



Carter, J. A., Jarvis, B., and Rubin, K. (2013) Knowledge: value on the cheap. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 91(2), pp. 249-263.

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Deposited on: 22 December 2016

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Knowledge: Value on the Cheap

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This is a preprint of an article whose final and definitive form will be /is published in the Australasian Journal of Philosophy [2013]; the Australasian Journal of Philosophy is available online at: <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/>.

ABSTRACT: We argue that the so-called ‘Primary’ and ‘Secondary’ Value Problems for knowledge are more easily solved than is widely appreciated. Pritchard, for instance, has suggested that only virtue-theoretic accounts have any hopes of adequately addressing these problems. By contrast, we argue that accounts of knowledge that are sensitive to the Gettier problem are able to overcome these challenges. To first approximation, the Primary Value Problem is a problem of understanding how the property of being knowledge confers more epistemic value on a belief than the property of being true. The Secondary Value is a problem of understanding how, for instance, property of being knowledge confers more epistemic value on a belief than the property of being jointly true and justified. We argue that attending to the fact that beliefs are ongoing states reveals that there is no difficulty in appreciating how knowledge might ordinarily have more epistemic value than mere true belief or mere justified true belief. We also explore in what ways ordinary cases of knowledge might be of distinctive epistemic value. In the end, our proposal resembles the original Platonic suggestion in the *Meno* that knowledge is valuable because knowledge is somehow *tied to the good of truth*.

Keywords: knowledge; epistemic value; Swamping Problem; virtue epistemology

Many have been attracted to the position that justified true belief is good enough for many purposes. If I have a justified true belief about where the beer is, how to cure AIDS, or my not being a brain in a vat, who cares whether or not I have knowledge? This is why some view the Gettier industry with bemusement. [Jackson 2002: 516]

...the only way to capture our intuition that knowledge is distinctively valuable is by demonstrating that it is finally valuable. Unfortunately, we have found that the only prima facie plausible account of why knowledge might be finally valuable—that offered by robust virtue epistemology—does not stand up to closer scrutiny. [Pritchard 2009a: 15]

Truth plus a reliable source of truth cannot explain the value of knowledge. It follows that there must be a value in the cause of a true belief that is independent of reliability or truth conduciveness.... [Zagzebski 2003: 14]

1.

Introduction

That knowledge must be more *epistemically valuable* (henceforth ‘*e-valuable*’) than mere true belief is often assumed to generate an *ex ante* constraint on candidate theories of knowledge: the conditions that a theory places on knowledge (beyond true belief) must be such that a true belief

that satisfies those conditions must be ordinarily more e-valuable than one that does not [Kvanvig 2003; Pritchard 2009b; Greco 2009; Kvanvig 2010].¹ (*Epistemic value* is, presumably, value arising from the existence of distinctively intellectual goods as opposed to, for instance, the presence of pleasure.)² The *Primary Value Problem* is the problem of developing a theory capable of accommodating this (plausible-seeming) constraint.³ The main obstacle to developing such a theory is generally assumed to be the *Swamping Problem*—the problem of addressing the question of how the property of knowledge could add any e-value to an already true belief.⁴ This challenge has been highlighted by Kvanvig [2003, 2010], Zagzebski [2003], Jones [1997], Pritchard [2009b], and Swinburne [1999].

The Primary Value Problem can be understood as a special case of a more general problem. Call a property, *C*, a *component* of knowledge if and only if, necessarily, a belief that is knowledge has *C*, but possibly, a belief that has *C* is not knowledge. Thus, beliefs that have component properties may fall short of knowledge, but such properties are necessary for knowledge. That knowledge must be more e-valuable than any component of knowledge seems plausible, and so a more general *ex ante* constraint arises: for any component of knowledge, *C*, a belief that is knowledge must ordinarily turn out to be more e-valuable than a belief that has *C*, but is not knowledge. Any theory capable of accommodating this constraint will obviously guarantee that knowledge is ordinarily more e-valuable than true belief, but it will also guarantee that knowledge is ordinarily more e-valuable than, for instance, justified true belief that falls short of knowledge.

¹ Cf. Baehr [2009] and Ridge [2011] for recent challenges to this assumption.

² For our purposes, it doesn't matter whether we can make sense of distinctively epistemic value because our main point is just that constraints driven by considerations of epistemic value, *if there are any*, are relatively easy to accommodate.

³ Here, we adopt Pritchard's [2009a] terminology. This problem is sometimes referred to as the *Meno Problem*. Indeed, Kvanvig [2003] suggests that, while the *Meno* exchange concerns *pragmatic* value, the 'moral' of the exchange concerns epistemic value.

⁴ Sometimes the Swamping Problem is identified with the Primary Value Problem. However, we agree with Pritchard [2009a] that the Swamping Problem is a problem of demonstrating *that it is possible* to develop a theory of knowledge such that knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief; the Primary Value Problem is a problem of actually developing such a theory.

Call the problem of developing a theory capable of accommodating this constraint the *Secondary Value Problem*.⁵

These problems are generally articulated in terms of e-value, so our discussion of the problems will follow suit. However, analogous challenges can be levied in terms of *pragmatic value*—that is to say, value related to the more general well-being of believers.⁶ True belief appears to have pragmatic value in certain canonical circumstances, given that acting upon true beliefs suffices for satisfying desires. One might worry that this pragmatic value leaves little room for additional value in central cases of knowledge.

For many epistemologists, the challenge of addressing these problems has seemed vexing; Kvanvig [2003], for example, is inclined to conclude that it cannot be met. Others have suggested that while these constraints can ultimately be accommodated, the class of theories with the requisite resources is restrictive—perhaps including only virtue theories on which knowledge is roughly understood as a belief that is true because of the manifestation of particular cognitive abilities. Such theorists conclude that knowledge is finally valuable because cognitive achievements—i.e., successes creditable to cognitive ability—are finally valuable and knowledge is such a cognitive achievement [Zagzebski 2003; Sosa 2007; Greco 2010].

By contrast, we argue that, insofar as they are problems at all, these problems can be resolved straightforwardly. Moreover, we suggest that the *ex ante* constraints of the Primary and Secondary Value Problem can be met on theories of knowledge where knowledge is understood as justified true belief that meets some other (difficult or even impossible to specify) condition aimed at blocking Gettier cases (henceforth ‘JTB+ theories’)—a plethora of theories, if not the majority of them.

⁵ Again, we borrow this terminology from Pritchard [2009a]. For Pritchard, however, the problem is one of explaining how knowledge could be more valuable than any proper subset of its parts. We have recast the problem because we don’t want to assume that knowledge is divisible into parts.

⁶ For instance, Olsson’s [2007] principal argument focuses on this analogous challenge.

In §2, we present a solution to the Swamping Problem and explain how this solution may be elaborated to develop a response to the Primary Value Problem accessible to JTB+ theorists. In §3, we expand upon the strategies advanced in §2 to address the Secondary Value Problem. In §4, we consider how our remarks bear on a further possible value problem before concluding in §5.

2. **The Primary Value Problem**

The project of solving the Primary Value Problem would be clearly undermined if the Swamping Problem could not be overcome. For if the e-value conferred by knowledge were nothing beyond the e-value of true belief, developing a theory capable of meeting the relevant constraint would be straightforwardly impossible. In order to tackle the Primary Value Problem, then, one would have to clear the way by adequately responding to the Swamping Problem.

The Swamping Problem is generated by the *Swamping Argument*. The Swamping Argument, as we shall characterize it, arises from three of four independently plausible premises:

(S1) Knowledge is more e-valuable than mere true belief.

(S2) Any e-value conferred on a belief merely by that belief having some non-factive property is instrumental value relative to the further epistemic good of true rather than false belief.

(S3) If knowledge is more e-valuable than mere true belief, then there is a non-factive component of knowledge that, in instances of knowledge, adds e-value.

(S4) If the value of a property possessed by an item is only instrumental value relative to a further good and that good is already present in that item, then it can confer no additional value. [Pritchard, 2009b]

All these premises have intuitive appeal. The first, S1, is largely just an articulation of the *ex ante* constraint suggested by the Primary Value Problem. The second premise, S2, gives conditions under which a property is e-valuable. Clearly, there are many different kinds of value, e.g. pragmatic, aesthetic, etc. Arguably, what distinguishes *epistemic* value from value of these other

sorts is some connection to the fundamental good of true rather than false belief.⁷ One might think it is something like S2 that explains the e-value of justification—justified beliefs are more e-valuable than (e-disvaluable) unjustified beliefs precisely because justified beliefs are *more likely to be true*, or, alternatively, *true in the default case*, whereas unjustified beliefs are *less likely to be true* and may even be *false in the default case*. S3 is an ostensible precondition for the truth of S1. Unless there is some non-factive component of knowledge that, in instances of knowledge, adds e-value, knowledge cannot be more e-valuable than mere true belief.

The final condition, S4, we may call the *Swamping Thesis* (following Pritchard [2009b]). The Swamping Thesis is typically motivated by way of analogy. Suppose you are presented with two identical cups of coffee; both are equally large and delicious [Zagzebski 2003; Pritchard 2009b]. One has been produced by a machine that reliably outputs excellent coffee. The other is a happy fluke—produced by a machine that ordinarily brews undrinkable sludge. Insofar as you are convinced that the cups of coffee are really identical, it seems that you will have no preference for one over the other. The fact that one cup was produced by an excellent machine confers no additional value on it. Thus, the value the property of having been produced by an excellent machine confers on the coffee is ‘swamped’ by the value conferred by the property of being a great cup of coffee. S4 simply generalizes this kind of reasoning to value of all sorts.

Despite the individual appeal of S1-S4, they are not co-tenable. Let V_e be a function that inputs properties of a belief, and outputs the e-value contributed by those properties. Let K be the property of being knowledge, and T the property of being true. Let C be some arbitrary non-factive component of knowledge. We can reason as follows:

(i) C adds only instrumental e-value relative to the further epistemic good of true rather than false belief. (by S2)

(ii) Therefore, $V_e(T \& C) = V_e(T)$. (by S4)

⁷ The suggestion that the fundamental epistemic good is *true rather than false belief* rather than merely *true belief* is not without significance. S2 encapsulates a plausible veritism whereby not only is true belief e-valuable, but false belief is e-disvaluable.

(iii) Therefore, no non-factive component adds e-value in instances of K . (by Universal Generalization)

(iv) Therefore, $V_e(K) = V_e(T)$ (by S3)

The conclusion (iv) is the rejection of S1. A natural response to the Swamping Argument is to retain S1 by rejecting S2. (For instance, one might adopt the view that the fundamental good that distinguishes epistemic value is knowledge.) While there may be independent motivations to reject S2, we think that pursuing this approach is unnecessary for defending the value of knowledge because S4 is demonstrably unacceptable [Carter and Jarvis forthcoming].

S4, as we note, is typically motivated by analogies like the coffee example discussed above. We consider a good: delicious coffee. We see that the value of the property of being produced by an excellent coffee maker is only instrumental relative to the good of delicious coffee. But then we see that once deliciousness is present in the coffee, having been produced by an excellent coffee maker confers no additional value. To understand what is wrong with S4, we may consider something else we value: having a pleasant home. Very plausibly, the value of the property of being well-maintained is instrumental to the good of having a pleasant home. For instance, suppose Bertie's flat is exceptionally pleasant; not only is it well-maintained, but it is tastefully decorated, conveniently located, etc. Is the value of being well-maintained 'swamped' by the value of the Bertie's already pleasant flat? It seems not.

Here is why: the project of keeping up a home is rather unlike the project of making a cup of coffee. The project of producing a cup of coffee *has a clear terminus*. The instrumental value that the property of being produced by an excellent machine confers on the coffee can only be 'swamped' *when the process is over*. To see this, imagine that you are watching a reliable coffee maker and an unreliable one brewing coffee side by side. If, during the process, you consider which machine's output you'd prefer, it seems clear that you should choose the output of the reliable machine (even granting that the *current* brews in both machines are identical). The trouble is that,

so long as the coffee is brewing, the bad machine has a greater chance of ruining the mixture. So, the ‘swamping’ can only happen when the brewing is done.

Of course, the project of keeping up a pleasant home *does not have a clear terminus*. Once we appreciate this, it becomes clear that the property of being well-maintained cannot be ‘swamped’ by the value of Bertie’s already pleasant flat; for if the flat is to continue to be pleasant, *it will have to go on being well-maintained*. Thus, although the value of property of being well-maintained is instrumental to the good of having a pleasant home, the property of being well-maintained can continue to confer instrumental value on the home *indefinitely*. This case presents a straightforward counterexample to S4, and, thus, defuses the Swamping Argument and the Swamping Problem it generates.

Once this resolution of the Swamping Problem comes into view, a solution to the Primary Value Problem takes shape.⁸ By definition, JTB+ theories are committed to the thought that true beliefs that have the property of knowledge have the property of justification. The justification condition has been cashed out in a variety of ways, but, ostensibly, proponents of any account of justification would agree that (doxastically) justified beliefs are beliefs that are acquired and sustained under certain appropriate circumstances (the details of which can be filled in by the relevant theory). Plainly, the *acquisition* of a new belief is an *event with a terminus*. But beliefs themselves are ongoing *states*.⁹ They are not events with a clear terminus like the production of a cup of coffee [Williamson 2000: 35; Chrisman forthcoming]. Once we apprehend this, we can immediately see a route to accommodating the *ex ante* constraint posed by the Primary Value

⁸ Olsson [2007] responds similarly to the Swamping Problem: coffee and belief are disanalogous because the latter can be ‘destabilized’ whereas the former cannot. We think that distinction between events and states can explain this disanalogy.

⁹ As Mourelatos [1978] points out, dynamic events with terminuses, such as accomplishments and activities, typically have progressive forms in English. However, neither ‘I am knowing p’, nor ‘I am believing p’ is felicitous. This observation is consistent with the Vendler-Kenney scheme [Vendler 1967] of verb types. As Chrisman [forthcoming: 8] notes, the unavailability of the progressive generally sufficient for testing whether a verb phrase is ‘non-dynamic’. Importantly, states are aspectually classified as (unlike what would admit of a terminus) non-dynamic. These considerations favour parting ways with the orthodoxy in the literature on epistemic value, according to which true beliefs are viewed (for the purpose of assessing epistemic value) as having some evaluable terminus.

Problem. For, in light of the fact that a true belief is an ongoing state, we can see that the (historical) property of having been acquired under appropriate circumstances might continue to confer instrumental e-value on a true belief *even though* the acquisition process has already reached its terminus. Consider that designing a home is also an event with a terminus. But even so, the (historical) property of having been cleverly designed clearly continues to confer instrumental value vis-à-vis having a pleasant home long after the design process has reached its terminus.

Moreover, it is critical to stress that managing beliefs, much like maintaining a house is an ongoing affair. Managing a belief continues long after the belief has been acquired; we may reflect on beliefs, and, ultimately, discard them.¹⁰ Having a justified belief, presumably, is not just a matter of having a belief that has been acquired under appropriate circumstances; it is also a matter of sustaining that belief under the right conditions. Indeed, it is natural to think that acquiring a belief under the right circumstances is important, in part, because doing so facilitates sustaining a belief that is true, just as designing a house cleverly is important, in part, because doing so facilitates sustaining a house that is pleasant.

This point is particularly salient for those who, following Leite [2004, 2010], contend that the ability to offer reasons for a belief is, in many central instances, *constitutive* of being justified in believing (for that reason). On such a proposal, justification—and any concomitant instrumental e-value—is tied to the possibility of giving reasons for one's present belief. It is not entirely implausible that, in certain instances, part of what is required to manage a belief well is having an ability to address potential challenges. If so, then properly managing a belief is plainly an ongoing affair.

However, even those who deny that the ability to offer reasons for a belief is necessary for one to remain justified in believing *p* still have good grounds to maintain both that (i) managing a justified belief well over time involves (at least in part) the ability to respond appropriately to

¹⁰ Cf. Olsson [2007] who focuses narrowly on reliabilist theories of justification.

potential defeaters *even if* that belief's acquiring its status as justified is largely a function of, say, satisfying externalist criteria at the time of acquisition; and (ii) responding (and having the ability to respond) appropriately to potential defeaters is not something that has to occur at the stage of *acquisition* of the belief. Rather, it typically takes place at least partly after the belief has been acquired.

In any case, it is imminently plausible that a belief's being justified over time is a matter of its being *well-managed* not only in terms of its acquisition *but also* its sustainment. Sustaining a belief *under the right conditions* also (continually) confers instrumental value on the belief just as keeping up a house (continually) confers instrumental value towards the end of having a pleasant home.

As the default, *good management* of a pre-existing belief might involve retaining and not actively reconsidering the belief—but only assuming that the default is also that beliefs are felicitously acquired so as to start out justified. In general, dogmatically sustaining a belief does *not* facilitate the end of true rather than false belief *per se*, even if the belief in question happens to be true. Sustaining beliefs at random is no better in this respect. These approaches to managing pre-existing beliefs do not select for having distinctively *true* beliefs any more than an approach of acquiring just any belief would. Consequently, neither approach confers any truth-related instrumental e-value.

The *right conditions* for sustainment exclude not only (at least some) conditions in which the belief has been infelicitously acquired, but also (at least some) conditions in which acquisition was originally reasonable but would no longer be so—as when a subject discovers that her belief, if true, was Gettierized at the time of acquisition.¹¹ We propose that a belief that both was acquired felicitously and is now sustained in a way that potentially is rationally responsive to forthcoming

¹¹ In making a similar argument, Olsson [2007] focuses narrowly on conditions in which the belief has been acquired unreliably, i.e. in a way that is in at least one respect infelicitous, and this fact comes to light. However, defeaters that will destabilize the belief (assuming the subject is rational) need not reveal that the belief was acquired in a generally unreliable way.

defeaters is a canonical instance of an instrumentally e-valuable belief. This belief is *presently* selected for being true rather than false *even if* this present selection is largely parasitic on the belief's having been selected for being true rather than false during its acquisition. This belief is also very plausibly a canonical instance of a well-managed—and therefore, *justified*—belief, suggesting that being justified necessarily gives rise to instrumental e-value.¹²

It is imperative also to emphasize that being 'well-managed' could be understood in a myriad of ways. Along with admitting of a virtue-theoretic reading, it could also be understood 'mechanistically' as simply being acquired and sustained under causal influences that, when the world cooperates, result in truth. To see why, it is useful to return to our home analogy. The fact that Bertie's flat is well-maintained (in the relevant sense) may not be clearly attributable to Bertie's abilities. We might imagine that Bertie is utterly incompetent in such matters. The fact that his flat is well-maintained may be entirely the result of the efforts of his far more competent valet, Jeeves. And, although it is surely not the case with Jeeves, it is possible for a valet to maintain a flat well, but not for that reason; a valet might maintain a flat well because good maintenance is incidental to some other pursuit. Finally, even the fact that Bertie has in his employ a valet that properly maintains his flat need not be due to some special skill Bertie possesses; we might imagine that Bertie engaged the services of Jeeves in a drunken stupor. These possibilities illustrate that being well-maintained in the relevant sense need not have any implications about whether the flat is maintained responsibly or even in such a way that someone deserves credit for success. The same could be said for the good management of beliefs. What matters is simply that a good result is regularly delivered (whatever the explanation). Consequently, the claim that justified beliefs are well-managed beliefs cannot be especially controversial.

¹² Note that the kinds of ancillary contingent assumptions that Olsson [2007] makes in constructing his narrower argument for the value of justification understood as reliability can be dispensed with, assuming that one adopts a more plausible version of veritism that acknowledges the disvalue of false belief. See footnote 7. This point is significant as it shows that the links between justification and e-value are necessary rather than contingent.

In any case, once we observe that true beliefs are ongoing states, it seems overwhelmingly plausible that good management (in terms of its acquisition and sustainment) can confer instrumental e-value on a true belief *indefinitely*. Of course, if the property of knowledge confers the instrumental e-value of the property of being well-managed on a true belief (because it confers the instrumental e-value of the property of being justified on a true belief), then, *ipso facto*, the property of knowledge will confer instrumental e-value on that true belief *indefinitely*.

Accordingly, it seems palpable that JTB+ theories offer the resources to accommodate the *ex ante* constraint that a true belief that satisfies the conditions of knowledge must be more e-valuable than a true belief that does not. So much for the Primary Value Problem.

3. The Secondary Value Problem

While the previous section may provide a satisfactory resolution to the Primary Value Problem, it may increase anxiety about the possibility of surmounting the Secondary Value Problem. Recall, the Secondary Value Problem is a problem of developing a theory of knowledge which accommodates the constraint that for any component of knowledge, C, a belief that is knowledge must ordinarily turn out to be more e-valuable than a belief that merely has C; it is a problem of developing a theory of knowledge on which the e-value of knowledge does not regularly collapse into the e-value of any component of knowledge.

Above, we argue that since true beliefs are ongoing *states*, the Primary Value Problem can be overcome. This is because true beliefs that have the property of knowledge also have the property of being justified, and the latter implies that the beliefs are well-managed in terms of their acquisition and sustainment. And it is easy to see how *this* latter property can continue to confer instrumental e-value on an ongoing true belief state. However, if knowledge confers more e-value on a belief than truth does because knowledge involves justification, then one might (reasonably) wonder whether the e-value of knowledge collapses into the e-value of *justified true belief*. To put

the point differently: if what we have said thus far is right, it is easy to see that satisfying both the ‘J’ and the ‘T’ conditions of a JTB+ theory of knowledge could continually add e-value to an ongoing belief, but it might be difficult to see what value satisfying the ‘+’ condition could be adding. We contend that, despite any initial appearances to the contrary, it *does* add something.

To understand what kind of value could be added, consider (again) the good of having a pleasant home. What kinds of properties are instrumental to this good? We’ve already seen one kind of property is that of being well-maintained. Other examples spring to mind. Properties, like being cleverly designed, being tastefully decorated, being conveniently located, etc. are also instrumental. A notable feature of these properties is that a home comes to have them through the *causal influence of home designers, constructors, and dwellers*—or, more precisely, *the causal influence of the psychological mechanisms of home designers, builders, and dwellers at a personal or subpersonal level* (whether or not they reflect any kind of agency). Let’s call properties that arise from such causes *ψ-properties*.

Now we might ask: if a home comes to have *all* the possible *ψ-properties* instrumental to the good of being pleasant, *will it be pleasant?* Not always. Bertie’s assiduously maintained, swanky Art Deco flat located in the most fashionable district of London could clearly be ravaged by a fluke hurricane. His tastefully decorated lounge would surely not be pleasant under several feet of water. This observation leads naturally to the conclusion that there are properties instrumental to the good of a pleasant home besides *ψ-properties*. These are properties of happy circumstance. To summarize, there are *two distinct kinds* of properties instrumental to the good of a pleasant house. There are *ψ-properties*. But, there are also properties that are the result of ambient causes.

It is worth emphasizing that the conferral of instrumental value on a home—both by *ψ-properties* *and* by properties that result from ambient factors—results from an important sense in which these two kinds of properties *complement* one another to secure the good in canonical cases. Insofar as we can anticipate ambient factors that may come to bear on a home, we adjust our

methods of designing and maintaining that home to ensure that it will be pleasant when these factors come to bear. The methods that are effective in creating a pleasant home in California, where earthquakes are common, are different from those that are effective in creating a pleasant home in Colorado, where heavy snowfall is frequent. Thus, *good* methods in design, construction, and maintenance appear to be methods that are effective in securing the good of having a pleasant home in whatever kinds of circumstances can be taken as the default in the present case.

Distinctively *happy* circumstances are, similarly, whatever circumstances facilitate securing the good of having a pleasant home when good methods in design, construction, and maintenance are undertaken. If these methods anticipate heavy snowfall, then heavy snowfall need not be especially unhappy. But, if they do not anticipate heavy snowfall—because it is exceptional—then, heavy snowfall may confer considerable instrumental *disvalue*.

We have already observed that, because a pleasant house is an ongoing state, ψ -properties can continue contributing instrumental value on an already pleasant home *indefinitely*. Now we must consider: can ambient factors likewise continue contributing instrumental value on an already pleasant home? It seems so. For, obviously, if the home is to go on being pleasant it will have to go on not being flooded by fluke hurricanes, etc. It seems equally clear that a (historical) property like having been built in weather conditions that facilitate construction (i.e., having been built in conditions where no precipitation occurred until after the structure was weathertight) —which, because of the unpredictability of weather patterns, could only partly be due to the causal influence of home builders—will continue to confer value on a home that is already pleasant. Clearly, a home that is constructed well will be less likely to develop problems going forward. Thus, to the extent that good weather contributes to good construction, it will have instrumental value indefinitely. The point is that a home can only remain pleasant *as long as ambient factors have cooperated with the causal influences of the persons behind design, construction, and maintenance, and, moreover, continue to do so*.

Now we can begin to appreciate why proponents of a JTB+ theory might be well-positioned to meet the challenge presented by the Secondary Value Problem. The ‘+’ in such theories, as we note, stands for some condition aimed at blocking Gettier cases. Gettier cases come in many flavours, but, all of them are cases in which a subject has a justified true belief, but, environmental conditions are unfavourable in some way.¹³ This idea is sometimes expressed by pointing out that Gettier cases involve an element of ‘bad epistemic luck’. We contend that these are cases in which beliefs lack the kind of instrumental e-value that is ordinarily conferred by ambient factors. Of course, Gettier cases also involve an element of ‘good epistemic luck’ that results in the belief’s being true, but we contend that this ‘good luck’ simply amounts to the conferral of the epistemic good of true belief without the conferral of instrumental e-value in any interesting way.¹⁴ In Gettier cases, ambient factors are not instrumental in the sense that they *systematically* facilitate getting the epistemic good of true rather than false belief; rather, the ambient factors *just happen* to be such that the epistemic good of true belief is gotten, albeit in a particularly unsystematic way.

To see this, it is helpful to consider an ordinary case of knowing and a Gettier counterpart:

HAT: Bertie purchases a new and rather ridiculous hat that he puts in his closet. Later that day, Bertie believes that his hat is in the closet. Indeed, he knows so.

HAT*: Bertie purchases a new and rather ridiculous hat that he puts in his closet. Later that day, Bertie believes that his hat is in the closet. Unbeknownst to Bertie, Jeeves has chosen today for his semi-annual cleaning out of Bertie’s closet, with the particular aim of ridding Bertie of articles of clothing that are unbecoming to an English gentleman. However, uncharacteristically, Jeeves misses the hat, which remains in the closet. So Bertie’s belief is justified and true, but not knowledge.

¹³ We are using ‘Gettier cases’ here to refer to cases where knowledge is forestalled by epistemic luck. As Pritchard [2005] demonstrates, knowledge can be forestalled by epistemic luck both in cases of the sort Gettier [1963] offered, as well as in barn façade cases, where it is specifically *environmental* luck at play. What both have in common is that the target belief could have easily been false given the way the belief was formed. The ‘+’ component of knowledge is best understood assuring that an *anti-luck* condition is met.

¹⁴ The double-luck structure of Gettier cases is observed by, for instance, Zagzebski [1994].

We contend that the belief in HAT has more e-value than the belief in HAT*. The reason is that the belief in HAT* is vulnerable to revision despite being true [Williamson 2000: 61-64]. Bertie is at risk for giving up his true belief that the hat is in the closet if Jeeves apprises him of his cleaning activities. Of course, Bertie might retain his belief nonetheless due to wishful thinking. However, the retained belief would lack instrumental e-value due to relatively poorer belief-management. Holding fixed that the belief has this instrumental e-value due to good management, the environmental conditions in the Gettier case will work against Bertie's sustaining the true belief. So, although ambient factors happen to be such that the epistemic good of true belief is gotten, they are not instrumental to any *systematic* persistence of this epistemic good. Systematic persistence, here, is persistence that does not require belief management to be poor in especially lucky ways.

As in the analogous case where the good is having a pleasant home, the conferral of instrumental e-value on a belief—both by factors due to the causal influence of psychological mechanisms of the believer at the personal and subpersonal level *and* by ambient factors—results from an important sense in which these two *complement* one another to secure the good in canonical cases.¹⁵ *Good* belief management is effective in securing the good of having (only) true beliefs in whatever kinds of circumstances can be taken as ordinary in the present case. However, *favourable* environmental conditions are similarly whatever circumstances are effective at facilitating this securing of the epistemic good when good belief management is undertaken. Thus, any instrumental e-value conferred either by the belief management or by environmental conditions stems from the possibility that causal influences from the believer and the surrounding environment might turn out to *systematically* secure the epistemic good of true rather than false belief by complementing one another in the canonical way.

It is easy to ignore the instrumental e-value conferred by ambient factors. This kind of instrumental e-value arises as the product of a necessary division of labour between believers and

¹⁵ Williamson [2000], ch. 2-3 highlights the importance of complementation.

environment in securing the epistemic good. By definition, there is little that believers can do to secure the instrumental e-value that must come from favourable environmental conditions; we rightly tend to focus on the kind of instrumental e-value we can do something about and hope for the best. However, that favourable environmental conditions are something we value on an epistemic dimension is implicit in the way that we expect good belief management to adjust methods of inquiry so as to bring about complementation when environmental conditions deviate from the ordinary. If Bertie becomes aware that Jeeves is considering cleaning out the closet, we would expect Bertie not to depend on his memory of putting his hat in the closet as a basis for believing that his hat is now in the closet. That way of managing the belief no longer has even the appearance of complementing the present environmental conditions, and so that way of managing the belief no longer appears good. Underlying this thought, however, is the presumption that complementary—that is to say *favourable*—environment conditions are worth having because of the way they facilitate securing the epistemic good of true belief. This presumption of value remains even when we are unable to do anything more to assure that methods of belief management and environmental condition will be complementary.

We originally stated our position by saying that Gettierized beliefs lack a particular kind of instrumental e-value. We can restate our position in a positive way: a belief that is un-Gettierized is a belief that is formed and sustained under (difficult or even impossible to specify) favourable environmental conditions that confer a kind of instrumental e-value that is distinct from (but, complementary to) the kind of instrumental e-value conferred by the good management of that belief. It bears emphasizing (again) that believing truly is an *ongoing state*. For this reason, if a belief has some property that is incompatible with being in a Gettier case, that property could continue to confer instrumental e-value on an already true belief *indefinitely*. This indefinite instrumental e-value is borne out by the fact that, on the assumption that beliefs are managed well, favourable environmental conditions will tend to stabilize beliefs over time only if they are true.

We have shown how the property of being knowledge confers more e-value on a belief than the property of being justified and true due to the additional instrumental e-value conferred by favourable environmental conditions. It should be equally clear how the property of being knowledge confers more e-value on a belief than the property of being true and managed in favourable environmental conditions. If Bertie could *know* that he will avoid marrying Honoria (a wholly undesirable partner) by reasonably anticipating the clever assistance of Jeeves, but he merely *irrationally believes* it on the basis of his misplaced confidence in his own ability to deflect Honoria's attentions, his belief has less instrumental e-value than it might have had. If Bertie does not come to appreciate his reasons for thinking that Jeeves will be able to extricate him from his troubles, Bertie is at risk of losing his true belief that he will avoid marrying Honoria once he is confronted forcefully with his own inadequacy.

Thus, the value of knowledge ordinarily exceeds the value of merely true belief, merely justified true belief, and merely true belief in favourable environmental conditions. Indeed, it appears that any component of knowledge will fall short when it comes either to conferring the kind of instrumental e-value that stems from good belief management or the kind that stems from favourable environmental conditions. Given that knowledge confers both kinds, knowledge will turn out to confer more instrumental e-value than any of its salient components.

One might worry that the Secondary Value Problem is not as easily resolvable by *all* JTB+ theories as we have suggested. For example, a JTB+ account according to which '+' is a 'no false lemmas' condition (e.g. Clark [1963])¹⁶ fails to provide a '+' condition that would confer the relevant epistemic value in some cases because a such a condition does not block, for example, barn façade cases (which are, arguably, 'double-luck' cases). However, this JTB+ account is unacceptable not so much because of the Secondary Value Problem, but rather because it isn't

¹⁶ The 'no false lemmas' proposal identifies the '+' condition as a condition one satisfies only if she does not reason through any false premise.

materially adequate.¹⁷ Even ‘+’ conditions that don’t successfully serve as an anti-luck condition *across the board* nonetheless can be such that, when satisfied, confer additional e-value to ongoing true belief states in canonical cases. Clark’s ‘no false lemmas’ condition, for instance, can be used to show why Bertie’s belief in HAT is more e-valuable than his belief in HAT*.

Ultimately, it may be that the only viable JTB+ theory includes some precisely formulated modal safety condition as the ‘+’ condition.¹⁸ Alternatively, perhaps the only viable JTB+ theory takes knowledge as primitive, explaining ‘+’ as that component that fails to obtain when someone has a certain kind of JTB without knowing [Williamson 2000]. We need not adjudicate these disputes. We merely wish to point out that even a half-plausible JTB+ account has the resources to explain why JTB+ is more e-valuable than mere JTB in canonical cases. So much, then, for the Secondary Value Problem.

4. **Another Value Problem?**

Pritchard [2009a] suggests that solving the Primary and Secondary Value Problems might not be enough to satisfactorily account for the value of knowledge. He claims that there might be a *Tertiary Value Problem* because knowledge must confer a *distinctive* sort of e-value—one different in kind rather than in degree. Otherwise, Pritchard argues, we cannot explain why knowledge is more worthy of study than alternatives that confer a marginally different degree of e-value.

We do not find this argument convincing. We doubt that the only way that knowledge could be worthy of study is due to its distinctive e-value. We further doubt that the only reason to be interested in knowledge is because of the e-value that it confers. Beliefs that are not defeasible and infallibly justified may be very e-valuable indeed. However, arguably, beliefs of this sort are so rare (if even possible) that they are of considerably less theoretical interest. By contrast, knowledge is

¹⁷ For counterexamples offered to Clark’s [1963] view, see Lycan [2006].

¹⁸ This is because, to a first approximation, a true belief is safe, by definition, if and only if it is not lucky. *Cf.* Pritchard’s [2007] (Safety) (p. 8) and (Lucky True Belief) (p. 3).

not only e-valuable, but, presumably, possible to obtain in many areas of inquiry that matter to us. For this reason, knowledge may be far more interesting from a theoretical perspective. Indeed, perhaps knowledge strikes the right balance between being e-valuable and being obtainable so as to be the epistemic commodity that is *most* interesting to us. Plausibly, there are still other features that make knowledge theoretically interesting.

Despite misgivings about the significance of the Tertiary Value Problem, it is worth considering how the picture developed in §§2-3 bears on the problem, such as it is. When compared to the e-value of its components, there is a sense in which knowledge does confer a *distinctive* kind of e-value; though there is a sense in which it may not. It may not have a distinctive kind of epistemic value in the sense that any particular kind of e-value that knowledge confers may well be had by one of its components. For instance, we are willing to concede, at least for the sake of argument, that the non-instrumental e-value knowledge confers may well just be the e-value of truth. However, the e-value of knowledge *is distinctive* in the sense that no particular one of its most salient components will confer *every* kind of e-value that ordinarily comes along with knowledge. A merely true belief, for instance, will not have the instrumental e-value that goes along with justification. Moreover, knowledge comes along with sufficient levels of both ‘J’ and ‘+’ kinds of instrumental e-value so as to *ensure* that the epistemic good of true belief is secured. This suggests that even if knowledge only marks a ‘stage in the in the continuum of epistemic value’ [Pritchard 2009a: 4], it marks an important and non-arbitrary stage—one in which a reasonable division of epistemic labour between the believer and environment has shown its merits.

5. Conclusion

Various putative value problems for knowledge have received attention in the recent literature. It has even been suggested that epistemology has taken a ‘value turn’ [Riggs 2008]. However, when we appreciate that beliefs are *ongoing states*, these value problems largely resolve

themselves. Indeed, our solution resembles the original Platonic suggestion that knowledge is valuable because knowledge is belief that is tied to the good of truth. Our discussion in §§2-3 clarifies what being tied to truth amounts to, and what sorts of properties can confer that kind of instrumental value on an ongoing belief.

It is worth emphasizing that our solution is available to a wide class of theories. That, for example, virtue theories of knowledge may be able to satisfactorily account for the value of knowledge does not distinguish them from alternative JTB+ theories; virtue theories gain no competitive advantage from their ability to effectively address the Primary and Secondary Value Problems. Our principal point, then, is that the value of knowledge can be had on the cheap—without taking on much in the way of substantive theoretical constraints.¹⁹

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¹⁹ We owe thanks to two anonymous referees. Benjamin Jarvis would like to thank the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the British Academy (CC100095) for supporting his research on knowledge.

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