radical skepticism should be front and center in our understanding of rational justification and knowledge. Instead, they simply took it for granted that finite, perspective-bound thinkers can also be knowers, even absent an (unattainable) answer to the radical skeptic that is acceptable on his own terms.

Two issues came to be the foci of most discussion. First, what are the conditions under which a true empirical belief counts as an item of knowledge? A natural (albeit schematic) answer is: when the person's belief is not merely true, but also *justified* (in some sense) by her evidence. But Ed Gettier (1963) showed convincingly through simple examples that justification is not enough. A belief can be as rationally justified as you please and true but be only 'accidentally' true: for example, reasonably inferred from another well-justified but *false* belief one has, perhaps because of unusual features of the environment that one has no reason to suspect are present. In such a case, intuitively, one doesn't have knowledge. Gettier's article generated a hunt for the missing fourth condition on knowledge (in addition to belief, truth, and justification), one that proved extraordinarily elusive. But one thing that was generally agreed was that this condition involves features epistemically 'external' to the agent (not consisting in certain mental states of the agent, or being immediately reflectively accessible to him): that his environment be of the 'right' sort and that his believing for the reasons he does be traceable to the circumstance in the world in virtue of which his belief is true.

This conclusion in turn led to a more radical perspective on knowledge, which became a second focal point of discussion: perhaps knowledge has nothing to do, fundamentally, with rational justification, where justification consists of states of the knower that are directly accessible to him and that intrinsically make the belief likely to some degree. Perhaps knowledge just consists in being connected to the world in the right way, such that one's believing (truly) as one does is the output of a causal or otherwise highly reliable process, relative to the environment in which one finds oneself—regardless of whether one is in a position to see or demonstrate said reliability.<sup>2</sup> (Certain *kinds* of knowledge may involve the agent's recognition of rationally justifying conditions. Such recognition can itself be a reliable process. However, despite its being the almost exclusive focus of much traditional philosophical reflection, concerned as this has been with the problem of radical skepticism, it would be but a special case in the broad spectrum of human knowledge.) This broadly accepted, reliabilist perspective on *knowledge* has come to be developed in different versions that generally allow that reliability is not entirely sufficient—for example by adding a condition that one not have significant reason to believe that one's relevant belief-forming

<sup>2</sup> Alvin Goldman was the seminal figure here. See his (1967) and, for a defense of a form of reliabilism, shorn of a causal requirement (1986).

capacities are *not* reliable. Reliability-based accounts of knowledge are consistent both with affirming and with denying that there is something other than knowledge that is epistemically valuable that *is* 'internal' to the agent. And so there has been an ongoing debate between 'internalists' and 'externalists' regarding epistemic/rational justification—internalists viewing matters from the first-person vantage point of the solitary thinker and what is immediately accessible to him, in accordance with the Cartesian ideal, and externalists adopting a third-person perspective on thinkers as members of a species equipped to function intellectually in certain reliable ways within the sort of environment they actually inhabit.

### 1.1.2 *The Rise of Virtue Epistemology*

Through the 1980s, the foregoing debates matured and led to fairly stable choice points for epistemologists, with new developments mainly taking the form of careful refinement of options. Not long afterwards, critiques of the twin foci of discussion began to emerge, first in the murmurs of philosophers working in other fields and then within the field itself. According to these critics, much of the epistemological literature had become sterile, consisting largely of semi-technical analyses that (worse) had only limited application, as they focused on everyday cases of simple empirical knowledge ("Under what conditions may Tom be said to know, based on his visual perception, that there is a barn across the field?"). It was quite unclear how the proffered analyses would apply to the more challenging cases of deeper human significance, such as knowledge of other persons, moral and religious truths, and the theoretical claims of science.<sup>3</sup>

Now, generically similar criticisms of ethical theory as it developed up through the first half of the twentieth century had already given rise to an attempt to recover and rehabilitate the 'virtue ethics' of ancient Greek thought, especially in Aristotle. (This approach was also followed by many medieval Aristotelians, reaching its zenith in the work of Thomas Aquinas.) This turn in certain quarters of ethical theorizing became the inspiration for a parallel re-thinking of epistemology in terms of the notion of 'intellectual virtue.' The most important groundbreaking work was a series of essays by Ernest Sosa beginning in 1980 (collected in his 1991) and—with a more clearly Aristotelian influence—a monograph by Linda Zagzebski (1996).<sup>4</sup> However, unlike the case with respect to ethics, the turn to virtue epistemology is not so much a wholesale repudiation of the recent past as a highlighting and deepening of certain aspects of it—the orientation implicit in the focus on intellectual *processes* in Goldman's reliabilism and Alvin Plantinga's proper functionalism, along with emerging debates about

<sup>3</sup> For a recent statement of these kinds of criticism, see Roberts and Wood (2007: Ch.1). Baehr (2011: Ch.1 and 4), while less critical of the general direction of recent epistemology, also argues that undue attention to low-level cases of knowledge leads to implausibly simplified general theories of knowledge.

<sup>4</sup> For further discussion, see Zagzebski (1996: Ch.1–3) and Baehr (2011: 6–8). The field of epistemology has seen a number of other major shifts in the last two decades. Space does not permit us to discuss these developments and their relationship to virtue epistemology.



‘evidentialism’ and how we should understand the constituent notion of ‘evidence.’ As with virtue ethics, the broadened perspective promoted by virtue epistemology was a recovering of an older tradition exemplified most fully in Aristotle and Aquinas. They identified and discussed a range of both practical and theoretical ‘virtues of the mind’ alongside the distinctively moral virtues, with the intellectual virtues being basic capacities involved in intuition of first principles, scientific knowledge (conceived in a very specific manner), and philosophical wisdom.

### 1.1.3 Broadening Epistemology

Epistemologists writing today about intellectual virtue hail the concept’s potential to provide evaluative frameworks that recognize a broader set of *epistemic goods* and apply to a broader *range of objects*.

Traditional epistemology has focused on providing a framework to evaluate propositional beliefs. Propositional beliefs have content that could be stated in words, for example, “I am typing on a laptop,” or “Dried fruit is high in fiber.” Epistemologists have attempted to specify the conditions under which a belief counts as justified or warranted or rational. Particular attention has been paid to specifying just when a belief counts as knowledge, since analyzing knowledge is the primary, definitional concern of the epistemologist.<sup>5</sup>

But some argue that focusing on the conditions under which propositional beliefs can constitute knowledge makes for an artificially narrow analysis of knowledge. Our commonsense concept of knowledge includes more than just true, warranted propositional beliefs. We know not only propositions about people and places, but also people and places themselves. Perhaps it is proper to think of our *understanding* of, say, a piece of fiction, which cannot be simply reduced to a set of propositions, as part of our knowledge. Or perhaps simple acquaintance, simple first-hand experience, is a kind of knowing (one that typically *gives rise to* both *de re* and *de dicto* propositional knowledge).<sup>6</sup> Moreover, we talk not only about knowing *that* a proposition is true but also knowing *how* to perform specific actions.<sup>7</sup> Aristotle famously opened the *Metaphysics* with, “All men by nature desire to know.” What we actually desire, in knowing, seems less the possession of a set of facts. Rather we desire the command of a store of answered questions—questions about “what it is like to...” or “what it means to...” as well as ‘plain’ questions about how things work or what there

<sup>5</sup> Roderick Firth writes, “The ultimate task of a theory of knowledge is to answer the question, ‘What is knowledge?’ But to do this it is first necessary to answer the question, ‘Under what conditions is a belief warranted?’” (1978: 216). Linda Zagzebski, quoting Firth, adds that “in practice the first step is generally the major part of the theory” (1996:7).

<sup>6</sup> On these last two points, see discussion by Roberts and Wood (2007: 42–55).

<sup>7</sup> Gilbert Ryle famously explored the differences between knowing-how and knowing-that long before intellectual virtue became a focus in philosophy. See his essay “Knowing How and Knowing That” in (2009). Stanley and Williamson (2001) provoked fresh discussion of this issue with their defense of a reduction of knowing-how, to knowing-that. Some of this discussion is collected in Bengson and Moffett, eds. (2011).

is. Both a natural tendency toward inquisitiveness and the desire that our knowledge inform right, deliberate orientation toward the world motivate these questions. Jason Baehr, analyzing intellectual virtue in his recent book, *The Inquiring Mind*, identifies the broad object of our natural inquisitiveness as the proper object of epistemology:

One remarkable feature of our species is its propensity for inquiry... As beings that are both reflective and rational, we often find ourselves fascinated and puzzled by the world around us. We desire to know, to *understand* how things are, were, or might someday be. As a result, we make intentional and sustained efforts to figure things out. We inquire. (2011: 1)

The thought is that, to understand knowledge as this broadened target, epistemologists need to recognize and analyze epistemic goods beyond possessing warranted, true beliefs. And understanding knowledge in this broader context requires understanding *knowers*; it requires understanding the intellectual habits, activities, faculties, and desires that further or hinder our various forms of knowledge and understanding.

Enter virtue epistemology. Whereas traditional epistemology evaluates beliefs, setting conditions under which these should be deemed “justified” or “warranted,” a virtue epistemology allows philosophers to evaluate *persons* or *intellectual traits/faculties* or *intellectual processes over time*. We already, in everyday life, call people thoughtful, open-minded, courageous, cautious, firm, honest, and wise. We also sometimes deem them stiff-necked, vacuous, cowardly, wishy-washy, gullible, disingenuous, or foolish. And, as we noted at the beginning of this introduction, all of these attributes can be restricted to particular cases within the intellectual life of an individual. For example, “She’s generally got a good head on her shoulders, but she was really gullible and rash in buying into that salesman’s spiel.” Virtue epistemology attempts to understand and specify what makes for good intellectual conduct or functioning, in particular cases of belief formation/revision and in one’s overall orientation toward these processes.

Now, it should be noted straightaway that we already see wide variation among philosophers regarding the *character* of these virtues that make for good intellectual conduct. Some think of virtues as being or including those of our *faculties* that reliably generate epistemic goods. This has been called “virtue reliabilism,” and notable representatives include Sosa and Greco. Others understand the intellectual virtues to be refined *traits* or *dispositions*. This view, broadly called “virtue responsibilism,” has been espoused by Zagzebski (1996) and Montmarquet (1987).<sup>8</sup> Though we note this much-debated distinction, it will not be a major focus of our volume.<sup>9</sup> Virtue theorists are unified in a broad commitment to the importance of understanding excellence in knowers.

<sup>8</sup> For further taxonomy of virtue theories along these lines and in historical context, see Baehr (2011: 6–8); also see Greco and Turri (2011).

<sup>9</sup> Some question the importance of the debate. See Battaly (2008: 651–661). Our essay in this volume will claim that deciding on a position is generally not necessary to an analysis of overarching questions about the intellectual acceptability of religious faith.

Understanding what it is to be an excellent knower in turn promotes a fuller (more adequate) understanding of knowledge than that which has been delivered by traditional theories. Wise, courageous people with a love for truth and a disciplined inquisitiveness naturally cultivate understanding, acquaintance, and skills. Thus, understanding that constitutes the former should be a means of insight into the latter.

#### *I.1.4 Bearing on Belief Justification*

Still, despite critiquing the narrowness of traditional epistemology, virtue epistemologists will nonetheless have to provide a perspective on the traditional questions of when a belief should be counted as justified and/or knowledge. These questions demand answers, not only because of their focal position in the tradition of epistemology, but also because of their intrinsic interest. They may not exhaust the interesting epistemological questions, but they are surely members (arguably the primary members) in that set.

It seems there are several possible paths open to a proponent of the fruitfulness of analyzing intellectual virtue. We already see some of this variation in the recent literature (cf. Baehr 2011: 10–12). We will here only lay out some basic categories of approach, the arguments for and against each of which warrant further exploration.

*Strong virtue epistemology:* One might argue that “intellectual virtue is the primary normative component of both justified belief and knowledge” (Zagzebski 1996: xv). Evaluative epistemic concepts, including the justification, warrant, rationality, and reasonableness of belief states, are properly seen as derivative of the intellectual virtue of the subjects/processes productive of those states. This position requires the rejection of traditional construals of justification, both internalist and externalist, although a strong virtue epistemologist might adapt features of either type to a virtue-based approach.

*Symbiotic virtue epistemology:*<sup>10</sup> Alternatively, one could hold that justification and virtue are related but that neither is a primary (explanatorily most fundamental) concept, in the sense that the other is properly seen as derivative. Limiting and dependence relationships could go both ways. For example, whether or not a belief is justified might affect the intellectual virtue in being firm in holding that belief. On the other hand, one’s degree of cultivation of the intellectual virtues, including, for example, open-mindedness, carefulness, and caution, might determine the sphere of beliefs that are apt to be justified for one. This could be true on either an internalist or an externalist theory of justification: some cultivation or possession of virtues may be a necessary component of fulfilling one’s ‘epistemic duty,’ and the reliability of certain belief-forming mechanisms may vary with the cultivation of one’s intellectual virtues, for example testimony in relation to insight into the character of others and intellectual caution.

<sup>10</sup> Baehr’s “Weak Conservative Virtue Epistemology” would be an example of this type of theory.

*Weak virtue epistemology:* Other virtue epistemologists might agree with traditional epistemologists that justification (or ‘warrant’—whatever it is that makes true belief; knowledge) is the primary normative epistemological concept, while arguing that the intellectual virtues promote or are partly constitutive of this concept. This would imply that whatever practices or faculties contributed to the justification of beliefs would be intellectual virtues. One’s purpose in analyzing these intellectual virtues then would be identical to the aim of epistemology in recent history: to explicate propositional knowledge and the justification of beliefs.

*Complementary virtue theory:*<sup>11</sup> Lastly, it seems open to a philosopher interested in the intellectual virtues to see this analysis as wholly separate from the project of traditional epistemology, perhaps for a variety of different reasons. For one thing, the intellectual virtues do not specifically or exclusively promote knowledge, but something like ‘excellent intellectual functioning.’ Perhaps the philosophy of excellent intellectual functioning is properly separate from the philosophy of knowledge, requiring different methods of analysis more akin to practices found in ethics than in epistemology.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps, given the admixture of practical and moral concerns in an analysis of the intellectual virtues and also the much-noted difficulty in describing the distinction between intellectual virtues and virtues generally, this burgeoning inquiry should really be considered a branch of ethics. We will return to this hotly debated issue shortly, in considering “Intellectual and moral virtue.”

### 1.1.5 *Virtue and Virtues*

Indeed, the variation among virtue epistemologies is not restricted to the nature of the relationship to traditional questions of justification. Another striking area of difference among philosophers is the degree of focus on *individual virtues* versus a central normative concept of intellectual *virtue*.

Virtue epistemologists tend to do readers no favors in parsing out the relationships between these two foci. They often use the term “intellectual virtue” ambiguously, as either a singular trait (e.g., the intellectual virtue of perseverance) or as a central normative concept (e.g., attributing “intellectual virtue” to one who is being appropriately courageous or cautious in a particular instance). It is widely acknowledged that the individual intellectual virtues exist in a kind of tension, with intellectual courage sometimes pulling us in the opposite direction from intellectual caution, intellectual autonomy sometimes pulling us away from intellectual humility. It might seem that the balancing or managing of these is itself an intellectual skill or practice—perhaps Aristotle’s higher-order intellectual virtue *phronesis* (practical wisdom).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> This seems similar to Baehr’s class of “autonomous” virtue epistemologies.

<sup>12</sup> Linda Zagzebski (1996) notes the pervasive use of moral concepts even within traditional epistemology.

<sup>13</sup> Roberts and Wood hold that practical wisdom is a higher-order virtue that governs the moral virtues as well; it is “involved in every virtue, as constituting the good judgment without which no human virtue could ever be exemplified in action, emotion, or judgment” (2007: 305).

Alternatively, it might seem that this is better described simply by applying a normative adjective to those who do it well—much as “good” or “virtuous” might apply to people who appropriately balance the moral virtues of, for example, justice and mercy. “Intellectually virtuous” is a clunky but often-used candidate adjective.

We have not mandated a standard use of the term “intellectual virtue” where it is employed in this volume. This is partly because it seems the vocabulary of virtue epistemology is still very much in flux. But it will be important throughout this work for readers to notice which general usage of the term an author is employing in a given instance. An author may argue that faith/trust *is (isn't) an intellectual virtue*, where the term is used to describe an individual practice or faculty. It is consistent with the success of arguments in favor of faith's being a virtue in this sense that there be other intellectual virtues ‘checking’ faith/trust in the intellectually virtuous person. Or an author may instead argue that exercising faith/trust (perhaps in a particular way) *is (isn't) intellectually virtuous*. This is a different, stronger claim. It is stronger in assigning a normative value to the faith/trust considered, without allowing for the potential of other virtues ‘checking’ its virtuousness. In addition, of course, there is the here-noted variation in the literature regarding virtues’ character (as faculties vs. traits), bearing on belief justification, and relation to ethics. Readers with specific commitments in virtue theory will especially want to be on guard for instances where the plausibility of an author’s claim depends on her particular understanding of the virtue concept.

### 1.1.6 *Intellectual and Moral Virtue*

Virtue epistemology appropriates many terms of virtue ethics. Traditionally, epistemologists and ethicists have both employed “justified,” applying this to beliefs or acts respectively. They talk about what is “permissible,” what does or doesn’t violate “rules,” what is or isn’t under a person’s control, what may or may not be his “duty,” and what is “good” or “bad.” One might think they actually pursue similar projects. Ethicists think about how humans achieve human flourishing, typically as relates to their practical behavior and emotions towards self and others. One might say that epistemologists think about how humans achieve intellectual flourishing, typically as it relates to the pursuit of knowledge. Indeed, since *virtue* epistemologists broaden the target of the field’s analysis, they make the link to ethics even clearer. They think about how humans achieve intellectual flourishing as it relates to the overall acquisition of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. And surely *this* sort of intellectual flourishing is necessarily integrated with human flourishing overall (including as relates to practical behavior and emotions). As hinted above, many believe it is not wise or even possible to divide our theoretical and moral ends. As they see it, these considerations preclude any hard-and-fast distinction between virtue epistemology and ethics; if there is a distinction to be made, it is at best a muddy one.

Accordingly, there are differences of opinion on whether and how to draw this distinction. But it’s common to regard the intellectual virtues as a special, importantly

different species of the virtues. The importance of the difference, it is argued, stems from the special desideratum of truth we have for our beliefs. Although we may be perfectly happy with right conduct and virtuous emotional responses and a good society, we don't want our *beliefs* just to be broadly 'right conduct-conducive' or to advance the good. We want them to be true. Or, at least, we value truth in our beliefs quite apart from the way they advance goodness and right conduct in the world. So, the thought goes, we need to develop theories specifically to understand the practices and skills by which humans get *true* beliefs and understanding. These are related to the quest for human flourishing, in that true belief and understanding is undeniably a part of our flourishing. But in principle and in particular instances, true belief or understanding can come at the cost of moral goodness or overall right conduct. In such cases, ethics would dictate the right employment of the intellectual virtues.

The ways philosophers think about this relationship have consequences for their claims concerning intellectual virtue. If, for an author, virtue epistemology is a branch of ethics—then his on balance 'intellectually virtuous' course would always be advanced as the right or recommended action. This approach raises the bar for applying the label of "intellectually virtuous" in a given case. It also raises questions about just how intellectual virtue fits into an overall ethical theory. (What is the strength of our intellectual duties? May we sometimes—or ought we sometimes—to shirk them?) On the other hand, if an author believes virtue epistemologies are concerned primarily with getting us to the truth, while ethics dictates when and how we should care about the truth, then her 'intellectually virtuous' course is not necessarily recommended. This too raises questions. (What is the role of true understanding in human flourishing? What are the ethical rules that govern when/how we pursue the intellectually virtuous course?)

These questions are by no means new, although some of the terminology is. The ethics of belief has been a hot topic in epistemology at least since W. K. Clifford's famous essay (1886). It is clear that our beliefs broadly affect our actions. It is plausible that we have some (at least indirect) control over what we come to believe, and even more so what we are willing to advance for discussion and to base our practical or theoretical reasoning upon. So it seems obvious that we have moral responsibilities with respect to our beliefs, that we cultivate them in ways that result in right behavior. It has additionally been argued that we ought morally to pursue true beliefs regardless of further effects on our behavior (because of, e.g., the goodness of truth—its intrinsic value and/or its place in human flourishing). By further muddying the distinction between ethics and epistemology, virtue epistemology brings these questions and issues to the fore.

### *1.1.7 Intellectual Virtue and Society: Beyond the Solitary Thinker*

A final task for a comprehensive virtue epistemology is to come to terms with the inescapable fact—Descartes notwithstanding—that much of what we know as individuals is deeply dependent on our relationships to others. From infancy onwards, we rely on

other individuals and whole social communities for knowledge of particular matters of fact and for the rational justification of the ways in which we interpret and understand the world around us. As infants, from first learning language to acquiring beliefs about our surroundings and the larger world, we are almost entirely reliant on caregivers and family members to give us testimony whose reliability we have no capacity to independently verify. But even mature, educated adults continue to base much of what they know on social sources that gather, sift, organize, and theorize, and ultimately transmit information to us as knowledge consumers. To see how deep our social epistemic dependency goes, one need only stop and consider what one takes oneself to know concerning current human affairs on various scales, important facets of human and natural history, scientific knowledge and understanding, and (perhaps less obviously, but no less certainly) moral beliefs and understanding. Almost everyone recognizes that the claim in an advanced society to being a ‘self-made man’ in one’s career or economic success is at best a gross exaggeration even in the most plausible instances; when it comes to anyone’s epistemic success, it is patently absurd.

Once the sociality of much opinion and knowledge is acknowledged, we must factor this into our understanding of what it is to be intellectually virtuous. There are no entirely self-made men or women in career achievement—but some individuals *do* achieve more than others in ways that redound to their credit. Likewise when it comes to the sociality of knowledge attainment. We rely on massive division of epistemic labor in a way that benefits us all as prospective knowers, but alongside this benefit to individuals come new individual responsibilities for navigating social landscapes and taking responsibility for our embrace of epistemic communities—for we do have choices, and such communities themselves display intellectual virtue to a greater or lesser extent. In this, we have far greater control than most previous generations. The exponential growth in certain areas of human knowledge has been accompanied by far greater access to information through mass education, mobility, and more recently the Internet and social media. All of this has led to even greater reliance on others, but sifting sources for their trustworthiness has also become more complicated, and skill in doing so occupies a correspondingly larger place in the cultivation of intellectual virtue.

## II.1 Intellectual Virtue and Religious Faith

### *II.1.1 Epistemology of Religious Belief: Brief Historical Context*

As daunting as was the task of context-setting for an introduction to “intellectual virtue,” the task of setting context for a discussion of “religious faith” is nigh impossible. We will restrict the present discussion to recent epistemological treatment of religion. The reasonableness of various religious beliefs was not given sustained treatment in the first half of the twentieth-century analytic philosophy. This reflected the dominance of logical positivism and its variants, a movement that regarded all of metaphysics,

let alone religious metaphysics, with grave suspicion at best, and more often as literally meaningless. As positivism declined, a more liberal form of empiricism still reigned. The place of religion was relegated to discussion of historical theistic arguments in undergraduate courses. However, the situation changed beginning in the 1960s, as metaphysics began a slow comeback (and eventually became a roaring fire) and epistemology underwent the changes described earlier.

Two distinct strands emerged in philosophical discussion of religious faith, each tracking prevailing ideas in distinct philosophical subfields. Using the Bayesian model of scientific theory confirmation employed by many in the philosophy of science, Richard Swinburne (2004) has produced a prodigious corpus defending the rationality of theistic belief and Christian belief, recasting certain traditional theistic 'proofs' as defeasible forms of probabilistic evidence and defending cumulative balance of probability conclusions that are intended to be persuasive to all. Alvin Plantinga (1983), by contrast, exploited the demise of the 'classical' epistemological foundationalism advocated by Descartes that permitted only self-evident beliefs in the foundation, to argue that there was no principled basis for excluding theistic belief from the class of properly basic beliefs, alongside other non-self-evident forms of belief involving memory and sense perception. Plantinga and William Alston later endorsed and drew upon the 'externalist' turn in epistemology in distinct but related ways. In doing so, both complained that philosophers were prone to using a double standard when it comes to religious belief, insisting on older, unrealistic standards for religious belief to count as rational. Recall that the central tenet of externalism is that a belief's having 'positive epistemic status' (whether epistemic justification or knowledge) is largely a function of the *de facto* reliability of the processes that produced that belief, whether or not the believer is in a position to give a non-circular *argument* for this reliability. *If* the world is as we roughly take it to be and our cognitive capacities function as we assume from the standpoint of everyday experience (we are not subject to the machinations of an evil demon or inhabiting the Matrix), then, assuming we don't have positive reason to believe something is amiss in our individual case, our beliefs based in ordinary sense perception and memory have a great deal of warrant—even though we cannot give a good non-circular argument for their reliability. Alston (1991) argued that a similar conditional holds with respect to religious experience: *if* God exists and is the ultimate cause, in the right sort of way, of religious believers' having experiences as of God's being present to them and/or communicating something to them (and they don't have positive reason to think something is amiss in their case), their consequent beliefs that God is so present and communicating to them have *some* measure of warrant quite apart from any other evidence they may have for these beliefs. And Plantinga (2000) argued that *if* God exists and has intended that our cognitive faculties so evolved that we have a tendency to form *spontaneous* religious beliefs in certain circumstances (say, when looking at a majestic mountain scene), then beliefs formed in those circumstances would be warranted, again absent compelling defeaters. The antecedents of these latter two conditionals, concerning God's existence and activity, are of course



controversial in a way that the commonsense anti-skepticism regarding sense perception and memory are not. But that is not relevant to the implications of reliabilist epistemology for religious belief, unless the apparent non-universality of spontaneous or experience-based theistic belief can be deployed in an effective argument that provides a 'defeater.' The atheist or agnostic who does not affirm the antecedents of these conditionals is given no reason to accept the consequent, and so the arguments given by Plantinga and Alston are not intended (as Swinburne's is) as neutral cases on behalf the truth of certain religious claims. But things are otherwise for the theist. She comes to see that her theism may be rationally warranted (at least in part) without neutral argument and, given the anti-skeptical stance of externalist epistemology, is encouraged to take at face value the religious deliverances of her cognitive faculties, no less than the perceptual or memorial ones. And the atheist who buys the structure of the argument (grounded in externalist epistemology) comes to see that one can argue for the *irrationality* of theism only by giving significant reason to doubt its *truth*.

### II.1.2 *Religious Belief and Religious Faith*

In much of the preceding epistemological treatments of religion, including those just noted, the focus has been on the rationality of religious *beliefs*. But religious faith involves more than belief; it is a complex mixture of intellectual, emotional, and behavioral phenomena. Virtue epistemology is a richer framework than that which immediately preceded it, and indeed seems well situated to promote fruitful epistemological exploration of faith in all its facets. Consider that religious faith typically includes:

*An orientation to forming religious beliefs:* a distinctive propensity to receive information, revise belief, and interpret experience in certain ways. Specifically, faith often involves a tenacity of belief that seems in tension with the intellectual virtues of autonomy and caution.

*A worldview:* rather than being merely a set of discrete propositions that happen to involve the same domain, a religion provides an overarching interpretation of reality. And as with other more or less comprehensive intellectual stances in science and metaphysics, the goal is not limited to amassing propositional knowledge, but includes achieving the epistemic status of *understanding*, seeing how numerous truths 'hang together.'

*A moral orientation:* much of religious life is centered on action towards others in and outside one's religious community. Religious adherents contend that their religious faith helps them to behave more virtuously. Many of the actions promoted by certain religious teachings would be widely recognized as good by people of other or no religious commitment; others are taught as good or right (or bad or wrong) and are morally controversial; still others make sense if, but only if, the religion is true (e.g., devoting significant amounts of time to prayer and fasting). Religious faith thereby raises issues of intellectual (and moral) virtue beyond the rationality of narrowly religious beliefs.

*An affective stance:* faith involves desire and aspiration. It is also characterized by confidence and a lack of anxiety with respect to one's own and others' future (Audi 2011: 77). And as Audi (2011) and Schellenberg (this volume) emphasize, for some persons (and for many persons for certain periods of their religious lives), religious faith can involve commitment and hope without flat-out belief. Thus there are further questions to be explored here, concerning the virtue of promoting the distinctive affections of faith or of having *subdoxastic* faith commitment in various circumstances.

### *II.1.3 Respecting Evidence and Responding to Entrenched Religious Disagreement*

One central issue (or closely related pair of issues) concerning the intellectual virtue or vice of religious faith is the faithful person's stance towards evidence. It is commonly held that (1) faith involves a disregard for, or at least laxity with respect to, evidence, and (2) this is illustrated by the fact that religious people generally maintain their faith despite radical, entrenched disagreement about religion across the globe. As certain critics see it, the intellectually virtuous thinker holds positive beliefs on a 'theoretical' subject matter only to the extent that he has reason to think he is familiar with the main lines of available evidence, he is competent to judge that evidence, and he judges that the evidence on balance strongly favors his position. Religions (it is claimed) standardly encourage believers to flout this epistemic norm, and believers regularly do so in practice. It is further contended that awareness of the fact that many other seemingly competent, sincere, and informed persons come down differently on a particular matter will cause the virtuous thinker to become significantly less confident of his private judgment, perhaps to the point of suspension of belief. (If the evidence really does strongly support position *P*, most competent and informed thinkers would affirm it.) Again, this norm is typically neither endorsed by major religions nor followed by religious persons.

In considering these criticisms as directed toward religious institutions, van Inwagen (2010:14) observes that we should distinguish between what the institution in fact teaches and what its individual adherents—even, in some periods, the majority of its adherents—believe. Christianity is a notable case in point, given that it consists of a rather diverse range of subtraditions whose friendliness to the role of reason and evidence in proper faith varies dramatically. One question for the thoughtful believer to consider is whether allying oneself (on presumably unrelated grounds) with a subtradition that seems to promote a measure of intellectual vice in the sphere of faith will inevitably or likely lead to a weakening of one's own intellectual virtue and so should itself be considered an act contrary to intellectual virtue. It would certainly seem to 'up the ante' with respect to the vigilance with which one needs to scrutinize claims to 'everyday' religious experiential knowledge within one's community, and such vigilance is in tension with lived communal faith.

As for the force of these criticisms as directed toward individual religious persons, matters are complicated by deep, ongoing disputes concerning the nature of *evidence*, of *having evidence*, and of *evidentialism*, on which one's evidence (whatever that amounts to) solely determines which beliefs one is epistemically justified in having.<sup>14</sup> The correct positions in these disputes will bear crucially on whether one's religious experience or intuitive judgments on controversial matters count as evidence; whether the testimony of others may directly provide one with evidence (i.e., apart from inductive evidence concerning the reliability of the testifier); whether (and when) trust in another that extends beyond evidence is ever justified; and whether there is a proper role for the will to play where a plurality of options are 'live' for one on a 'momentous' matter where, practically speaking, a decision is 'forced' (as William James 1897 famously held in responding to W. K. Clifford's evidentialist critique of religious faith).

However, one needn't embrace any particular stance on these controversial matters to grant that there are legitimate concerns regarding the intellectual conduct of particular religious believers. Though we should bear in mind that individual intellectual virtue is relative to what one has to work with—native ability, access to information, time to pursue inquiry, etc.—in general a virtuous thinker seeks out available evidence on matters of great significance, charitably interprets and thoughtfully assesses arguments for positions contrary to her own, and reflects on the appropriateness of whatever trusting credence she gives to those in her religious community whom she deems to be more knowledgeable or better trained than herself.

As critics are quick to point out, religion is a domain of widespread, entrenched disagreement. Of course, given that religions collectively encompass the vast majority of human beings, one needn't be much disturbed by disagreement involving many who are simply ill informed of relevant information or who lack the training to adjudicate certain points of important dispute. However, there is undeniably also pervasive dispute even among persons of roughly similar intelligence, education, and knowledge of pertinent established facts and competing arguments, who consider religious matters with similar seriousness, thoroughness, and care. (Call these cases of "peer disagreement.") But while religion is often singled out here, entrenched disagreements of this kind extend to many other spheres of belief: all of philosophy, much of politics and morality, and a fair bit of science and history. So the question of the virtuous response to disagreement does not concern religion alone: it is one that bears upon most inquiry that goes beyond relatively isolated bits of information, especially that which seeks some kind of comprehensive understanding.

Those who criticize (positive) religious belief on grounds of pervasive disagreement would seem to be endorsing some general principle to the effect that where there is significant entrenched peer disagreement, one should withhold positive belief; that is, move to a position of agnosticism. Related 'conciliatationist' suggestions in the

<sup>14</sup> For good overviews of these issues, see the introduction and other contributions to Dougherty (2011) as well as Kelly (2008).

epistemology of disagreement would recommend, not necessarily agnosticism, but some principled shift of confidence in the direction of the opposing viewpoint (e.g., Elga 2007; Christensen 2007; Cohen 2013). But as Alvin Plantinga (1998: 522) pointed out while considering the religious case explicitly, a recommendation of agnosticism in the face of disagreement is self-defeating. For there is likewise peer disagreement among epistemologists on whether and how recognition of peer disagreement in any domain should affect one's beliefs. Thus, the principle would seem to counsel that one should refrain from endorsing the principle itself. Plantinga concludes that the most sensible policy—assuming one has very thoroughly considered the matter, including opposing arguments—is to stick to one's position. More recently, epistemologists have put forward self-undermining arguments directed at additional variants of the conciliatory view (Elga 2010; Weatherson 2013). A competing, intermediate theory of the correct response to peer disagreement would be to treat the fact of disagreement as a piece of meta-evidence that should be factored into a revised, downward assessment, one that differs more or less strongly, depending on how strong one takes one's original evidence to be and the extent of peer disagreement encountered (Kelly 2010). (But what do we make of the fact that recognition of *entrenched* peer disagreement is typically 'baked into' one's original assessment of a matter?)

Another way that maintaining one's position in the face of peer disagreement can seem troubling concerns its implications for one's judgment regarding the rationality of those with whom one disagrees. Van Inwagen (2010) frames the worry this way: it seems plausible that a body of public, shared evidence 'confers rationality' on at most one of two contrary views, where 'rationality' is understood in terms of meeting one's epistemic obligations. If I continue to trust in my own judgment in a peer disagreement, I must assume with regard to the disputed matter either that that my peers are believing irrationally or that one of the following is the case: I am more capable; I have on this occasion non-public evidence, an incommunicable insight that my opponents lack; or I am just lucky—and (generalizing) continue to be lucky on all of the many matters I have opinions on where there is significant dispute! But all of these options seem implausible.

How might one respond to this argument? We suggest one starts by recognizing that for difficult philosophical, moral, political, scientific, and religious cases, differing unexpressed and perhaps unrecognized *background beliefs* are in play. These are on matters that are evidentially related to but not strictly part of what theorists take to be the shared body of evidence. (Van Inwagen's example of arguments pro and con the incompatibility of causal determinism and free will easily misleads. The argument structures and conceptual distinctions are fairly simple, but plausibly background metaphysical views—for example, concerning the nature of causal necessity, and whether we can make good sense of free will under the assumption of significant causal indeterminism of choices—inform one's assessment of those arguments.) Goldman's (2010) recent suggestion that people bring to bear on the same evidence different methodological commitments about right reasoning seems related to this answer. Does this just

push the issue of peer disagreement back one or more steps? Note that it might collapse what look like multiple disagreements into *single* case disagreement—between ‘package deal’ views in a particular disputed domain.

Second, there is presumably a fact of the matter concerning which conclusion the shared public evidence most strongly indicates in objective terms. Determining this relation in a particular case is a matter of *judgment*. Can one not comfortably doubt the quality of a peer’s judgment without doubting his rationality in grasping distinctions and arguments and carefully reflecting on them? We may each ‘reasonably’ judge—in a deontological sense—that we, and not they are judging this relation better, even while one of us, perhaps, really is the better judge, and so is more rational in this instance in a different, truth-tracking sense.

What might explain why all of the relevant parties may reasonably take themselves to be fulfilling their epistemic duties in judging as they do, despite their recognition of peers who disagree? Foley (2002) and Zagzebski (2012) emphasize the way that ‘self-trust’ implicitly underlies all forms of rational belief. Zagzebski further argues (this volume) that in general we have irreducibly first-personal reasons that cannot be shared by others, even when we report the contents of those reasons to them. Similarly, in stressing the non-transparency of our belief-forming processes, Nick Wolsterstorff (this volume) also supports the impossibility of total disclosure of one’s evidence. If this is correct, then it is false that there is completely shared evidence in cases of peer disagreement.

We make two final observations about the problem of peer disagreement, with an eye to religious beliefs. First, it seems plausible that one’s response to peer disagreement is (and should be) different in different sorts of cases. Where I am less confident of the thoroughness of my assessment, or of my ultimate judgment, peer disagreement may prompt my attitude to be one of mere *acceptance* (something I am willing to draw upon in practical reasoning and behavior), rather than outright *belief*. Second, a religious monotheist may believe on theological grounds that his faith, including his judgment that the central claims of his religion are true, is a gift from God (while also supported by evidence). God’s gifts are not necessarily equally distributed.

### III.1 Interpersonal Trust

In addition to the themes of religious faith and intellectual virtue, most authors in this volume touch on interpersonal trust, with several focusing most of their attention here. This is unsurprising. For interpersonal trust is intimately related to religious faith and may be the best, most tangible avenue through which to understand it. Moreover, trust is a natural target for evaluation on an intellectual virtue framework. We will briefly explore these relationships.

#### III.1.1 *Trust and Faith*

Trust is both similar to and partly constitutive of religious faith.

Trust is similar to faith in that (at least in cases of strong, relational trust) it involves a rich intellectual commitment with an affective dimension that opens one up to risks and somewhat compromises one's autonomy. This rich intellectual commitment involves having a set of beliefs about the trustworthiness of another person. These beliefs often bear a confidence beyond what one has evidence for believing. It also involves assuming a certain attitude toward those beliefs—a confidence and a resilience that, again, is not strictly evidentially based. We are ready and willing to think well of those we trust. We may ignore or dismiss small evidences of betrayal on the basis of our trust. In general, strong relational trust involves a certain bias, and this bias is also affective.<sup>15</sup> Upon finding that strong trust in another was not well-placed, we typically do not merely think, “Oh, I suppose I had a false set of beliefs about so-and-so,” and get on with revising those beliefs according to the new information. We feel let down. Betrayed. Trust is risky. Through trust, we can end up with false beliefs, broken hearts, and damaged lives. Trust also fundamentally takes control out of our hands, including control over beliefs, emotions, and practical affairs. It can thus be seen as compromising independence or autonomy.

Now these brief observations about trust seem similarly to apply to religious faith. Faith typically involves a rich intellectual commitment, involving beliefs that go beyond available evidence as well as a confident, resilient orientation toward those beliefs that resists (to a degree) evidentially based revision. Faith certainly involves an affective stance toward a divine being and perhaps also a body of religious authorities. And faith might seem similarly risky and compromising. To draw the explicit parallel: through faith, too, we can end up with false beliefs, broken hearts, and damaged lives. Given these similarities and given the relatively more straightforward and tangible nature of interpersonal trust, it seems promising that work being done to understand the acquisition of knowledge in interpersonal trust relationships would inform an understanding of the intellectual virtue or vice in religious faith.

But even if parallels between trust and faith prove upon consideration too tenuous to draw straightforward lessons,<sup>16</sup> one might still hope better to understand faith by understanding the interpersonal trust that is partly constitutive of religious faith. Many faithful people trust in a personal God (or gods). They trust in religious authorities. They trust in their local communities of fellow believers. They may trust in the whole great body of a worldwide Church, stretching through time and holding a communal justification for trust that transcends individual perspectives. And these trust relationships, one might think, are not external to faith but rather part of it (indeed, perhaps the lion's share!). So understanding the intellectual virtue of trusting another person has a direct application to understanding the intellectual

<sup>15</sup> It may be fruitful to think of this bias as a “first-personal reason.” See Linda Zagzebski, this volume, for a discussion of first-personal reasons.

<sup>16</sup> See John Bishop, this volume, for an argument that these parallels are actually quite limited.

virtue of faith, in that it bears directly on the intellectual virtue of trusting another person *about religious matters*.

### III.1.2 *Trust and Intellectual Virtue*

Trust's similarities to faith also highlight the reasons that trust is particularly amenable to consideration on a virtue epistemological framework. We explained these reasons with respect to faith earlier, so here we will make only a few brief comments. Trust, like faith, is a wide-ranging set of dispositions rooted in a rich intellectual commitment. It involves, not only beliefs, but practices and attitudes sustained over time. Although we may consider whether particular beliefs based on trust are justified (Were they formed by appropriate faculties? Were they acquired by reliable methods?), it is not sufficient or even perhaps sensible to ask the same justification questions about an overall orientation of trust.

The question of the intellectual virtue in trust is fascinating and important quite apart from its relevance to religious faith. While risky, trust is eminently necessary and even good or desirable for human beings. Trust helps us acquire intellectual goods—even knowledge—that we could never gain by running off and trying to figure everything out by ourselves. Understanding how this can be and understanding the rules governing right trust (as opposed to gullibility or naïveté) has been the project of numerous recent essays, including parts of essays in this volume.<sup>17</sup>

The conditions of virtuous trust also lie at the crux of two other questions in epistemology currently receiving much attention, concerning the acceptance of testimony and intellectual authority.

Note first that some weak form of trust seems necessarily to underlie the rationality of acquiring knowledge through testimony (knowledge at second hand). A friend tells me that the pope has just resigned, and I come to know this by believing her through trust. This kind of telling—what philosophers call testimony—is a very ordinary and important way by which we learn. As we noted earlier in discussing the sociality of knowledge, it's not clear we could know anything at all (or even acquire language skills) without at least starting off trusting what others say. To date, philosophers (including Foley, Fricker, and Zagzebski) have focused on understanding the rationality of this thin, 'necessary-for-getting-off-the-ground' kind of trust in the reliability of other people's tellings. Foley and Zagzebski argue that, since we have to trust our own basic cognitive faculties, on pain of skepticism, we also have to trust those around us with relatively similar cognitive abilities, on pain of arbitrariness. In her contribution to this volume, Fricker rebuts versions of this argument en route to concluding that rational trust in others depends on having specific evidence of their trustworthiness.

But this is a very thin sort of trust indeed, one that is perhaps more appropriately termed 'reliance.' A general reliance on others' tellings born of necessity needn't

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Richard Foley (2002), Linda Zagzebski (2012), and the essays by Elizabeth Fricker, Eleonore Stump, Linda Zagzebski, and Laura Callahan and Timothy O'Connor in this volume.

involve any affective commitment. And mature, intellectually virtuous adults quickly scrap general reliance whenever anything else is available, whether perceived evidence or the deliverance of a well-trusted friend. For example, if I ask a stranger on the street the time of day and he tells me it's noon, I will believe him (as long as I do not know quite well that it is not anywhere near midday, from the external evidence of, e.g., the sun setting on the horizon). But as soon as I see a clock or two telling otherwise, or as soon as my good friend runs up to ask, "Where have you been? It's almost 2:00pm!", I will revise that belief.

We conclude that more work is needed to understand the complex virtue of trusting the right people's testimony, on the right issues, to the right extent. Here, as with relational trust, we expect that there will be a greater role for acquired habits and skills as opposed to innate or rationally necessary dispositions.

The same could be said for the linked epistemological topic of intellectual authority, a topic that is especially relevant to faith. It can obviously be rational to defer to the opinion of someone who I can see is better placed or better able than I am to get at the truth about a particular matter, even where my own assessment of the raw facts would yield a different conclusion.<sup>18</sup> (It's rational for a high-school biology student to go with what the book says about the force of gravity, even though she would have guessed it to be much less strong.) But in practice this is messier. It's difficult to assess the abilities and expertise of putative authorities, and they can dupe us. Sometimes we are asked to accept authorities where we are not even in a position to understand why or how these individuals are better placed to get at the truth. And ultimately, it is still we who bear the responsibility for evaluating authorities and marshaling our intellectual affairs. How do mature, intellectually virtuous adults go about trusting the right authorities, and how do they know when to rebel?<sup>19</sup>

To date, most work on the intellectual virtue in trust has focused on its rational necessity for accepting testimony and intellectual authority (which we cannot do without), although some have begun to argue that the moral and social effects of trust are also relevant to its virtue. We offer here one additional consideration in defense of trust that has been little explored: trust is necessary for the acquisition of relational knowledge.

Throughout this introduction, we have discussed the potential of a virtue framework to broaden the set of epistemic goods, to include not only knowledge but wisdom, understanding, and perhaps acquaintance. On this broader framework, there is room to recognize the importance of the knowledge and understanding one gains by being in a close relationship such as deep friendship or marriage. This understanding might include, not only deep understanding of the attributes and inner states of the other person—her personality, her feelings, her fears, her aspirations, her history, her characteristics—but also a deep understanding of general moral or social

<sup>18</sup> See Zagzebski (2012) for a thorough discussion of the grounding of beliefs accepted on authority.

<sup>19</sup> For discussion, see Goldman (2011).



truths—truths about empathy, forgiveness, compassion, etc. So there is important knowledge to be gained through being in close relationship. But close relationships are predicated on trust. Trust is thus a necessary condition on the gleaning of important intellectual goods.

## IV.1 Overview of Essays in This Volume

*W. Jay Wood* gives a fresh re-statement and development of a view of Christian faith that goes back to Augustine and Aquinas. He starts by arguing that there is a variety of faith underlying all human inquiry: the ‘thin faith’ in our own and others’ cognitive capacities. He then presents a view of Christian faith in God as a natural disposition to not only cognitively accept but to embrace and be changed by the natural and supernatural means by which God reveals Himself to human persons. He argues that the fact that this disposition is not (apparently) a human universal is not a strong reason to reject it as properly epistemically basic. He then elaborates a detailed account of how this attitude of faith unfolds, involving an interplay of cognitive and affective attitudes, and how it matures in ways that suggest that it is intellectually virtuous. Its highest form is mystical knowledge, a kind of intimate ‘connaturality’ of affection between the believer and God analogous to, yet deeper than, intimate forms of human love.

*Lara Buchak* presents a general account of the attitude of faith in proposition *P* (both religious and non-religious), on which it consists in stopping one’s search for evidence for *P* and committing to act on it without further evidence. Her aim is two-fold: first, to identify the conditions under which instances of faith may be rational, as seen through the lens of decision-theoretic accounts of epistemic and instrumental rationality; second, to examine the relationship of rational faith to justified belief. She argues that understanding the latter relationship turns on an unresolved question concerning how justified belief *simpliciter* is a function of rational *degrees* of belief (the operative notion in decision theory). But she goes on to sketch how the relationship between rational faith and justified belief will go, depending on which of the four main accounts of the rational credence–justified belief connection one accepts.

*John Schellenberg* delivers ‘good news’ and ‘bad news’ as regards ordinary religious belief. The bad news is that the practice of trusting the religion and religious mentors of one’s upbringing cannot suffice for rational religious *belief*. The good news is that there can be religious and nonreligious attitudes of trust that are more *imaginative* than doxastic—that is, that are shorn of specific belief commitments. Specifically, he commends an imaginative stance towards ‘ultimism,’ the proposition that there is a reality that is *triple ultimate*: metaphysically, as the ultimate fact about the nature of things; axiologically, as the greatest possible reality; and soteriologically, such that significant relation to it can be attained. Theistic faith is a very specific variety of ultimism, but one, Schellenberg argues, for which we can have little justification at this early stage in the evolutionary development of sustained human thought about such matters.

*Trent Dougherty* contends that faith should be seen as a simple instance of testimonial acceptance, with the implication that, contrary to what many writers have supposed, faith does not raise distinctive epistemological issues of 'form.' The most provocative feature of his essay is his claim that an internalist, evidentialist, and foundationalist epistemology—commonly a target of criticism for recent defenders of the rationality of religious belief—is in fact hospitable to the reasonableness of the faith even of ordinary religious believers not well equipped with sophisticated arguments. Since, he argues, testimonial trust fits comfortably within such a broad epistemology, the believer may reasonably take the 'inner' testimony of God to provide evidence more powerful than skeptical arguments for which she has no direct answer.

*Evan Fales* suggests that the psychology of faith is often misunderstood, even by persons of faith. It is plausible that even the faith of cognitively unsophisticated believers is rooted in forms of evidence (which may or may not be objectively probative). However, often enough, details of the original grounds for their belief have been largely forgotten over time (as happens with belief more generally). He allows that such persistent belief is not inherently problematic, nor even is a fairly strong tendency to persist in belief in the face of significant counterevidence, a tendency that is also reflected in commitment to fruitful theories in science. However, he goes on to argue, contra fideism, that belief formed entirely in the absence of evidence is an epistemic vice, and to argue further that the common phenomenon of God's coming to seem 'hidden' to the believer for more or less protracted periods of time can render unreasonable the persistence of trust in God that is a central dimension of theistic faith.

*Paul Moser* offers a sustained reflection on what a morally perfect God would seek for created persons. He argues that freely embraced and cooperatively shared acquaintance with, and participation in, God's moral goodness would be of overriding value to such persons, and therefore we can expect that God, if He exists, would make this opportunity available to all. However, our moral inconstancy, and especially our tendency to fail to worship God wholeheartedly, poses a serious obstacle to such experience of friendship with God. God's offer of friendship therefore must be an offer of redemptive friendship, in which God increasingly manifests His perfect, self-sacrificial love, or *agape*, in a person's life. Because God would choose to do this only in persons who freely cooperate, it entails moral struggle on our part. Where a person experiences this in powerful ways in her life, she thereby comes to have a distinct and significant kind of evidence for God's reality, as it involves a self-manifestation of God's own character and reality. Having laid out this account, Moser goes on to consider obstacles to our receiving this transforming love, and suggests that it includes a common vice of philosophers—to seek other kinds of purely contemplative evidence of God's reality that simply are not available to us.

*John Bishop* considers and argues against the proposal that faith's similarities to interpersonal trust merit its being considered reasonable or virtuous. There is, to be sure, an important analogy between faith and trust. This analogy may in fact be crucial to *understanding* the content of faith. But the disanalogies between the two sever the

attempt to justify faith along the same lines as trust. When we examine what is actually involved in reasonable interpersonal trust—for example, the inductive basis for trust, the venture incurred by virtue of trustees sometimes letting us down, the possibility of ‘constructive’ trust that does not involve belief in a trustee’s trustworthiness, the potential for (dis)confirmation of our assessments of trustworthiness—we see that both the epistemically worrisome and redeeming features of trust are quite different than what’s involved in faith. There are special reasons to worry about faith, including faith’s requiring special doxastic venture even to believe in the existence of the God purportedly trusted. Thus, Bishop argues, the virtuous character of faith would have to be defended, if this were possible, by other means.

*Lizzie Fricker* observes that religious beliefs are often grounded in trust in others. Richard Foley and others have recently argued that there is an a priori connection between rational trust in one’s own faculties and rational trust of other human persons. Fricker argues, to the contrary, that we must instead establish through empirical observation which others are to be trusted and under which circumstances—there is no rational presumption of the trustworthiness of others absent experience. Hence, since it is incumbent on us as rational agents generally to empirically assess the trustworthiness of specific others, rationality requires that in particular religious matters we assess the credentials of those from whom we take our beliefs.

*Eleonore Stump* employs a Thomistic account of faith as well as recent neurobiological research to explore just why we might consider the trust-based, testimonial acquisition of knowledge to be the result of a *virtue*. The motivating worry for her essay is that, typically, taking others’ word through trust is apparently easy and passive. Why think of this as any kind of success through ability, as a virtue would be? Stump briefly explicates the role of the will in a Thomistic account of belief and wisdom, suggests that recent empirical research offers support and refinement to those of Aquinas’s views under consideration, and concludes that coming to testimonial knowledge is indeed an *accomplishment* on the part of one who trusts. It is our empathic capacities working together with our wills that allow us to perceive and actively, appropriately respond to goodness or trustworthiness in others. Similar processes may be at work in the acquisition and growth of our faith in God.

*Linda Zagzebski* calls attention to self-trust in the light of an important distinction between the types of reasons one typically has for one’s beliefs. She claims that attacks on the intellectual virtue of a faith commitment are typically criticisms of one or the other category of a person’s reasons for the religious beliefs in question; these attacks admit of different kinds of defenses depending on the category of reasons impugned and have different consequences if successful. The distinction called for is between *theoretical or third-personal reasons* for believing religious propositions (facts that are logically or probabilistically connected to the truth of those propositions, typically communicable) and *deliberative or first-personal epistemic reasons*. These are reasons that have an essential connection to the person who holds them, including her experiences and—crucially—her self-trust. Attempts to undermine a believer’s

confidence, for example by showing how evolutionary biology or psychology can explain away belief, should be seen for what they are: attacks on one's first-personal reasons that should purport to have a *pervasive* impact on one's beliefs, yet do not bear on third-personal arguments.

*Laura Callahan* and *Tim O'Connor* argue that the *well-tuned* trust found in interpersonal relationships as well as communal institutions and enterprises—as distinct from blind gullibility in either case—is an intellectual virtue on the grounds that it is balanced with concern for other, potentially 'threatened' virtues and that it is highly productive of epistemic goods. The considerations and conclusion of this argument are highly suggestive for an examination of religious faith. If faith can be similarly held in check by concerns for intellectual autonomy and caution, and if faith can help us to the discovery of important truths, then a parallel argument for intellectual virtue in faith could be at least partly sustained. However, the ultimate success of such an argument will hinge on empirical questions regarding the form of faith in question: the actual evidence available for its propositional content and the demands it makes on the intellectual conduct (e.g., resilience in belief, deference to communal authority) of its adherents.

*Sandy Goldberg* presents a particular challenge for the prominent externalist epistemic theories by which some have recently sought to vindicate the justification of religious belief. In its general form, the challenge Goldberg outlines—stemming from the fact of pervasive religious disagreement amounting to *systematic disagreement*—applies to *anyone* who would vindicate religious belief. A religious person is seemingly committed to the difficult-to-explain view that all those with differing religious views, that is, a good number of intelligent, otherwise competent people, have failed to achieve truth. The difficulty of explanation here suggests (minimally) that one should not be very confident. But Goldberg here focuses on this challenge's particular relevance to recent externalists' aims. Systemic disagreement calls into question both the existence of reliable routes to religious knowledge and the possibility of one's being entitled to think one is using such a route.

*Jennifer Lackey* considers what rationality requires when there is disagreement over propositions with religious content between those who regard one another (or should regard one another) as epistemic peers. She rejects prominent conceptions of epistemic peerhood that would countenance religious believers and non-believers alike simply continuing without revision despite encountered disagreement. These conceptions in one way or other allow for defining all those with differing opinions as non-peers, which would have the implication that there are no genuinely interesting instances of religious disagreement. Instead, Lackey proposes that atheists and theists *should* regard each other as epistemic peers, if they should regard each other as equally justified in their respective beliefs.

*Nick Wolterstorff* engages the essays in this volume by Lackey and Goldberg, also taking up the general question of the significance of inexplicable disagreement. He points out that disagreement within the discipline of philosophy is common and generally

thought to be unproblematic. Considering why this is the case, he argues that the processes by which we come to hold our beliefs, and the reasons for our convictions, are never entirely transparent, leaving us room to suppose that subtle, undetectable errors and background beliefs underlie otherwise puzzling peer disagreements. Despite the popular framing of religious disagreements as signals that one or both sides have got things wrong and ought to alter their beliefs, Wolterstorff argues that we can be entitled to our religious beliefs even when others disagree for reasons we can't identify and explain.

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