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Wisdom as Responsible Engagement
How to Stop Worrying and Love Epistemic Goods

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Responsibilist epistemic virtues, such as intellectual humility, thoroughness, and inquisitiveness, motivate and inform behaviour to acquire, assess, and share epistemic goods. While existing accounts primarily emphasise the virtues' role in knowledge acquisition, I argue for casting a wider net by redefining responsibilist virtues in their connection to wisdom. I draw upon Sosa's AAA structure of competence – which he employs to support the direct and constitutive relation between reliabilist virtues (e.g., memory and perception) and knowledge – proposing that the same structure can be applied to responsibilist virtues, establishing their direct and constitutive relation to wisdom. The resulting framework provides us with an account of how epistemic agents can responsibly engage with our current sociotechnical environment.

The first half of the thesis establishes this framework, arguing for its implementation. The value of this framework is, in part, its ability to uphold the claim that responsibilist virtues are admirable traits of character that aid one's epistemically responsible engagement with the environment. The AAA structure of competence entails that a performance is Adroit, i.e., resulting from a reliable competence, Accurate, whereby the performance hits the intended target or the functional goal given the competence, and Apt, whereby it is Accurate as it is Adroit. Applying this to responsibilist virtue, an act is adroit when it results from an acquired, admirable, epistemically motivated, and stable disposition to perform behaviour characteristic of the relevant intellectual virtue. This act is accurate when it is successfully virtuous, i.e., admirable. Within this framework, an act from an admirable, virtuous disposition (i.e., an adroit act) can fail to be virtuous by undermining another virtue, or successfully virtuous when it does not. An apt act of intellectual virtue is thereby an act performed from an intellectual virtue (e.g., attentiveness or intellectual humility), that is admirable because it is adroit (e.g., as it was performed from a virtuous disposition to be attentive or intellectually humble, without the act undermining another virtue).

The second half of the thesis applies this framework to various phenomena within the digital epistemic environment. It explores how increasingly prevalent epistemic emotions, such as an epistemic fear of missing out (epistemic FOMO) and morbid curiosity, can
shape epistemic behaviour to be unwise, despite the knowledge one may acquire through acts motivated by these emotions. For example, ‘doombehaviour’ – entailing the frequent or long-lasting consumption of distressing news – is examined in light of its impact on mental health and other prudential concerns. Moreover, our digital environment supplies us with novel epistemic responsibilities in relation to consuming attention-grabbing information, as well as inadvertently distributing misinformation. By applying the framework of apt intellectually virtuous action on these and similar phenomena, we can give an account of wise engagement with our sociotechnical environment.
The internet has opened up a vast world of knowledge that we can access without even leaving our beds. However, this digital world also competes for our attention. Our attention has become a limited resource, and platforms are constantly vying for it by installing habits, goals, and showing exciting, sensationalist, or disturbing content to keep us engaged.

This thesis argues that intellectual virtues, like open-mindedness, interest, and thoroughness, are crucial for navigating this new digital environment. These virtues, known as "responsibilist epistemic virtues," tend to be discussed in the context of acquiring knowledge while avoiding falsehoods. However, if we accept that responsibilist virtues are admirable, reflecting well on the person, or traits that contribute to an agent’s personal worth, then a disposition to acquire as much knowledge as possible, including through immoral actions, does not seem to fit with this characteristic.

This thesis therefore proposes wisdom, rather than knowledge, as the ultimate end of intellectual virtue. The proposed account of wisdom cannot be reduced knowledge or understanding. Instead, it is constituted by values, abilities, traits, and behaviours that guide the acquisition, assessment, distribution, and application of such epistemic goods by taking epistemic, as well as moral and prudential, values into account. In other words, by conceptualising the intellectual virtues as directed towards wisdom, we can avoid characterising immoral or unhealthy methods of knowledge acquisition as intellectually virtuous.

The second half of the thesis applies this framework to various phenomena in the current digital environment. It discusses the emotions that motivate the acquisition and assessment of knowledge and beliefs, applying them to contemporary online epistemic behaviours. This includes the example of compulsively consuming distressing news, which can have negative effects on mental health. Additionally, this application illuminates relatively novel epistemic responsibilities in relation to inadvertently distributing misinformation.
In a nutshell, this thesis challenges the traditional way we think about intellectual virtues, where their only function is to establish truth or knowledge. Instead, taking wisdom as the ultimate goal of these virtues allows us to suggest that our epistemic behaviour in the digital world should also be guided by ethical and health considerations. Moreover, when we accept this, we can aim to improve our epistemically responsible engagement with this environment by practising the virtues, as well as by changing this environment itself.
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In recent years, our epistemic environment has been subject to drastic changes. We use online newspapers to be informed about current events, online encyclopaedias to understand complex topics, and YouTube tutorials, rather than a helpful family member, to learn how to sew a button back onto our favourite shirt. Through the internet we have immediate access to a seemingly endless epistemic world without even needing to get out of bed. Even without a specific epistemic goal in mind, one can easily stumble upon interesting, exciting, useful, or important information from various sources while engaging with the digital environment.¹

This broad, occasionally non-goal-directed, engagement with an epistemic environment can be compared to taking a stroll through a city centre, walking past university lecture theatres that are open to all, libraries, newspaper stands, gossiping acquaintances, political debates, and people doing live experiments in the street. However, another element of our digital environment is that these and other sources are fighting for our attention. Our attention is a finite resource which, due to the constant availability of information and other stimuli, has become a scarcity that platforms aim to gather. Instead of walking through town, entering lecture theatres or picking up a newspaper, our pleasant walk is constantly interrupted by people tapping us on the shoulder, presenting us with information that we might find interesting or feel obligated to acquire. Moreover, rather than merely tapping us on the shoulder, some may show us pictures of horrid events while other “street” performers display more and more dangerous stunts to keep our attention.

In this thesis I argue that responsibilist epistemic virtues, such as open-mindedness, interest, and thoroughness, are especially well-suited to help us navigate this novel digital environment. However, current explorations of intellectual virtues in the context of this environment tend to focus on knowledge-acquisition alone. This can entail the role of virtues and vices on accepting conspiracy theories and fake news (Meyer and Alfano 2022; Cassam 2019), extended virtue or knowledge (e.g., Schwengerer 2021; ¹ See Bruineberg and Fabry (2022) for a discussion of this non-goal-directed engagement.}
Smart 2018; Smart and Clowes 2021), or the effectiveness of digital intellectually virtuous information seeking behaviour in general (e.g., Heersmink 2018). This is not surprising, as responsibilist virtue epistemology aims to define epistemically motivated and acquired character traits that aid one in acquiring epistemic goods such as knowledge and understanding, while avoiding falsehoods. Yet I suggest that intellectual virtues allow us to responsibly navigate our digital epistemic environment beyond acquiring truths and avoiding falsehoods. That is, the intellectual virtues can be informed by moral and prudential concerns, as well as epistemic concerns irreducible to veridicality (e.g., how to engage with trivial information).

For example, forsaking one’s physical or mental health to acquire various (valuable) epistemic goods does not seem like the behaviour of an epistemically responsible agent. However, as I argue in Chapter 7, this is an increasingly common phenomenon. Moreover, the endless streams of information offered by digital spaces also include information that is not worth attending to. While existing accounts of responsibilist virtue note that these virtues would not be directed to the acquisition of trivial knowledge, such theories cannot account for the disvalue of trivial knowledge when it is trivial due to its subject, rather than because the knowledge reflects too little of the world (e.g., celebrity trivia versus knowing that one pebble is 2 cm away from another pebble). Lastly, one’s intellectual virtue may motivate immoral actions, such as reading the diary of a friend, or to slice open another living human being who happens to have a rare heart condition that has never been captured on video, killing them in the process. While these acts allow one to acquire knowledge, which can also increase the possession of knowledge of one’s epistemic cohort or society, they do not seem especially virtuous.

I argue that accounts that conceptualise intellectual virtues as admirable (Zagzebski 2015, 2020) or as adding to one’s personal worth (Baehr 2011) ought to, and often seem to, incorporate these epistemic, prudential, and moral concerns (e.g., Baehr 2011; Battaly 2010; Gardiner forthcoming). However, I also argue that these accounts cannot satisfactorily explain how and why such considerations inform intellectually virtuous action. That is, if intellectual character traits are considered responsibilist virtues solely in terms of their function to acquire, assess, and share knowledge or

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2 While these examples are not related to our digital environment, Chapter 9 argues that the attention economy motivates the enactment of less extreme, yet nevertheless immoral, epistemic actions.
understanding, then the theory has no normative basis for including elements that do not affect whether this acquisition, assessment, or sharing is successful.

Responsibilist virtue epistemologists thereby have three options. First, they can argue that they are only concerned with character virtues that instantiate and improve one’s acquisition of knowledge or understanding, ignoring the mentioned non-epistemic consequences. While this is a valuable project, I argue that this would negate the conceptualisation of intellectual virtues as admirable traits of character. Moreover, as I argue in Chapter 1, the resulting accounts would play second fiddle to reliabilist accounts of epistemic virtue. Second, they can reject that the intellectual virtues are defined in terms of their function to establish epistemic goods, rather simply being traits that motivate and inform admirable epistemic conduct. Yet this would result in analyses of individual intellectual traits without any shared goal to unite them. Lastly, they can conceptualise the virtues as admirable intellectual traits, incorporating moral and prudential concerns, while nevertheless defining the virtues in terms of epistemic good acquisition. Yet in this case, they seemingly want to have their cake and eat it too. After all, they would propose an account of intellectual virtue directed towards the acquisition of epistemic goods akin to reliabilism, where these virtues get their value from their motivational and, ceteris paribus, causal connection with these goods, while also incorporating non-epistemic values as relevant to determine whether an act or trait is intellectually virtuous.

In this thesis I propose an account where responsibilists can both eat and keep their cake. By taking wisdom as the ultimate end of intellectual virtue, these virtues are directed towards an epistemic good that, as I argue in Chapter 2, incorporates moral and prudential values. Moreover, it provides responsibilism with a project where its virtues stand in a direct and constitutive relation to a highly valuable epistemic good. Lastly, the resulting account is well-suited to respond to the concerns and novel epistemic phenomena brought about by our current sociotechnical epistemic environment. The majority of this thesis (Chapter 1 to 6) presents and argues for the framework I suggest. The remainder of this thesis (Chapter 7 to 9) then applies this framework to address examples of epistemic emotions, habits, and behaviours that are the product of our current sociotechnical environment. A chapter-by-chapter breakdown of this is presented in the remainder of this introduction.

In addition to presenting a short overview of virtue responsibilism and virtue reliabilism, Chapter 1 argues in favour of the claim made by Sosa (2017) that
responsibilist virtues lack a direct and constitutive relation to knowledge. Sosa applies his AAA structure of competence on reliabilist virtues, such as memory and perception, to argue for reliabilism’s place in the ‘charmed inner circle’ of epistemology (i.e., the field of study that analyses knowledge, aiming to formalise necessary and sufficient conditions for this epistemic good, including what sets it apart from mere true belief). When applied to reliabilist virtue (e.g., Sosa 2015, 2017), the AAA structure of competence entails that a belief resulting from an instance of reliabilist virtue must be adroit (i.e., competent in terms of the relevant virtue), accurate (true), and apt (accurate because of the reliable competence). This structure is the foundation for Sosa’s claim that reliabilist virtues stand in a direct and constitutive relation to knowledge, as well as that responsibilist virtues lack this relation. This is because responsibilist virtues do not possess a direct and constitutive relation to knowledge – they can merely bring one in a position to know (Sosa 2017).

To illustrate, the products of the reliabilist virtues of perception, memory, and introspection could, respectively, be the percept of a bee, the memory of an afternoon in the park, or the (categorised) feeling of hunger. These products partly constitute beliefs and, when accurate (i.e., where one is indeed looking at a bee, accurately remembers the afternoon, and is hungry) and are accurate because of one’s reliable abilities to perceive, memorise, and introspect, they partly constitute knowledge. In contrast, the products of intellectual virtues, such as inquisitiveness or objectivity, are actions: asking relevant articulated or non-articulated questions (Watson 2015) or assessing the veridicality of, or justification behind, information without bias. While such actions may lead to knowledge, they do not partly constitute this knowledge.

In Chapter 2, I therefore introduce wisdom as an alternative epistemic good towards which the intellectual virtues can be directed – one that is partly constituted by action. I present an account of wisdom which, while novel, is based on the arguably most influential accounts from Western philosophy, further informed by the psychological research on the implicit theory, or folk concept, of wisdom. The three accounts discussed are practical, theoretical, and Socratic wisdom. I argue that these three concepts are complex and active, being characterised by the ways one acquires, assesses, and applies epistemic goods, rather than merely the possession of such goods. I then argue for the combination of these accounts to form a contemporary consolidation account of wisdom. While this wisdom concept may be an idealisation, in Chapter 4 and 5 I argue that acts of intellectual virtue add to, and partly constitute, wisdom, as long as they do not undermine the necessary and constitutive elements of wisdom.
With this account in mind, Chapter 3 applies the AAA structure of competence to responsibilist virtue, whereby an apt exercise of intellectual virtue is partly constitutive of wisdom. This thereby necessitates an account of adroit and accurate action. In exploring these elements, I discuss existent accounts of successful action, both from intellectual and moral virtue theory. These are divided into two categories: measures that assess whether the act was successfully virtuous, and those that assess whether a virtuous act was successful in establishing some state of affairs. As I argue in Chapter 1, the main focus ought to be on assessing the behaviour itself, rather than its product, for this account of virtue to possess a direct and constitutive relation to an epistemic good (i.e., wisdom). The two potential measures of success within this category that are available in the existent literature, however, are argued to be constitutive of adroitness rather than accuracy (the *implicit end*) or too demanding (the *telos*). The two other measures of success, reflecting whether a virtuous act was successful, are the *ultimate end* and the *immediate target*. The latter entails that an act is successful when it establishes the state of affairs the agent intends to establish. The former is a concept introduced by Zagzebski (1996, 2017) and accepted by other virtue reliabilists (e.g., Baehr 2006; Watson 2015) as the end at which all virtues are directed. Namely, closer cognitive contact with reality, or CCCR. However, none of these four measures can account for the moral or prudential considerations that, as I noted, are relevant for conceptualising the intellectual virtues as contributing to one’s personal worth or to be admirable.

In Chapter 4 I introduce my suggestion for the accuracy condition of intellectual virtue: admirability. This admirability is distinct from the emotion of admiration that takes central stage in Zagzebski’s (2015, 2020) accounts of intellectual virtue. Nevertheless, what they reflect is relevantly similar: that the act or trait reflects well on the agent as a person. So, an act performed from intellectual virtue tends to be admirable as this virtue is admirable, where both reflect well on the agent as a person. However, if this act fails to be admirable, which would be the case if it would undermine another virtue by being vicious, morally or intellectually, this act fails to be accurate and thereby fails to be apt. The proposed AAA account of intellectual virtue thereby takes the following form: an act is adroit when it was performed from an intellectual virtue, where this entails an epistemically motivated, acquired, and admirable disposition to perform behaviour characteristic of the relevant virtue. This act is accurate when it is admirable, and apt when it is admirable as the trait it results from is reliably accurate, i.e., reliably results in acts that do not undermine another virtue.
It is important to mention that the accuracy condition is based on the provided wisdom account, rather than accounts of admirability. In other words, intellectual virtues are not directed towards admirability; they are directed towards wisdom, and it is wisdom that provides the parameters for intellectually virtuous action. So, rather than undermining the moral virtue of, e.g., kindness, an inquisitive yet cruel act would instead undermine the motivational component of practical wisdom, i.e., one’s positive evaluation of the moral virtues that guides action even when one may experience desires that are in conflict with morally virtuous desires. In other words, experiencing a desire to act cruelly need not in itself undermine wisdom, despite it undermining one’s possession of kindness. Not regulating this desire, on the other hand, does undermine wisdom as it undermines the motivational element of phronesis.

Chapter 5 further argues for this account by specifying the relationship between intellectual virtue and wisdom. I first outline the ways in which intellectual virtues reflect the active elements of wisdom discussed in Chapter 2. I then note that the account I propose still incorporates the generally accepted function of intellectual virtue: to establish closer cognitive contact with reality or, in other words, to acquire epistemic goods such as knowledge and understanding. Moreover, taking wisdom as the end of intellectual virtue allows us to provide an account of epistemic goods that deserve our attention, both in terms of kind and content. First, apart from propositional knowledge, the intellectual virtuous agent can aim to acquire and share understanding and skills, while avoiding the acquisition and endorsement of unjustified beliefs. Second, the intellectual virtues ought to be directed to the acquisition and distribution of knowledge, understanding, and skills that can be constitutive of theoretical, practical, or Socratic wisdom. Whatever falls outside of these parameters can be considered trivial; as epistemic goods that are not sufficiently worthwhile to acquire. In this chapter I also argue that wisdom can provide the normative foundation to include intellectual virtues whose deficiency and excess, i.e., their respective vices, are partly based on moral and prudential considerations (e.g., not eating or sleeping for days to acquire an epistemic good would reflect the excess of epistemic temperance).

In Chapter 6, I discuss the epistemic motivation that is required for an act to be intellectually virtuous. This entails a positive orientation towards epistemic goods (POG), or a negative orientation towards epistemic ills (NOI). For such an orientation to reflect an intellectually virtuous motivation, it cannot be purely instrumental (e.g., only being curious about the effects of x as it is financially profitable to know). However, I also argue that one
need not be conscious of one’s non-instrumental, or final, positive evaluation of epistemic goods. Rather, they can be reflected by dispositionally experiencing epistemic emotions that motivate epistemic behaviour. This leads to a discussion of epistemic emotions that could reflect an intellectually virtuous motivation. Some of these, such as curiosity and doubt, are well-established in the literature. Others, however, are less so, despite becoming increasingly ubiquitous in our socio-technical environment. These include epistemic FOMO and external uncertainty.

If we accept the account presented in this first half of the thesis, we can move on its application. Chapter 7 therefore details some effects of our sociotechnical environment on the acquisition of epistemic goods, notably the epistemic habits that may develop through engagement with the attention economy. I illustrate the effects such novel habits may have through the introduction of *doombehaviour* – the frequent or long-lasting online consumption of distressing information on current events that tends to induce a sense of doom – and its components: doomsrolling, doomsurfing, and doomchecking. Doomsrolling refers to passively scrolling on a social media platform, attending to negatively valenced information. Doomsurfing rather entails goal-directed deep-dives into negatively valenced topics. Lastly, I introduce the term *doomchecking*, referring to frequently opening trusted news sources to check specific facts. While these epistemic behaviours can be useful to acquire knowledge on current events, they have also been linked to increased anxiety and depression.

Chapter 8 then focuses on the virtues relevant for the distribution of epistemic goods in digital spaces. While it seems evident that epistemically responsible agents should aim to be epistemically trustworthy when sharing testimony with others, the introduction of ‘shares’ and ‘likes’ on both social and traditional media platforms complicates the epistemic responsibility the agent must accept. I argue that users of social media platforms ought to be aware of the increased visibility of posts that they ‘like’ or ‘share’, through which I argue that the same intellectual virtues apply to these online practices as to sharing information in person.

Chapter 9 returns to the epistemic emotions of epistemic FOMO and morbid curiosity, which are often induced or enforced by our digital environment, within the context of the proposed model. It presents the parameters for these emotions to be reflective of an intellectually virtuous motivation by outlining the moral and prudential implications within the digital environment. While these and many other epistemic emotions can motivate behaviour that undermines certain elements of wisdom, acquiring
and practicing the intellectual virtues aids one in avoiding, or at least minimising, these behaviours. Finally, the concluding chapter summarises the presented account and suggests methods that can aid the reliability of imperfect intellectual virtues within this framework.
Chapter 1

Responsibilism and Reliabilism

1. Introduction

Virtue epistemology is commonly understood to consist of two strands: reliabilist virtue epistemology, which posits that epistemic virtues are faculties and competencies that reliably lead to knowledge (e.g., perception and memory), and responsibilist virtue epistemology, which rather focusses on intellectual character traits that motivate and inform behaviour directed towards the acquisition of epistemic goods (e.g., contemplativeness and objectivity). In this chapter, I present an overview of these two strands and the ways in which their respective virtues stand in relation to knowledge. The conclusion that responsibilist virtues do not stand in a direct and constitutive relation to knowledge forms the foundation for the project of the first half of this thesis: providing an account of responsibilist virtue directed towards wisdom.

In the following section, I begin by discussing the necessary characteristics of responsibilist virtues, entailing that they are acquired, admirable dispositions to act, motivated by the agent’s positive orientation towards epistemic goods. Section 3 then explores the direct relationship between reliabilist virtues and knowledge through Sosa’s (e.g., 2007, 2017) AAA structure of competence. Reliabilist epistemic virtues are reliable faculties aimed at acquiring true beliefs, and reliabilists partly define knowledge in terms of these virtues. In contrast, according to Sosa (2015, 2017), responsibilist virtues do not play a role in defining knowledge and are thus not part of traditional epistemology.

In Section 4.1, I address Baehr’s (2016) objections to Sosa’s claims, which take the form of examples where responsibilist virtues appear to take up the role Sosa denies them: as directly responsible for acquired knowledge. However, I argue that these examples do not show that responsibilist virtues are partly constitutive of the knowledge acquired. These virtues thereby do not enjoy the same direct relationship to knowledge that reliabilist virtues possess. If we accept this argument, then responsibilist virtue epistemology faces the choice between playing second fiddle to reliabilist virtue, or finding a different project to focus on.
2. Virtue Characteristics – a quick overview

Intellectual trait virtues, such as open-mindedness and integrity, are generally presented under the umbrella responsibilist epistemic virtues. These virtues present an alternative to reliabilist virtues, by shifting the focus to traits that allow one to be epistemically responsible in one’s acquisition, evaluation, and distribution of epistemic goods (e.g., Code 1984; Roberts and Wood 2007). While there is a broad range of attitudes and character traits that can be considered responsibilist virtues, certain features are commonly attributed to all of them. Namely, that they are acquired (§2.1) and admirable (§2.4) dispositions to act (§2.3) that reflect the agent’s personal values (§2.2).

2.1 Acquired Traits

As responsibilist virtues are inspired by Aristotelian moral virtues (e.g., Code 1984; Zagzebski 1996), it is not surprising that the first quality of responsibilist virtues is that they are acquired, rather than innate. While an infant exploring their environment may exhibit an innate disposition towards curiosity, they do not possess the intellectual virtue of curiosity. Note that this need not entail the active practice of these virtues – the agent need not be aware that she is ‘practising’ intellectual humility by performing agential actions reflective of intellectually humble behaviour. This is thereby distinct from neo-Aristotelian skill-based accounts of virtue, which emphasize intentional acquisition through intellectual assessments of what the virtues entail, or fine-grained goal setting to practice the relevant virtue (Annas 2011; Stichter 2018). As agents can exhibit traits like open-mindedness, diligence, or curiosity without consciously intending to acquire these traits, requiring this active practise seems counterintuitive.

Yet it is worth noting that intellectual virtues are partially constituted by certain virtue-relative abilities and skills which can be actively acquired, or be partially innate. Inquisitiveness, for example, requires an ability to ask relevant and clear questions to gain the aimed for piece of knowledge, where this ability can be acquired and improved through practise and instruction (Watson 2015). Other abilities, such as those relevant for perceptiveness, may rather be (partially) innate (Riggs 2015). Nevertheless, one can

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3 Note the difference between responsibilist virtues and Aristotelian intellectual virtues. The latter include, e.g., intellect, which can be an innate competence, rather than an acquired intellectual (character) trait.
improve upon one’s initial level of perceptiveness, and thereby the virtue perceptiveness, through practise and by receiving instruction (Baehr 2011; Riggs 2015).

In other words, while some abilities that are necessary for certain intellectual virtues are innate, improving upon them through agential action aids one’s ability to act on virtue. As such, even when elements of a virtue are, in part, innate, one ought to improve upon them through agential action which is epistemically motivated – another constitutive element discussed in the following section.

2.2 Epistemic Motivation
The second element of intellectual virtue is that they require the agent to possess an epistemic motivation that reflects her personal values (Code 1984; Battaly 2018, 2020; Zagzebski 1996). While the required values tend to be characterised as intrinsically valuing epistemic goods, I argue that the agent merely has to non-instrumentally value epistemic goods.

Instrumental value tends to be contrasted with intrinsic value, i.e., that the value of an object \( x \) depends on the intrinsic properties \( x \) possesses, rather than on its relational properties. As such, one may suggest that one ought to value epistemic goods intrinsically in order to display an intellectually virtuous motivation, as suggested by Baehr (2011, 2015). However, Korsgaard (1983) argues that the instrumental value of \( x \) should rather be contrasted with whether \( x \) is finally valuable, i.e., valuable for its own sake, disregarding whether the elements that make it valuable for its own sake depend on relational properties. Intrinsic value, on the other hand, ought to be contrasted with whether \( x \) is valuable for its extrinsic properties, i.e., that \( x \) is related to valuable properties that are not intrinsic to \( x \). \( X \) being extrinsically valuable does not necessitate that \( x \) is valuable as it allows one to acquire or pursue some other end. Rather, \( x \) can be valuable as its properties relate to another valued good in a non-instrumental way. As such, an object being extrinsically valuable is compatible with this object being finally valuable. In the case of epistemic goods, this can entail that certain epistemic goods are extrinsically and finally valuable as they, e.g., relate to valued goods such as achievement (Brogaard and Smith 2005; Pritchard 2009) or were acquired through a reliable mechanism (e.g., Brogaard 2006; Riggs 2002a).

Conceptualising knowledge as finally valuable allows us to make sense of the minimal value of trivial knowledge. If knowledge is valuable as truth, an intrinsic component, is intrinsically valuable (e.g., Bonjour 1985), then all knowledge would be
valuable, including trivial knowledge.\(^4\) While trivial knowledge may have some value, being motivated by the intrinsic value of truth and therefore counting the blades of grass in one’s garden would not reflect intellectual virtue. Instead, knowledge that \(p\) can be finally valuable as, e.g., \(p\) is a true answer to a question one has interest in (Sosa 2000), or as it relates to living well (Zagzebski 2003a). The content of an epistemic good can thereby add to its final value as it, e.g., refers to a valued topic such as one’s hobby or family, which is distinguished from instrumental value as one does not (only) acquire the epistemic good to be better at one’s hobby or to talk to a particular family member.\(^5\)

The personal values relevant for intellectual virtue possession thereby entail a final, positive evaluation of epistemic goods, such as truth, knowledge, and understanding. These values express themselves in an epistemic motivation to acquire, assess, or share epistemic goods. While the specific motivations behind individual acts can vary, the epistemic motivations relevant for intellectual virtue can all be categorised as a positive orientation towards epistemic goods (Baehr 2011; Zagzebski 1996) or a negative orientation towards epistemic ills (Baehr 2010; Zagzebski 2003a, 2003b). For example, one can be positively orientated towards an understanding of scientific topics, or negatively orientated towards acquiring false beliefs on these topics.

This positive orientation towards epistemic goods (or POG) and negative orientation towards epistemic ills (NOI) will be discussed further in Chapter 6. For now, we need merely note that the epistemic motivation relevant for intellectual virtue entails a POG or NOI, where this orientation reflects that one finally values epistemic goods, or finally disvalues epistemic ills, and motivates epistemic action that is in line with these values. While these epistemic actions may often aim for the acquisition of epistemic goods or the avoidance of epistemic ills, a final POG or NOI may also motivate one to share knowledge or warn others of possible misinformation. After all, when one finally values truth or understanding, this is likely to be accompanied by perceiving certain duties in relation to these epistemic goods (Baehr 2011, 103), which may include sharing one’s findings.

\(^4\) Moreover, this could lead to the ‘value problem’, entailing that a theory of knowledge would be unable to explain why knowledge is more valuable than true belief (e.g., Plato, *Meno*; Pritchard 2007; Zagzebski 2003a).

\(^5\) Note that non-instrumental and instrumental evaluations are not mutually exclusive: I may be negatively orientated towards ignorance both because I negatively value ignorance and because I want to impress my social circle with interesting facts.
2.3 Dispositions to Act

The third element entails that ‘[r]esponsibilist epistemic virtues require dispositions of action’ (Battaly 2018, 197); they are *dispositions to act* rather than mere intentions or motivations. While this characteristic could seem like quite minimal, it can also be interpreted as a stability requirement: a responsibilist virtue is not merely a disposition to act sometimes or in some situations. Rather, these virtues guide behaviour across temporal and situational conditions (e.g., Alfano 2013). In other words, once an agent has acquired an intellectual virtue, she will act on this virtue when it is appropriate to do so (e.g., Riggs 2015). This stability requirement reflects a key function of intellectual virtue. Namely, as I argue in what follows, that the dispositional element of intellectual virtue is partly constituted by attention being drawn to possibilities for virtuous action.

Intellectually virtuous dispositions (e.g., open-mindedness) are inclinations or tendencies to respond to certain situations with certain (e.g., openminded) acts. While some dispositions may be general, e.g., Santa always has a jolly disposition, the virtues are situation-specific dispositions – the situation determines which epistemic act is intellectually virtuous. This is because intellectual virtues, like moral virtues, are a mean between two vices. Being openminded, for instance, is the mean between being closeminded and gullible, and the same epistemic act can be openminded, closeminded, or gullible, depending on the situation. So, an openminded agent does not consistently interpret all other points of view as if they possess merit, as this would be gullible. Rather, she responds with open-mindedness when the situation calls for it, in contrast to situations where this act might be epistemically harmful (e.g., when coming across conspiracy theorists – see Cassam, 2019).

Note that this process need not be conscious, or even epistemically accessible to the agent. For instance, a diligent agent need not consciously decide whether they should read the full ingredient list of the different kinds of pasta they may buy. They could look for relevant information if they have certain dietary restrictions, for instance whether the pasta is vegan or gluten free, yet without such considerations the agent simply buys the pasta. The diligent agent is not consciously aware that she has judged this situation as

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6 Note that one’s virtuous disposition need not be perfectly stable for one’s behaviour to be intellectually virtuous. After all, virtues can be possessed in degrees (e.g., McDowell 1998). This stability condition, as well as the reliability condition often attributed to the virtues, will be analysed in Chapter 3 and 4.

7 Of course, we could argue that even Santa would not be jolly when attending a funeral. Though, even here, we might assume that Santa would be jollier than the other attendees.
not requiring diligence, nor need she consciously interpret an epistemically challenging situation as requiring diligence.

If we accept this, one of the functions of a virtuous disposition is to guide attention to the relevant aspects of the environment with reference to the intellectual virtue in question, thereby informing the epistemic act fitting to the situation. Similar to moral virtues (McDowell 1998) then, intellectual virtues make one sensitive to the epistemically relevant characteristics of a situation (Fricker 2007; Riggs 2015; Roberts and Wood 2007), thereby disposing one to respond with an epistemic act informed by these characteristics. As such, an agent cannot be intellectually virtuous when they merely act in line with virtue if they happen to recognise a situation as epistemically demanding. Rather, by developing a sensitivity with regards to the relevant elements of a situation, recognising a situation as requiring a particular action or even performing the intellectually virtuous action itself can become habitual or automatic.

2.4 Admirable Traits
Finally, the virtues are admirable: possessing and acting on an intellectual virtue reflects well on the agent (e.g., Baehr 2011, 2016; Code 1984; Montmarquet 1987; Zagzebski 1996). This is for a large part due to the ways in which possessing or acting on an intellectual virtue reflects that the agent values epistemic goods – as reflected in the motivational element – and has acquired a trait, attitude, or disposition aiding the acquisition of these goods. As Chapter 4 will present an in-depth account of admirability, for the purposes of this chapter we need merely remember that acting on intellectual virtue reflects well on the agent. With these characteristics in mind, the remainder of this chapter analyses the relation between intellectual virtues and epistemic goods.

3. Reliabilism and Its Epistemic Good
Accounts of intellectual virtue that adhere to the qualities discussed in the previous section, arose in response to virtue reliabilism, introduced by Ernest Sosa (1980). Yet by focussing on intellectual character traits rather than the reliable competences he proposes (e.g., perception and memory), Sosa (2017) argues that virtue responsibilism is not a project within traditional epistemology. I.e., it is not a project that attempts to formalise the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge, defining it in terms of these conditions, thereby being able to distinguish it from mere true belief. In what follows I summarise why Sosa considers his account of reliabilist epistemic virtue to be
constitutive of traditional epistemology and why virtue responsibilism would be excluded. While I remain agnostic on whether Sosa’s competence virtue epistemology (e.g., 1980, 2007, 2017) supplies us with a definitive definition of knowledge that distinguishes it – both in kind and in value – from true belief, in the following section I argue that the structure of competence he proposes indeed supports his conclusion: that responsibilist virtues lack a direct and constitutive relation to knowledge. However, applying his structure of competence to responsibilist virtue informs the epistemic good responsibilist virtues can stand in direct relation to: wisdom.

Knowledge, according to Sosa, is true belief gathered through reliable faculties or competences. This is based on his AAA structure of competence, entailing that a belief (or performance) is Adroit, Accurate, and Apt. A belief or performance is adroit when it is an exercise of competence, accurate when it reaches its target, and apt when it is accurate because it is adroit. So, an apt belief is established when an agent forms a true (accurate) belief because of a competent (adroit) exercise of an epistemic faculty such as memory, reason, or perception. For example, if one’s memory is reliable, then adroitly exercising this faculty results in a memory that can accurately reflect the remembered state of affairs or not. If this memory is accurate, and if it is accurate because of one’s reliable faculty of memorisation, this memory partly constitutes an apt belief, i.e., knowledge.8

Based on his account, Sosa argues that responsibilist virtues merely fulfil a secondary or auxiliary role in analysing knowledge:

It is such knowledge-constitutive competences that are of main interest to a competence virtue epistemology (CVE) aiming to explain human knowledge. Other epistemically important traits—such as open-mindedness, intellectual courage, persistence, and even single-minded obsessiveness—are certainly of interest to a broader epistemology. They are, of course, worthy of serious study. But they may fall outside the charmed inner circle of traditional epistemology. They may be only “auxiliary” intellectual virtues, by contrast with the “constitutive” intellectual virtues of central interest to virtue reliabilism.

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8 This is merely a description of what Sosa (2007, 2017) calls animal knowledge. To possess reflective knowledge, which Sosa deems more valuable, the belief must be fully apt, or aptly apt, meaning that one endorses the reliability of the employed competence within the relevant context. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Moreover, aptness requires an exercise of complete competence. This is entailed by Sosa’s SSS conditions, again discussed in Chapter 4.
Here, Sosa clarifies the distinction between trait virtues and faculty virtues: the former put one in a position to know, while the latter have a direct relation to the epistemic good, where an apt exercise of a faculty virtue constitutes knowledge. After all, when an agent perceives a fern on the table, this percept partly constitutes the true belief that there is a fern on the table. Likewise, when the agent later remembers this fern, this memory partly constitutes the knowledge that there was a fern on the table. Additionally, that these beliefs were acquired through reliable faculties allows us to upgrade them from true beliefs to knowledge. In contrast, openminded or creative acts do not partly constitute knowledge, nor are they sufficient for a true belief to be categorised as knowledge. Rather, the responsibilist virtues allow one to put one’s faculty virtues to good use, where these faculty virtues subsequently produce apt beliefs, i.e., knowledge (Sosa 2017).

In short, Sosa presents the AAA conditions applied to faculty virtues as both necessary and sufficient for knowledge, thereby defining knowledge as apt belief. For the purposes of this thesis, I will assume that Sosa’s theory of justified true belief through the virtues is a helpful way to characterise knowledge and its relation to the faculties. Moreover, I will assume that being able to talk about knowledge is a useful aspect of any theory in epistemology. Therefore, I will not argue against Sosa’s theory in order to make space for a responsibilist project. Responsibilist virtues, according to Sosa, lack the direct connection to knowledge, whereby they fall outside the “charmed inner circle” of traditional epistemology. For this reason, trait virtues have a secondary role, or no role at all, within traditional epistemology. In the following section I defend this claim. In doing so, I argue that responsibilism can embrace its indirect connection to traditional epistemology, focussing on wisdom instead.

4. Responsibilism and Its Epistemic Good
Given this assessment, virtue responsibilists can either reject the proposed claim, stating that their account is constitutive of traditional epistemology, or they can abandon attempts to define knowledge, instead focussing on the relation between intellectual virtue and other epistemic goods, or on analysing and defining the intellectual virtues themselves. Those engaging in the former project are grouped together by Baehr (2008) as conservative responsibilists. Conservative approaches interact with the questions traditional epistemology posits, either by replacing the reliabilist account of knowledge
with a responsibilist account (*strong conservative*), or by working on the periphery of traditional epistemology, adding to the reliabilist account (*weak conservative*). Theories or accounts of responsibilist virtue that do not aim to define or analyse knowledge are categorised as *autonomous accounts*. Here again we have a strong version which aims to replace traditional epistemology (*radical autonomy*) and a weak version which leaves traditional theories in place, offering alternative projects (*moderate autonomy*). Both conservatism and autonomous theories are discussed in what follows.

### 4.1 Conservatism

Conservative accounts of responsibilist virtue either aim to replace or expand upon the reliabilist account of knowledge. In this section, I merely focus on the latter project (weak conservatism) for three reasons. First, as stated, arguing against the reliabilist account of knowledge falls outside the scope of this thesis. Second, the arguments against weak conservatism, outlined in what follows, would be applicable to strong conservatism as well. That is, responsibilist virtues do not share the direct and constitutive relation to knowledge possessed by reliabilist virtues. Rather, I argue that the product of responsibilist virtue is an act that is not constitutive of a belief that can be true or false. Strong conservative accounts would therefore have to argue that a constitutive relation is not required for their theory of knowledge. Third, Chapter 3, 4, and 5 contrast the account I present in this thesis with an account that posits the responsibilist virtues as traits that reliably lead to closer cognitive contact with reality. In other words, I leave it to these chapters to argue against the plausibility of a responsibilist account defined through its relation to knowledge or understanding and vice versa.

Following Baehr, a proponent of this project, weak conservatism attempts to outline and support connections between intellectual trait virtues and knowledge, ‘even if not connections that warrant giving the notion of intellectual virtue a central or fundamental role within traditional epistemology’ (2008: 22). This may seem to automatically endorse Sosa’s (2017) claim that responsibilist virtues are merely of auxiliary importance. Yet in a later paper, Baehr (2016) argues for a direct relation between trait virtues and knowledge, where responsibilist virtues carry direct explanatory power akin to reliabilist virtues. That is, to explain the acquisition of complex knowledge, or epistemic goods that are otherwise difficult to acquire, including responsibilist virtues is necessary. While Baehr’s (2016) assessment does show an important connection
between responsibilist virtues and knowledge, I argue that his argument does not support a direct and constitutive relation between responsibilist virtue and knowledge.

Baehr (2016) argues that under certain conditions, knowledge is not primarily gathered through faculty virtues. Especially challenging situations, such as in epistemically hostile environments or when engaging with complex subjects, trait virtues are needed to reach the truth and thereby claim the primary role in justifying the resulting true belief, elevating it to knowledge. According to Baehr (2016, p. 22-23), responsibilist virtues must thereby be considered fellow ‘knowledge-makers’ by reliabilists. This conclusion is argued for through examples of challenging epistemic situations where, according to Baehr, a trait virtue is the primary knowledge-maker. However, as I will argue, this is not sufficient for responsibilism to claim a place in traditional epistemology. This is because the discussed examples merely show the occasional necessary causal relation between trait virtues and knowledge, rather than the constitutive relationship faculty virtues enjoy.\(^9\)

In the first example, an agent is in the epistemically challenging situation of having a true, justified belief which is forcefully questioned by others. If it was not for the intellectual trait virtue perseverance, she would have relinquished her knowledge in this situation. Perseverance, then, is the primary justification for her knowledge in the following example.

S might, out of intellectual perseverance, continue to affirm a certain well-supported proposition P despite a barrage of prima facie forceful but ultimately implausible and mistaken objections. If not for her intellectual perseverance, we might imagine, S would have prematurely and mistakenly surrendered her belief. Thus S’s intellectual perseverance can be seen as manifesting in her ongoing affirmation of P. And we can say that, subsequent to the challenge to her belief, S knows that P largely on account of this trait.

Baehr 2016, p. 2564

This example claims that an agent (S) continues to know P directly because of her perseverance. The trait virtue is the direct cause for holding on to her belief, and thereby

\(^9\) Due the limitations of space, I do not discuss all the examples presented by Baehr (2016). However, the conclusion I draw is applicable to all examples as they follow an implicit theme: the act that results from one’s intellectual virtue is not constitutive of knowledge.
the direct cause for her knowledge. As such, the perseverance would be of equal importance to, for instance, remembering P. While we can agree with Baehr that the virtue is the direct cause of the agent retaining her true belief, the relation between the virtue and knowledge is not constitutive. While the product of memorisation (the memory that P) partly constitutes the knowledge that P, the product of the agent’s intellectual perseverance is to persevere in maintaining or endorsing P. As such, the product of the virtue constitutes the act that results in knowledge, rather than knowledge itself.\textsuperscript{10}

We see a similar problem in the next example, where Baehr notes the necessity of trait virtues in a situation where acquiring knowledge requires

facing certain undesirable truths about one’s own character or personality. A normal or naturally well-functioning capacity for introspection is not always sufficient […]. If the flaws are significant and threatening enough, a basic competence for introspection may need to be supplemented and regulated by qualities like intellectual courage, openmindedness, and intellectual honesty. In an act of courageous, open, and honest introspection, one might come to grasp, accept, and thereby know that one has a certain flaw.

Baehr 2016, p. 2565

Again, the product of the intellectual virtue is an act; in this case an act constitutive of the knowledge-acquisition process. After all, one’s intellectual courage (amongst the other named virtues) allows for the resulting introspection. In other words, while the application of introspection – a faculty virtue (Sosa 2012) – may have been less accurate or would not have occurred at all without the relevant trait virtues, these virtues still merely placed one in the position to apply introspection to acquire an apt belief.

The previous examples illustrated a necessary causal link between the relevant trait virtue and the resulting knowledge. In the following example, on the other hand, the

\textsuperscript{10} Note that the reliabilist explanation in question depends on the machine-product interpretation of reliabilism or reliabilist virtue. While Zagzebski (2003) argues that we can consider knowledge as an act of knowing which incorporates the agent’s motivation, action, and the proposition that is known in order to account for the value of knowledge, the argument would lead to the same result. That is, we can accept that believing p, endorsing p, and knowing that p are acts, without thereby negating that a belief or piece of knowledge is a direct product of a reliable process, while the agent’s motivation and intellectually virtuous behaviour merely puts her in a position to employ this reliable process.
link seems more complex, as the faculty and trait interact with one another to such an extent that the trait virtue and faculty virtue form one process of knowledge acquisition:

suppose that the evidence threatening S’s belief consists of a nearly imperceptible physical detail (e.g. an obscure mark on an X-ray or some tiny feature of a cell viewed from under a microscope). Again we can imagine that the detail is subtle and unexpected enough, and that the stakes are high enough, that unless S is ready and willing to consider counter-evidence to her beliefs, she will fail to see or notice it. Accordingly, S’s subsequent visual perception of the detail might manifest her open-mindedness. Her open-minded attention to possible counterevidence might explain how or why she sees—and knows—as she does.

Baehr 2016, p. 2566

At first glance we might interpret this as equivalent to the other examples: the trait virtue produces an act (of perception in this case) and, while this act partly constitutes the acquisition process, it does not partly constitute knowledge itself. However, we can also interpret this example an integration of vision and open-mindedness: the agent’s perception itself becomes open-minded in nature, as her open-mindedness permeates every aspect of her perceptual experience. If we accept this, then we may also have to reconsider the other examples, reformulating them as describing one acquisition process encompassing both faculty and trait. If these examples do surpass the cause-and-effect relationship, we could consider it arbitrary to only count the product of the faculty as constituting knowledge, rather than the integrated process of open-minded perception.

However, we might defend Sosa’s position here by asking which virtue is central in the attainment of knowledge. Sosa notes that his AAA structure can be applied to any faculty, competence, or skill, so let us compare the virtues to a familiar skill. An agent can play football and aptly score. This means that she was successful in scoring the goal because of her competence in football (or, more specifically, her reliable competence to kick a ball in the direction of a target in such a way that she hits the target despite the presence of another person who attempts to be in the way). However, becoming good enough to score against an opponent takes training and practice. The agent’s training allows her to notice ways to score she did not before, taking her opponent’s possible movements into account. The training, therefore, shapes her performance, allowing her to score aptly. However, in Sosa’s AAA structure of competent action, the central
competence is still “football” or “scoring”: the agent scored aptly because of her reliable ability to score or play football, no matter the means through which this competence may have become more reliable. If we accept this, then we can say that a responsibilist virtue can interact with a reliabilist virtue so that the trait inherently shapes the faculty, but within the AAA structure, it is still the faculty virtue that is directly responsible for, and provides the constitutive relationship with, the acquired knowledge.

So, while intellectual virtues may frequently be necessary for acquiring or maintaining knowledge, they are not necessary or sufficient for a true belief to be considered knowledge, nor do they possess the constitutive relationship to knowledge that reliabilist virtues enjoy. If we accept this argument, moderate conservative accounts of responsibilist virtue do not support a necessary or central space for these virtues in traditional epistemology. As such, when directed towards knowledge, responsibilist virtues can only fulfil the secondary role that Sosa (2017) proposes: functioning as auxiliary virtues that bring one in a position to apply one’s reliable faculty virtues, thereby only indirectly leading to knowledge. So, if we would accept weak conservatism, resposibilist virtues would only play second fiddle to the faculty virtues.

4.2 Autonomous theories

Autonomous responsibilist virtue epistemology, on the other hand, is not tied to analysing knowledge. This diverse field of study sets itself apart by, amongst other things, analysing individual responsibilist virtues and epistemic goods besides knowledge. The original responsibilist virtue account, presented by Code (1984), is a good example of autonomous virtue epistemology. She describes her worries about traditional epistemology’s main project, stating that searching for infallible justifications for knowledge might be a lost cause – a concern mirrored by others (Zagzebski 1996; Kvanvig 2003). Instead, virtue epistemology ought to become more agent-centric, focussing on finding traits which make for a good epistemic agent, when we take human nature and human limitations into account. By focussing on the traits that make one a responsible epistemic agent in this way, Code’s proposal is more akin in structure and justification to Aristotelian virtue ethics than Sosa’s reliabilist account of epistemic virtue.

Other epistemologists followed suit, arguing that describing virtues as faculties was to ignore two important characteristics of virtue: the underlying motivation of virtuous action (Zagzebski 1996) and the responsibility on the part of the agent (Montmarquet 1987). Virtue responsibilists mostly agree that intellectual virtues are acquired,
praiseworthy, require (epistemic) action, and are personal qualities (Battaly 2015). Yet
the field of enquiry built upon this account of virtue is highly divergent, without a clear,
positive theoretical focus binding it together (Baehr 2008).

One moderate autonomous epistemic virtue project is the analysis of individual
responsibilist virtues (e.g., Alfano et al. 2017; Battaly 2010; Riggs 2015; Roberts and
Wood 2007; Watson 2015). When we recall the characteristics of responsibilist virtues
discussed in Section 2, we note that these characteristics are applicable to all
responsibilist virtues. The task of this project is thereby to analyse the skills or dispositions
involved for, e.g., open-mindedness or thoroughness specifically. The importance of this
project is discussed further in Chapter 3.

A second area of research within autonomous responsibilist virtue epistemology,
is to analyse the relation between responsibilist virtue and epistemic goods. Apart from
the mentioned concerns regarding the relation between responsibilist virtue and
knowledge, this area can also provide positive accounts of epistemic goods that the
intellectual virtues can be directed towards. For example, some may argue for taking
understanding as the end of intellectual virtue as it is a more valuable epistemic goal to
establish. E.g., because it is a product of achievement (Pritchard 2010; Zagzebski 2001)
or reflects the world (Grimm 2011; Kvanvig 2003) to a greater extent than true and
justified beliefs.

To contrast this understanding with knowledge, take the example of a law
professor who, during the first lecture of a 1st year course, defines Malum Prohibitum to
her students. While these students now know that Malum Prohibitum means that the
crime in question was regulatory instead of inherently dangerous or evil, they do not yet
gasp the complex meaning of this concept which would allow them to reliably apply the
term on a case-by-case basis (e.g., Grimm 2011; Kvanvig 2003). That is, they do not
understand the concept of Malum Prohibitum.

I argue that taking understanding as the end of responsibilist virtue does not lead
these virtues to possess a direct and constitutive relationship with this epistemic good.
After all, while intellectual virtues such as perseverance and attentiveness may often be
needed to acquire understanding, especially of complex topics, the understanding itself
is nevertheless acquired more directly through reliabilist virtues such as perception,
reason, and memory. This is especially applicable to accounts that make understanding
reducible to beliefs (e.g., Stanley and Williamson 2017; Ross, 2018), as these constitutive
beliefs are acquired through reliabilist virtues. In this sense, understanding would merely
be a category of propositional knowledge. In other words, it would merely require the agent to acquire more apt beliefs, including apt beliefs on how these beliefs hang together.

However, if understanding cannot be reduced to propositional knowledge (e.g., Grimm 2011; Zagzebski 2001), the intellectual virtues still lack a constitutive relation to understanding. This is the case even when we would deny that reliabilist virtues possess a direct and constitutive relationship with understanding. After all, a thorough act, such as rereading an article one found difficult to interpret, may lead to understanding, but it does not itself partly constitute the understanding of this article. Nevertheless, the idea that not all epistemic goods are reducible to propositional knowledge is an important quality to keep in mind when we discuss orthodox accounts of responsibilist virtue in Chapter 3, 4, and 5.

Moreover, as with knowledge, in some cases there could be a direct and even necessary causal relationship between a responsibilist virtue and understanding, but we can imagine plenty of cases where agents come to understanding without having to exercise any trait virtue. For instance, one can understand why their trousers are wet as they saw their hand knocking over their glass of water and saw the water flow from the desk onto their jeans. This understanding came to them without the need for open-mindedness, intellectual courage, etc. While this understanding could be deepened through an interest in physics, the initial simplistic understanding of why their trousers are wet does not require this interest. Moreover, we can already acquire understanding before having developed responsibilist virtues. For instance, from a young age, infants can already understand simple cause and effect relations, leading them to understand why they should not drop their spoon (the floor is dirty, it would delay eating, etc.). As such, the relationship between trait virtues and the epistemic good remains contingent. So, while moving to a different epistemic good might seem like a fruitful way to carve out a positive project for the moderate autonomous responsibilist project, understanding does not provide the responsibilist virtues with a more central explanatory role, compared to reliabilist virtues.

Nevertheless, I argue that focussing on a different epistemic good can still resolve responsibilism’s either merely secondary role in epistemology or its lack of a complete, positive project full stop. In the remainder of this thesis, I argue that focussing on wisdom would provide responsibilism with a central project in both epistemology and philosophy.

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11 See Grimm (2011) for a discussion.
in general. This proposal is distinct from Baehr’s (2018) suggestion that sophia, or theoretical wisdom, can be the end of intellectual virtue, as he reduces sophia to “deep explanatory understanding of epistemically significant subject matters” (2014: 310; 2018: 809). Sophia, then, is conceptualised as a category of understanding. It thereby suffers from the same critique previously applied to understanding as the end of intellectual virtue. In the following chapter I introduce the epistemic good that, as I will argue, the responsibilist virtues are directed towards: wisdom.

5. Conclusion
In this chapter I presented an outline of responsibilist virtue and its relation to knowledge and understanding. I argued that the product of a responsibilist virtue can consist of a broad array of acts, rather than a state potentially constitutive of knowledge or understanding. In the following chapters I argue that responsibilist virtues can stand in direct relation to wisdom instead, where the apt product of an intellectual virtue is partly constitutive of wisdom, akin to an apt product of a reliabilist virtue being partly constitutive of knowledge. While one intellectually virtuous act does not make you wise, similar to one reliabilist act not making you knowledgeable, instances of wisdom add to wisdom overall. By cultivating these traits, individuals can not only acquire knowledge constitutive of wisdom, but more directly perform wise actions by enacting these acquired traits.
Chapter 2

The Contemporary Consolidation Account of Wisdom

1. Introduction
As this thesis presents an account of apt acts of intellectual virtue where the virtues stand in a direct and constitutive relation to wisdom, we must first explore what wisdom is. In this chapter I therefore argue for an account of wisdom that fits with the folk conception of the term, as well as within Ancient and contemporary Western literature on the topic. This account entails a complex concept, constituted by various motivational, behavioural, and epistemic elements that interact with one another, leading to an account of wisdom as living well, i.e., living in line with these elements.

In contemporary Western philosophy, accounts and analyses of wisdom tend to draw inspiration from one of three Ancient Greek concepts of wisdom: practical (e.g., Grimm 2015; Nozick 2006; Roberts and Wood 2007; Swartwood and Tiberius 2019; Vallor 2016; Whitcomb 2010; Zagzebski 2001), theoretical (e.g., Baehr 2012, 2018; Whitcomb 2010), or Socratic wisdom (i.e., wisdom as intellectual humility – see Ryan 2012). From these accounts, some argue that wisdom can be reduced to knowledge of how to live well (e.g., Grimm 2015; Whitcomb 2010; Zagzebski 2001), making wisdom an epistemic good one can possess without needing the corresponding behaviour. Others argue that wisdom can rather entail an understanding of academically valuable topics (Baehr 2012, 2018; Whitcomb 2010). This, again, refers to an account of wisdom that need not be active to be possessed.

For example, Grimm considers wisdom to be directed towards well-being, where the wise agent knows what well-being consists of and how to obtain it (2015, p.140). He therefore takes knowledge to be sufficient, as someone who knows how to obtain well-being is unlikely to pass up on the opportunity. Whitcomb (2010) on the other hand, suggests that one can be wise due to their knowledge of living well – an account that is closer to Aristotle’s phronēsis than Grimm’s (2015) account due to the explicit focus on living a morally good life – even when one does not act on this knowledge. On his account, this is also applicable to theoretical knowledge. In other words, knowledge or
understanding of a particular topic, be it living well or astronomy, would be sufficient for an agent to be wise.

In this chapter, I propose an active account of wisdom that combines practical, theoretical, and Socratic wisdom – one that cannot be reduced to knowledge, and where the possession or acquisition of knowledge must be shaped by other factors to reflect wisdom. When we accept that ‘wisdom comes in degrees; a person can be more or less wise’ (Nozick 2006, p. 268), the account proposed in this chapter focusses on how one values, acquires, assesses, and applies knowledge or understanding, adding to wisdom, rather than the knowledge or understanding possessed by a fully wise agent.

To support this conception, Section 2 argues that the mentioned Ancient Greek accounts are active, i.e., irreducible to knowledge. Moreover, as I argue in Section 3, in common usage the concept of wisdom is active as well, as mere knowledge is not sufficient for the concept to apply. The folk concept of wisdom, as represented by the implicit theory established through empirical research, is constituted by various characteristics such as insight, reflection, a moral character, and knowledge acquired through experience or research.

In Section 4, I combine the implicit theory with the three Ancient Greek wisdom accounts to construct the contemporary consolidation account of wisdom. This holistic wisdom concept reflects the three accounts of wisdom generally accepted in Western philosophy, i.e., practical, theoretical, and Socratic wisdom, as well as how the concept of wisdom is commonly employed in contemporary society. This thereby reduces the rift between the philosophical concepts and the common usage of the term. As such, it provides philosophy with a concept that can be employed to analyse contemporary behaviour, dilemmas, and the acquisition of wisdom in terms that reflect the public’s usage of the term. Additionally, it adheres to the understanding of wisdom as living well, or the enacted ability to live well (e.g., Grimm 2015; Nozick 2006; Roberts and Wood 2007; Vallor 2016). However, ‘living well’ need not entail that one has obtained well-being or eudaimonia. While Aristotle takes both phronesis and sophia to be roads towards eudaimonia or happiness – as I discuss in Section 2.2 – becoming wiser by living in line with the elements of wisdom need not entail that one is happier or reaches eudaimonia (e.g., one can live wisely while experiencing chronic pain, or encounter other cases of bad luck that hinder eudaimonia).

While this active interpretation of the wisdom concepts is not novel overall, it is novel within the context of virtue responsibilism. As noted in the previous chapter, where
wisdom is discussed in this context, the intellectual virtues are either directed towards a 'deep, complex understanding' (Baehr 2012) or employed, amongst other things, to acquire an understanding the wise person possesses (Zagzebski 2001). Moreover, in this chapter I do not merely argue that all three wisdom concepts reflect different ways of being wise *simpliciter*. Rather, I argue that the active components of these concepts constrain and support one another.

So, Section 5 crystallises the contemporary consolidation account of wisdom, arguing that combining practical, theoretical, and Socratic wisdom entails that these concepts act as the parameters of one another. For example, an act may be in line with theoretical wisdom when it competently brings one closer to a complex understanding of an academic topic, yet it would not be wise if this act involves the torture of an expert in this topic, i.e., when it undermines practical wisdom. This holistic account is argued for by presenting examples of agents who exemplify one category of wisdom while undermining (one of the) others, noting that these agents would intuitively not be deemed wise.

2. Ancient Greek Wisdom Accounts as Active

The three most prolific wisdom concepts in western philosophy are practical, theoretical, and Socratic wisdom.  

Practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) are the two intellectual virtues Aristotle posits as constitutive of living well and have served as inspiration for most contemporary accounts of wisdom within philosophy. Both concepts are discussed respectively in Section 2.1 and 2.2, before presenting Socratic wisdom – wisdom as intellectual humility – in Section 2.3.

2.1 Phronesis

Practical wisdom, or *phronesis*, is possibly the most prominent wisdom account in contemporary philosophy. It is analysed as a requirement for moral virtue (e.g., Hursthouse 2006; Kristjánsson et al. 2021; Wolf 2007), as an intellectual virtue (Roberts and Wood 2007), and has been naturalised in terms of its functions, acquisition, and measurements (Darnell, et al. 2019; Darnell, et al. 2022; Kristjánsson et al. 2021; Stichter

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12 While there are other concepts of wisdom that are frequently discussed in philosophy, most notably wisdom accounts from Eastern Philosophy, this paper merely focusses on the wisdom concepts often employed in Western Philosophy.

13 While both accounts have received a lot of attention, I aim to provide a discussion of the interpretation that is arguably closest to the original conception while avoiding inconsistencies.
The reason for its prominence is practical wisdom’s role in guiding the moral virtues such as kindness and courage; it allows virtuous agents to apprehend and respond to normatively laden situations with the right action (NE 1144b20, NE 1142a). How it performs this function can be divided into three parts: the deliberative quality, the perceptive quality, and the motivational quality.

First, practical wisdom requires deliberation, which Aristotle deems the central activity of phronesis (NE 1141b.1). This quality can be interpreted as having the function of refining the agent’s understanding of the moral virtues (Baehr 2012; Foot 2002; Stichter 2018), as well as aiding her decision-making process when confronted with normatively laden situations (Hursthouse 2001, 2006; Darnell 2022). First, while someone may be disposed to act in line with the moral virtues due to her upbringing, deliberation allows one to acquire the practical wisdom that grounds these virtues, as one comes to endorse their value and understand what kind of behaviour relates to them.\(^\text{14}\)

The second role of deliberation refers to the virtuous agent’s ability to respond to a normatively laden situation with the right action, even in cases where multiple, seemingly contradictory, virtues are relevant. For instance, while an agent may wish to be courageous and kind by going to a war-torn area to volunteer, she might find this in conflict with the kindness she wants to show her friends and family who would worry about her safety. Practical wisdom allows the agent to deliberate between these considerations, allowing her to make an informed decision on what the virtuous action in such complex situations would entail.

However, especially for the truly virtuous agent, i.e., an agent who already possesses the moral virtues and practical wisdom, conscious deliberation is not necessarily required for virtuous action. Rather, practical wisdom can give virtuous agents an immediate understanding of normatively laden situations and how to respond to them, here categorised as the perceptive quality of practical wisdom. Phronesis bridges the gap between virtuous motivation and virtuous action, allowing the agent to be effective and intelligent in her virtuous behaviour by perceiving, or being sensitive to, the (morally) relevant elements of a situation (Hursthouse 2006; McDowell 1998, 2009; Wolf 2007).

\(^\text{14}\) However, as will be discussed in the next section, this deliberation may not involve reflection on what the virtues are and how they relate to the good life, as it can be argued that this enquiry is too general for phronesis due its defining quality of focusing on particulars (NE 1142a). As such, I take it to only refer to the deliberative process that allows the agent to acquire or improve the motivational quality of phronesis.

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While this perceptive quality may seem similar to the deliberative quality, as both concern informed action-regulation, the perceptive quality allows the agent to automatically respond to normatively laden situations. For instance, when two agents see someone drowning in a fast-moving river, the agent who lacks practical wisdom may jump into the river in an attempt to save this person, while the practically wise agent would first sprint along the river, catching up with the drownee before jumping into the water. The practically wise agent can arrive at this course of action through deliberation, considering her swimming abilities and the speed of the river before deciding to run alongside the river, or through the perceptive quality of practical wisdom, as the possibility for action stands out to her due to her virtues, abilities, and prior experience (in this case, previous experiences with fast-moving water). Both this perceptive quality and the deliberative quality contribute to the reliability of the virtues (Stichter 2018), i.e., they inform the agent of the right action given the situation and their goal, turning their good intentions into (reliably) effective actions (e.g., NE 1142a, 1144a20).

Lastly, practical wisdom enforces the motivation behind the moral virtues as the agent rationally endorses them (Foot 2002; Darnell et al. 2019; Hursthouse 2001; Wolf 2007). While the deliberative and perceptive qualities of practical wisdom allow agents to, respectively, arrive at or perceive the right actions, the motivational quality endorses the value of these actions. This quality explains the temporal stability often ascribed to virtue (Zagzebski 1996; Alfano 2013): once an agent has acquired the virtues, these dispositions will not be (easily) lost due to agent’s practically wise endorsement of them.

Moreover, the motivational quality increases the situational stability of the virtues, i.e., their stable enactment across various situations, as it enforces the virtuous disposition in cases where they may be in conflict with other, non-virtuous, passions or desires. In these situations, an agent can be akratic, where the agent gives in to the opposing passions despite being aware of what the virtuous act would be, or enkratic, where the agent acts virtuously due to valuing the virtues, despite the opposing passions (NE 1145b). For instance, after accidentally breaking her mother’s Christmas figurine while bringing it to the attic, an honest agent, Anna, experiences resistance to come clean as she dreads seeing her mother’s disappointment. If she gives in to this resistance, not telling her mother, Anna would be akratic. If she, on the other hand, comes clean despite

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15 This endorsement need not entail a theory of virtue. Rather, it can refer to endorsing individual virtues, or an endorsement of certain unnamed traits as they, for example, make her automatically inclined to do (what she deems to be) the right thing.
experiencing dread while doing so, she would be *enkratic* – her endorsed positive evaluation of honesty enforcing this virtue.

Anna may also experience *propeteia* (NE 1150b), where she automatically acts in line with passions that oppose virtue, yet where her positive evaluation of the virtues makes them regret this action. For instance, if Anna is on the phone with her mother when the figurine breaks, she may tell her mother that the sound she just heard was due to a cat pushing a bowl off the table. However, as she continues this conversation the motivational quality of *phronesis* makes her regret her lie as she values and endorses honesty. This, then, motivates her to enact her honesty after all, coming clean about the broken figurine.

So, when one's moral virtues are in conflict with non-virtuous desires, the motivational quality of practical wisdom directs one to perform *enkratic* rather than *akratic* actions. Moreover, due to the perceptive quality of practical wisdom, the likelihood of *propeteia* is diminished. When it does occur, however, the regret experienced due to the motivational quality directs the agent’s attention to her mistake, either motivating her to act in line with virtue after all, or disposing her to learn from this mistake (Stichter 2018).

To sum up, the deliberative, perceptive and motivational qualities of practical wisdom guide the agent’s virtuous dispositions, both in terms of stability (i.e., across time and situations) and reliability (i.e., aiding the accuracy of the agent’s actions), even in complex normatively laden situations. Note that this gives *phronesis* a more active role than mere knowledge: it motivates deliberation and action, thereby actively guiding the moral virtues, rather than merely contextualising them through knowledge.

While Aristotle states that possessing and enacting the moral virtues through practical wisdom constitutes the good life, i.e., the life that leads to or constitutes *eudaimonia* (translated as ‘flourishing’ or ‘happiness’), this may not be the only road to this good. Theoretical wisdom, discussed in the following section, is another contender for acquiring or enacting *eudaimonia*. In fact, Aristotle mentions both *sophia* and *phronesis* as reflecting the best life to lead, where the activity constituting both concepts allows one to flourish. While this may seem like an inconsistency, in the following section I discuss the argument that *sophia* and *phronesis* can be compatible goals.

### 2.2 Sophia

*Sophia*, or theoretical wisdom, combines and integrates two other Aristotelian intellectual virtues: scientific knowledge (*episteme*) and intelligence or understanding (*nous*). Note
that the knowledge that comes with episteme, and therefore sophia, need not be scientific as we understand the term today. Rather, ‘the condition for something being contemplated is that it be necessary, unchanging, eternal, that it be self-contained, noble’ (Rorty 1978, 344). Sophia, then, concerns itself with topics or fields of interest that are intrinsically valuable, in contrast to, say, trivial knowledge or crafts (after all, to Aristotle NE 1140a, crafts are only as valuable as their products, making them merely instrumentally valuable).

Recall that Baehr (2018) suggests that sophia could be the epistemic good aimed for through intellectually virtuous activity. On his account, however, the elements of episteme and nous are interpreted as scientific, or theoretical, knowledge and understanding. This leads to an interpretation of sophia as a deep understanding of an academic subject – a static epistemic good which can be attained. Yet this ignores the active quality of sophia, whereby it is interpreted as a life of contemplation (NE 1177a), where nous can better be interpreted as the ability or motivated disposition to understand.

The contemplation enacted by the theoretically wise agent is intrinsically valuable, i.e., the act is not valuable merely because it produces intrinsically valuable knowledge; the act is intrinsically valuable as it is constitutive of living well. After all, theoria, the activity of sophia, ‘is complete in its very exercise: there is no unfolding of stages, no development of consequences from premises. It is fully and perfectly achieved in the very act’ (Rorty 1978: 344). As such, the Aristotelian notion of sophia need not differentiate between the trait and the epistemic good it produces. Rather, on this account, sophia refers to a way of being in the world that both entails an understanding of epistemically valuable subjects and the activity that leads to this understanding. This includes a motivational element, as the agent values the epistemic goods she aims to acquire and, ceteris paribus, derives happiness, or eudaimonia, from their acquisition. Similar to phronesis, then, sophia is active, a way to live one’s life that leads to eudaimonia.

It may seem inconsistent that phronesis and sophia are both said to constitute the good life, i.e., the life that leads to happiness (e.g., NE 1098b21-26, 1141a20-1141b5). After all, they appear to refer to distinct dispositions: the scholar lives in pursuit of scientific understanding, while the phronimos develops a moral know-how, acting in line with the moral virtues she has acquired. Aristotle scholars (e.g., Broady 1991; Cooper 1987; Natali 2001; Rorty 1978) shed light on this problem, arguing that phronesis and sophia are compatible goals to strive towards.
Moreover, possessing one may even inform the other. While practical wisdom allows agents to endorse their virtuous traits and actions, this endorsement does not require the agent to have a theory of virtue. After all, believing that certain traits or actions ought to be supported does not require one to name or differentiate between these traits, nor does it require an understanding of how these traits may lead to eudaimonia (e.g., Hursthouse 2001). In other words, tasking phronesis with providing an overarching understanding of the good life is an unfitting interpretation of Aristotle (e.g., Cooper 1987; Rorty 1978). Sophia, on the other hand, is concerned with finding the underlying principles of fields of inquiry, including the study of species (Rorty 1978). That is, defining different species entails analysing what they need to flourish, i.e., it entails defining their excellences, or virtues. As such, Rorty argues, sophia can motivate the project of defining the (moral) virtues, where one contemplates what makes a human life a good life. This, then, solves the otherwise inconsistent claim that both sophia and phronesis are the best ways to live one’s life; when they are not in conflict, they can both be the life to strive towards. In short, sophia entails a life of contemplation and the resulting deep understanding of a certain field, which may include the study of human excellence.

2.3 Socratic Wisdom
The final account of wisdom generally discussed in contemporary philosophy is Socratic wisdom. While this account is not as prevalent as phronesis or sophia, Section 4 and 5 argue that all three concepts are required for an account of wisdom that reflects the implicit theory and that allows agents to wisely navigate their contemporary environment. In this section I therefore give an outline of Socratic wisdom which, as I argue, cannot merely be reduced an intellectual humility account of wisdom (a categorisation made by, e.g., Ryan 2020; Whitcomb 2010).

It is not uncommon or unfounded for people to remember Socratic wisdom as the denial of possessing knowledge. After all, Socrates claims that he lacks knowledge of natural philosophy, craft, rhetoric, poetry, how to run a state and, death (Plato, *Apology*). This is the reason for Socrates' surprise upon hearing that the gods, through the oracle of Delphi, proclaimed him to be the wisest man (*Apology* 21a-21b). Yet as he looked for wisdom in others, he found that the natural philosophers, craftsmen, sophists, poets, and politicians lacked wisdom, as they thought themselves to have knowledge where they

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16 In the sense that a virtue of a knife is to be sharp – virtue does not necessarily refer to morality.
lacked it (Gómez-Lobo 1994). For instance, while craftsmen had the know-how to produce a product, they lacked the knowledge of politics they proclaimed to possess. Socrates’ search for wisdom in his fellow citizens, then, led him to believe that many, if not all of those he questioned, did not possess the knowledge or wisdom they claimed to have. Socrates, on the other hand, was wise enough to know what he did not know.  

Yet Socrates does proclaim to possess some knowledge, most notably knowledge of moral values. For example, Socrates states that he knows justice to be good, even when he is unable to give an adequate definition (Plato, Apology). Likewise, he knows that courage is good while pointing out his inability, and the inability of supposed experts on courage, to provide a comprehensive account (Plato, Laches). The knowledge he does possess guides his behaviour; he aims to live in line with the virtues.

Likewise, however, he aims to avoid acting on what he does not know. This is most evident in the Apology (Plato), where Socrates decides to accept his death sentence, despite having the option to avoid his death by leaving Athens. Leaving Athens would mean impiety or injustice – giving up on the task he accepted from the god, showing the citizens the value of examined beliefs and living well – which he knows to be wrong. The other way his death could have been avoided was by presenting a different defence; one that would appease the jury yet would be in conflict with his task (Plato, Apology, 38d). The possibility of death, on the other hand, does not guide his behaviour, as neither he nor any other mortal knows what death is like (Plato, Apology, 29). To fear death, then, is to think that one has knowledge (that death is bad) when this knowledge cannot be possessed.

Socrates thereby possessed knowledge, but he retained the awareness that human knowledge is fallible, in contrast to godly knowledge (Gómez-Lobo 1994). He therefore promoted the idea that one ought to reflect on what one believes to know, 

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17 While Aristotle is relatively precise in his use of concepts, defining the intellectual virtues and employing them consistently, Plato’s Socrates occasionally also uses ‘sophia’ to refer to, e.g., knowledge, know-how, and understanding (depending on the translation). For clarity, then, I will only refer to what has come to be known as Socratic wisdom as wisdom and other instances of sophia as knowledge or understanding.

18 This can be compared to his (claimed) knowledge that courage is good while admitting, and while making others admit, not to know what it entails (Plato, Laches).

19 Note that the use of fallible knowledge merely refers to a translation of Socrates’ view that humans, in contrast to gods, cannot know (with certainty) that they know. It does not entail that claim that knowledge can be false. So, for example, when an agent receives testimony from a leading expert in the field, they can possess testimonial knowledge while also being aware that there is a small chance that experts in this field have missed something relevant as they are not all-knowing.
especially about the virtues or similarly valuable goods, as ‘the unexamined life is not worth living for man’ (Plato, *Apology* 38a). The knowledge that is the focus of this reflection can pertain both to the understanding of what goods ought to be valued, what the virtues are, and the human condition in general – topics that fall under the umbrella of *sophia* – and knowledge partly constitutive of *phronesis*, i.e., how to act on the virtues. Yet recall that Socrates also questioned those who held knowledge not necessarily connected to moral virtue; while moral knowledge is of the most importance to Socrates, *all* human knowledge is fallible and therefore subject to re-examination.

Socrates thereby espouses reflection on one’s own knowledge, being intellectually humble in accepting that this knowledge is fallible, in addition to applying the same metric to others who claim to have knowledge. Doing this allows one to assess one’s own knowledge, being open to other, potentially conflicting, information, as well as to acquire knowledge from others, rejecting or further questioning claims that appear to be unjustified. Lastly, Socrates advocates for sharing one’s wisdom and knowledge with others. In his final words after being sentenced to death, he asks this of those that convicted him:

> when my sons grow up, avenge yourselves by, causing them the same kind of grief that I caused you, if you think they care for money or anything else more than they care for virtue, or if they think they are somebody when they are nobody. Reproach them as I reproach you […] If you do this, I shall have been justly treated by you, and my sons also.

*Apology* 41d-e

While Socrates took it to be his duty to question and educate citizens of Athens, from this final wish we learn that he prescribes the same value to others. In other words, it is not merely *his* divine task to uncover the limitations of human and individual’s knowledge, or to promote others to examine the beliefs and values held by themselves and others. Rather, the person who lives in accordance with Socratic wisdom also shares this wisdom with others. Socrates thereby does not merely take it to be wise to reflect, self-scrutinise, and to examine the beliefs of others. It is also wise to prevent others from believing falsehoods or unjustified beliefs, either through questioning them, or by teaching them how to interact with fallible knowledge themselves.
Given this contextualisation, reducing Socratic wisdom to intellectual humility – a self-directed virtue focussed on assessing one’s cognitive limitations and a willingness to admit to them – would ignore the other-directedness of his account. Rather, I suggest that the active component of Socratic wisdom has three elements of questioning: questioning oneself, questioning others, and teaching questioning to others. These elements allow one to acquire knowledge regarding one’s own epistemic standing, the epistemic standing of others, and testimonial knowledge when one has sufficiently assessed the other’s justification behind their claims. Yet there is one piece of knowledge that is constitutive and necessary for one’s ability to act in line with Socratic wisdom: the knowledge that human knowledge is fallible, including one’s own.

Lastly, note that incorporating Socratic wisdom in the wisdom concept is especially relevant given our current, complex, sociotechnical environment. For example, while Socratic wisdom entails intellectual humility when it is self-directed, it can also direct the agent to reflect on the testimony of others. This is an important quality for the contemporary agent as we, as a society, have a lot of complex knowledge which necessitates learning from experts. As Socrates aimed to find sophia in others by questioning them to see whether they possessed the wisdom they claimed to have, so can contemporary wise agents question others’ testimony before accepting it. Of course, Socratic wisdom should not require us to postpone judgement on everything there is to learn until we get the opportunity to question these experts in person. Yet the principle can still be followed by questioning whether the received testimony is founded on proper reasoning or evidence and by asking whether the source of this testimony has the right reasons for sharing their knowledge.20

This can refer to checking the trustworthiness of the relevant source, whether this is a person or organisation. A Socratically wise agent may thereby ask, e.g., their friend sharing information for the justification supporting their beliefs, or what the original source of this information was. Some sources are more trustworthy than others, after all. Academic journal articles, for example, have gone through the process of peer-review, which means that the reader of the article can assume that other experts in the field endorse the quality of the content of this article. So, Socratic wisdom can motivate one

20 I do not deny that one can receive knowledge via testimony from someone who does not truly understand the topic – a child can inform anyone that gravity attracts objects to the centre of something with a large enough mass, like a planet, without truly understanding what it entails. A wise agent, however, must simply be aware that the information has sufficient justification by evaluating the relevant source (teachers, textbooks, journal articles, etc.).
to assess the sources of the information one consumes, checking that these sources are epistemically justified in accepting and sharing this information. This is also applicable to, e.g., the practise of researching a topic of which one lacks knowledge or expertise. For example, if an agent is aware that she does not have the skills or background knowledge to check whether a particular fact is accurate without relying on expert testimony (e.g., that the Earth is a globe, that a particular vaccine does not affect cognitive function, or other pieces of information that can be partly constitutive of theoretical or practical wisdom), she can apply the same criteria to others. As our current sociotechnical environment provides a platform for the spread of unedited and unverified information, shared by people who do not possess the knowledge or skills to adequately justify their endorsement of this information, the ability to recognise one’s cognitive limitations and to apply a similar process of assessment to others would aid one’s epistemically responsible navigation of this sociotechnical environment.

3. Psychology and the Implicit Theory

The field of psychology has seen a 50-year surge of interest in wisdom in terms of its definition (e.g., Baltes and Staudinger 1993; Bluck and Glück 2005; Sternberg 1985), acquisition methods (e.g., Grossmann 2017; Santos et al. 2017) and difference with intelligence (e.g., Clayton 1982; Sternberg 1985). This has led to formulations of the implicit theory, i.e., the wisdom concept employed by lay people. Wisdom is highly valued – not just by philosophers, but by society as a whole. It should therefore not seem odd to employ the implicit theory to reflect on the explicit (i.e., conceptualised by experts) philosophical accounts based on the works of Aristotle and Plato. For one, Bluck and Glück (2005) note that if an explicit theory fundamentally does not align with the implicit theory, favouring the explicit theory would require an argument that human language does not reflect (social) reality.21

Moreover, it seems important to remain aware of what it is that our wisdom concept tracks. E.g., a wisdom concept may only entail qualities valued in Ancient Greece, qualities important for those who accept virtue ethics as their moral theory, or qualities or goods valued by epistemologists. To make sure that our wisdom concept is not limited to these academic contexts, analysing what it is that lay people value when they say they value wisdom seems like a worthwhile endeavour.

21 This is relevant as it seems likely that, akin to the moral virtues (e.g. Neijzen 2021), wisdom is an abstract concept rather than a natural kind.
So, to formulate the elements a contemporary account of wisdom should entail, the implicit theory can be a helpful source.\(^{22}\) As this theory has been constructed through various methods and within a multitude of studies, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss all of these at length. Therefore, the following description is mainly based on a recent overview of psychological research on the implicit theory (Bluck and Glück 2011). Here, the implicit theory has been split into five tenets: Cognitive, Insightful, Reflective, Moral, and Real-world application. These qualities will be respectively discussed below, before comparing them with the philosophical wisdom concepts discussed in the previous section.

3.1 The Tenets of the Implicit Theory

**Cognitive**

The cognitive characteristic of the implicit theory of wisdom can be divided in two parts: knowledge, and cognitive qualities aiding one’s acquisition of knowledge. This can also be described as “fluid intelligence (such as logical thinking, good reasoning ability) and crystallized intelligence (knowledge and experience)” (Bluck and Gluck 2005, p. 95). Note that the crystallised intelligence results both from experience and the cognitive qualities constitutive of the cognitive category, which entail being intelligent, observant, thoughtful, and good at reasoning and logical thinking (Jeste et al. 2010; Paulhus et al. 2002; Sternberg 1985).\(^ {23}\) Moreover, the wise agent’s knowledge is often practical and employed to enact other characteristics of wisdom, such as being good at problem solving and decision-making, especially within moral contexts.

**Insightful**

Wise agents are seen as insightful, referring to their ability to reliably understand complex issues and (social) situations or dilemmas. The wise agent grasps the perspective of others and understands how her own motivation and perspective influences how she interprets the situation. This category reflects the wise agent’s skilfulness in acting in line with her values within various situations, on top of her ability to offer insightful solutions to problems for both themselves and others (Holliday and Chandler 1986; Sternberg 1985).

\(^{22}\) However, note that even this implicit theory is somewhat explicit, as the categorisation of the different traits laypeople describe is still performed by wisdom experts in psychology.

\(^{23}\) Note that wisdom and intelligence are distinct concepts with distinct characteristics, as discussed by e.g., Clayton (1982), Sternberg (1985) and Jeste et al. (2010)
Wise agents are also motivated to develop their insight, i.e., they are motivated to gather more information when their immediate insight directed towards a situation is not sufficient. This quality also partly constitutes their motivation to learn from novel situations (Kaluz’na-Wielobób 2014; König & Glück 2013), its results adding to the (practical) knowledge wise agents are thought to have.

Reflective
Wise agents have a reflective attitude – a disposition to question their behaviour, motivations, and beliefs (Sternberg 1985). This self-reflection leads to intellectual humility; an awareness of the limits of their knowledge (Hershey and Farrell 1997; Staudinger and Gluck 2011). Moreover, similar to the motivating quality of the insight tenet, the reflective attitude motivates agents to inquire further where understanding is lacking. Lastly, the reflective tenet also entails an affective component, as wise agents are seen as unlikely to be carried away by their emotions (Staudinger and Gluck 2011 p. 218), which allows and motivates them to reflect without, e.g., getting defensive, or otherwise immediately enacting the behaviour motivated by the emotion.

Moral (Care for Others)
The moral facet of wisdom, also referred to as the Care for Others tenet, refers to the moral character wise agents are thought to have. Wise agents are thought to be empathetic, kind, and just, showing others care and respect (Holliday and Chandler 1986; Staudinger and Gluck 2011). This is most notable in the examples of wise agents often given by subjects, which include Mother Theresa and Gandhi, in contrast to examples often given for intelligent agents, such as Einstein and Newton (Paulhus et al. 2002). Moreover, wise agents are openminded when it comes to accepting, and learning from, others (Holliday and Chandler 1986; Sternberg 1985).

Real-world application.
The real-world application tenet of wisdom posits that the wisdom characteristics discussed so far must be translated to wise behaviour. In other words, wise people must

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24 While wise agents are seen as knowledgeable, focus tends to be on practical knowledge, i.e., knowledge related to living well, especially in a moral sense. This is especially notable in studies where people’s idea of wisdom is compared to their idea of intelligence. However, as this is not consistently the case; the idea of a wise agent invested in scientific, theological or other academic topics is also included.
not merely value open-mindedness, intellectual humility, morality, and inquisitiveness, they must also consistently act in line with these traits (Bluck and Glück 2005, 2011; Weststrate et al. 2019). Moreover, wise behaviour, including epistemic behaviour, may be difficult or effortful at times, yet is nevertheless enacted by the wise agent. The wise agent, then, is conscientious, i.e., motivated to achieve one’s (epistemic) goal and do the work required to reach it (Grossmann 2017). Another practical implication is that wise people give good advice (Bluck and Glück 2005). Again, this is an ability that must be acted on – wise agents share their informed perspective or knowledge on the matter to those who need it.

3.2 Towards the Folk Concept
The various traits and attributes described in this section are interconnected. For example, the wise agent’s insight through which she understands social situations allows her to act on her moral disposition to be kind and just, on top of her ability to be openminded. This openminded quality is also motivated by her intellectual humility acquired through her reflective attitude; a link that has also been discussed by Alfano et al. (2017) and Spiegel (2012). Likewise, the knowledge the wise agent is said to possess derives from the motivation to understand a topic or situation, as discussed in the insight and reflection tenets, on top of the cognitive qualities that allow her to attend to relevant aspects of a topic or situation.

While the implicit theory reflects what lay people tend to take wisdom to be, note that there are differences in conceptualisations between groups. For one, the implicit theory presented here reflects a Western conception which, according to Takahashi and Overton (2005), differs from Eastern definitions in its relative focus on the cognitive element rather than its integration with the affective element, where the latter refers to the moral tenet as well as the wise agent’s reflective character. However, within the Western implicit theory, the relative weight of the affective quality over the cognitive element differs as well: older subjects and female subjects describe the affective quality as central to wisdom, ascribing less importance to the cognitive element (Bluck and Gluck 2011). That older subjects give the affective quality more weight than the cognitive quality was already reported in 1980 (Clayton and Birren 1980). As such, this change does not seem to indicate that the wisdom concept is in flux, with the younger generation ascribing a different meaning to it. Rather, it seems that the importance given to the moral quality
increases with age. The weight individuals place on the different qualities of wisdom discussed here, then, may differ. But this does not deny that, generally speaking, these five tenets are constitutive of the layperson’s conception of wisdom.

In short, the folk theory of wisdom reflects an integration of various motivations, abilities, and behaviours (e.g., Birren and Fisher 1990; Glück and Bluck 2011; Jeste et al. 2010). Wise agents are described as reflective, insightful, possessing a moral character, having relative control over their emotions, and as having cognitive traits that lead to knowledge. They are seen as knowledgeable, where this knowledge is acquired through the mentioned abilities and traits, and is in turn applied to interpret novel situations.

4. Combining the Implicit with the Explicit
This section shows how the tenets of the implicit theory mirror elements of sophia, phronesis, and Socratic wisdom. I first discuss practical wisdom, then focussing on the elements of theoretical and Socratic wisdom that reflect components of the implicit theory. Lastly, I argue that these wisdom concepts can be combined to form a holistic, contemporary account of wisdom.

4.1 Phronesis
The clearest connection between phronesis and the implicit theory is the moral tenet. However, section 1.2 argued that practical wisdom entails a deliberative, perceptive, and motivational quality, all of which are reflected in the implicit theory. First, the deliberative quality entails deliberation to ground and thereby endorse the moral virtues, as well as deliberation between multiple options in complex normatively laden situations. The latter function is enacted through the cognitive tenet’s qualities of being observant, thoughtful, and good at reasoning. Moreover, to endorse moral virtues or virtuous actions one needs to reflect on one’s actions and dispositions, thereby determining whether they are in line with one’s values. Second, the perceptive quality is mirrored in the insight tenet of the

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25 As the perceived importance of the affective quality correlates with aging, it is relevant to note that this perceived importance also correlates with the ways wisdom develops (according to the implicit theory), e.g., being exposed to a broad spectrum of negative and positive experiences, confronting human mortality, and possibly even aging in itself (Glück and Bluck 2011). As such, it could be possible to argue that the older subjects were, on average, wiser than the younger test group. If so, then the greater extent with which older subjects endorsed the affective quality as central to wisdom to a greater extent than younger subjects.
implicit theory, as it allows one to quickly understand complex, normatively laden situations. Lastly, the motivational quality is reflected in the moral tenet of the implicit theory, as well as the real-world application tenet. After all, the motivational quality is informed by one's endorsement of moral traits such as kindness and justice, and motivates their enaction.

Moreover, I argue that the reflective and affective quality of the implicit theory is mirrored in the motivational element of practical wisdom. Recall that the enkratic agent acts morally virtuous, despite opposing inclinations. While the ideal practically wise agent may never be enkratic, only experiencing desires that are either in line with the virtues or not opposed to them, I also noted that this ideal agent is unlikely to exist. Where one does come across an opportunity for virtuous action yet experiences an opposing inclination, the motivational component of practical wisdom allows agents to be enkratic, rather than akratic. In other words, through practical wisdom, agents can reflect on their desires or prospective actions, regulating their behaviour when this behaviour would undermine a moral value.

4.2 Sophia and Socratic Wisdom

Sophia, defined as a life of contemplation, is partly constituted by nous – intellect or insight – and episteme, which can be translated as an understanding or knowledge of valuable epistemic goods. This reflects the cognitive facet of the implicit theory, both when it comes to the wise agent possessing knowledge – acquired through experience and, especially when the knowledge may be difficult to acquire, cognitive qualities such as insight and being observant and good at reasoning – and these cognitive qualities themselves. Moreover, the motivation to learn is an important element of sophia, which both the insight and the reflective facets of implicit wisdom put forward. Lastly, and this is a quality applicable to practical and Socratic wisdom as well, real-world-application is required for sophia. After all, sophia entails the life of contemplation, rather than merely the intention to contemplate or the ability to do so.

Theoretical and practical wisdom thereby cover the lion’s share of the qualities that constitute the implicit theory. Neither, however, cover the intellectual humility characteristic of the reflective tenet. Theoretical wisdom, for one, does not seem to require second-guessing as one may simply understand a complex matter without experiencing doubt. Likewise, practical wisdom does not require intellectual humility. After all, the beliefs that result from deliberation need only be sufficiently justified to be
action-guiding; the practically wise agent is not required to reflect on the veridicality or justification of one's beliefs to act on them, especially as her interpretation of a normatively laden situation tends to be accurate. Moreover, when the practically wise agent reflects on her character and abilities, she need not be intellectually humble in doing so, as she need not consider whether she is wrong in ascribing value to certain virtuous traits, nor in ascribing certain traits to herself if she, in fact, possesses these traits, even when she lacks adequate justification for this conclusion. Of course, questioning one's knowledge and abilities is useful for both theoretical and practical wisdom, yet neither seem to explicitly require intellectual humility of the agent. This will be expanded upon in the following section.

Socratic wisdom, on the other hand, does reflect the quality of intellectual humility. Moreover, it also contributes to the cognitive and insight elements of the implicit theory, as intellectual humility entails the understanding that no one can truly know what the future holds and that many situations are more complex than they may initially seem. Unanticipated events or new evidence can always come to light which, if they conflict with an agent's held beliefs, ought to lead to a re-evaluation or adjustment of these assumptions. This disposition also motivates open-mindedness—a quality of the moral tenet— as the awareness that one's knowledge is fallible allows one to be open to information that conflicts with one's knowledge. The intellectual humility reflected in Socratic wisdom, which makes agents open to the idea that they may be mistaken, as well as being open to other perspectives that may be in conflict with their own, is an important attitude, even when the agent happens to be right. After all, if they merely happen to be right, luck plays a bigger factor than what we may want from a wise agent.

The previous section noted that the tenets of the implicit theory and the characteristics they contain are best interpreted as interconnected. Likewise, recall that practical, theoretical, and Socratic wisdom are active concepts, referring to a way of interacting with the world, which both leads to and derives from epistemic goods such as, respectively, an awareness of the limits of one's knowledge, moral know-how, and non-trivial understanding. One thing we can take from both the philosophical concepts and the implicit theory, then, is this blurring of the division between epistemic goods and behaviours. They are part of the same system, the same way of life, and to separate them

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26 More recent accounts of moral virtue do include moral humility as a virtue (e.g., Driver 1989; Slote 1983). However, whether Aristotle ascribed moral value to humility is disputed, and generally rejected (e.g., Boyd 2014; Raterman 2006).
is not necessary to define wisdom. In fact, as I argue, wisdom is best defined as a *modus vivendi* where these elements come together, not just within the concepts of practical, theoretical, or Socratic wisdom, but where the elements of all these concepts form a unified concept of wisdom.

How these wisdom concepts and the characteristics they include can, together, form a holistic, complex account of wisdom – one that can be the regulatory end of intellectually virtuous behaviour – is discussed in the following section. This will thereby be the account of wisdom employed in this thesis, i.e., the epistemic good at which the intellectual virtues are directed.

5. A Contemporary Consolidation

In the previous section I argued that practical, theoretical, and Socratic wisdom map onto the implicit theory of wisdom and represent important qualities a contemporary wise agent ought to possess. The last task that we must address, then, is defending the combination of the three concepts to form a holistic wisdom account. In 5.1, I first discuss the ways in which the wisdom concepts can *add* to one another – an element that reflects prior arguments on combining practical and theoretical wisdom. While this discussion, and those in the following sections, draw on the original descriptions by Aristotle and Socrates (or Plato), I do not intend to argue that theoretical, practical, and Socratic wisdom are *meant* to be combined for these authors.

Rather, as I argue in Section 5.2, combining them in the way I propose can aid the function these authors connect to wisdom, i.e., living well. With this function in mind, I argue that the wisdom concepts do not merely *add* to one another, they can also *restrict* one another. I thereby argue that an act cannot be wise *simpliciter* if it is unwise within the context of Socratic, practical, or theoretical wisdom.

5.1 The Additive Value of the Wisdom Concepts

While I discussed a contemporary debate on the potential additive value of *sophia* on *phronesis* within Aristotle’s conception of the good life (which, as discussed, mainly focusses on the relation between investigating what traits make one better as a person – a process constitutive of *sophia* – and thereby being more informed in one’s quest to acquire practical wisdom), the consequence of the combination of these wisdom concepts when it involves our contemporary formulations of moral and intellectual virtues has been largely overlooked. This is not surprising, as contemporary virtue ethicists do
not require the notion of *sophia* for their theories, merely focussing on *phronesis*. Likewise, virtue epistemologists either focus merely on *sophia*, specifically moving away from *phronesis* to keep their theory purely epistemic (Baehr 2012, 2016), or take *phronesis* simply as another epistemic virtue (Roberts and Wood 2007). However, combining the two concepts, as well as Socratic wisdom, through the contemporary lens of the implicit theory gives us an intuitively fitting account of the broad and complex notion of wisdom.

There is precedent for combining practical and theoretical wisdom in contemporary epistemology. Whitcomb (2010) asks us to imagine two agents who possess practical wisdom. One, however, also possesses scientific understanding. This agent, Whitcomb notes, seems wiser than the agent who merely possesses practical wisdom. As such, he argues, theoretical wisdom makes one wiser than when one merely possesses practical wisdom. Note that this argument by Whitcomb (2010), and supported by Baehr (2012) relies on the idea that wisdom is reducible to knowledge (an account incommensurable with the proposed active accounts and which I further argue against in Section 5.3): the knowledge related to practical wisdom is sufficient for an agent to be wise, but she can be even wiser when she acquires knowledge related to theoretical wisdom. Given this, the described combination of practical and theoretical wisdom is merely additive: one is wiser if one possesses more knowledge. This additive quality is thereby distinct from the one I propose.

First, knowledge that may partly constitute theoretical, practical, or Socratic wisdom is not simply added together, where more knowledge equals more wisdom. After all, as the wisdom concepts are active, how one acquires, assesses and applies knowledge is just as important, if not more, than the knowledge itself (NE 1098b - 1099a). Second, the knowledge acquired through activity reflective of one wisdom concept can inform activity reflective of another, as we have seen in the argument where *sophia* informs *phronesis* by allowing the agent to possess an account of what traits are good to possess, informing her practically wise behaviour. However, again, knowledge is not the only element of the discussed wisdom concepts.

So, besides the knowledge acquired through theoretically wise behaviour informing practically wise behaviour, another possible example of the additive value between concepts would be the motivational element of *sophia* aiding the perceptive quality of practical wisdom. For example, when a friend is frustrated about their inability to grasp a complex topic, a kind agent’s attention can be directed towards asking this
friend to try and explain this complex topic to her so they can figure it out together, or even to research this topic herself. These are two options available to the agent that show kindness, where other potential acts, such as consoling or distracting the friend, are kind, yet potentially less effective than helping the friend in reaching a goal. Additionally, the sincere interest the agent shows in the topic helps the friend to not feel burdensome by receiving this support.

Elements of practical wisdom also add to theoretical wisdom. For example, valuing honesty, kindness, or justice, would motivate an agent to give credence to others when sharing her understanding of complex topics, avoiding implications that the information or ideas contained in it were purely her own.\(^{27}\) Moreover, going back to the previous example of a kind person helping a friend with understanding a complex topic, phronesis can motivate the agent to indeed help such a friend with this task.

Socratic wisdom can also add to theoretical wisdom, aiding the process through which one acquires understanding. After all, an awareness of one’s own cognitive limitations motivates seeking out the expertise of others, allowing the agent to acquire knowledge more effectively. Moreover, the awareness that human knowledge is fallible can motivate her to learn from those who do not make unjustified claims. For instance, climate scientists have adequate justification for their beliefs that climate change caused by human interference can be mitigated through numerous methods. However, they do not claim to possess infallible knowledge on the subject, i.e., they do not claim with full certainty that their conclusions are true. Instead, they claim that an analysis of the abundant evidence makes them endorse these conclusions as they are the best explanation of the available evidence. They are, in other words, intellectually humble in stating their claims, only sharing what they know to be the case: the evidence and the most likely explanation for this evidence.

Given the sheer number of sources and information available to the contemporary wise agent, checking whether the relevant source provides sufficient justification for their testimony and displays intellectual humility in formulating their statements gives the agent better tools to evaluate whether the relevant source should be trusted. Moreover, being aware of the reasons why a proposition is endorsed by experts gives one a greater understanding than the knowledge that certain experts endorse the proposition. Socratic wisdom, then, appears to be a useful trait for the contemporary agent to have – a trait

\(^{27}\) This also reflects the connection between wisdom and intellectual honesty or integrity, as discussed in Chapter 5.
that is reflected in the implicit theory and adds to theoretical and practical wisdom in a similar way to how practical and theoretical wisdom aid and inform one another. Namely, as I discuss in the following section, in a way that allows one to live well.\textsuperscript{28}

5.2 Living Well and Being Wise

So far I have merely argued that an agent is wiser when they possess more characteristics of wisdom reflected in theoretical, practical, and Socratic wisdom. In what follows I argue that the expression of an otherwise wise characteristic cannot be wise when it undermines another wisdom characteristic. To illustrate, when the wisdom concepts are seen as distinct an agent can be, e.g., theoretically wise when she researches a natural phenomenon and comes to the right conclusions. On the account presented in this chapter, however, this theoretically wise act is only wise \textit{simpliciter} when it is not, e.g., morally vicious or intellectually arrogant.

Combining the three wisdom concepts in this way seems to be in line with the function both Aristotle and Socrates ascribed to wisdom: being able to live well. For Aristotle, \textit{sophia} and \textit{phronesis} constitute different ways of living well. Nevertheless, a practically wise agent ought not deny the value of acquiring knowledge, and neither should a scholar act in ways that make her unhealthy or immoral (e.g., Broadie 1999; Natali 2001). In other words, if both kinds of wisdom ought to lead to \textit{eudaimonia}, then enacting one should not undermine the other. Likewise, Socrates saw wisdom regarding the virtues sufficient for happiness (Jones 2013), in addition to his claim that the unexamined life is not worth living (Plato, \textit{Apology} 38a).

It therefore seems that there is historical precedent for the qualities reflected in the three wisdom concepts adding to, and restricting one another, similar to the different qualities mentioned in the implicit theory being intertwined: being observant may generally add to wisdom, yet when this understanding is used to deceive, or when an agent is only observant in select circumstances where it benefits her and her alone, this would not be wise according to the implicit theory. To illustrate the ways in which the three wisdom concepts can add to and restrict one another, in what follows I present examples of agents who appear to exemplify one category of wisdom while undermining another.

\textsuperscript{28} Recall that living well is distinct from reaching \textit{eudaimonia} on my account: living well refers to the activity, including the motivations, of the agent, while \textit{eudaimonia} also entails elements that are up to luck even after the agent acts in line with \textit{sophia} or \textit{phronesis} (e.g., NE 1098b.20-22)
Imagine an agent who is theoretically wise yet undermines Socratic or practical wisdom. A theoretically wise agent may possess understanding of a scientific field, such as nuclear physics, and be motivated to increase this understanding further. If this agent would attempt to increase her understanding through attempts to build a nuclear power reactor, ignoring the danger this poses to herself and others, she would undermine practical wisdom. Likewise, if this agent believes herself to know enough about nuclear physics to undertake her experiment safely, taking this risk, especially without checking with other experts, would undermine Socratic wisdom as she ignores that human knowledge is fallible. As such, this person seems unwise either because she actually risks the lives of others or, when she accurately assesses her project to be safe, because she is intellectually arrogant in thinking that her assessment is sufficiently reliable to reject the possibility that others may lose their lives.

With regard to practical wisdom, we are unlikely to find an example where Socratic or theoretical wisdom can be undermined by the actions of an agent who possesses practical wisdom in full. After all, a practically wise agent cares that the beliefs that inform her behaviour are reliable. As such, when deliberating on the right action, she would be motivated to assess whether the beliefs she employs are justified, acting in line with Socratic wisdom. Moreover, possessing practical wisdom in full entails an idealisation. This should not be a problem: an ideal, after all, is something to strive towards – the existence of an ideal does not require it to be (easily) achieved. The excellences of virtue and wisdom, then, need not include imperfections; they ought to be ideals (McDowell 1998).

As we have seen in Section 2.1, the perceptiveness and insight reflective of the perceptual element of practical wisdom is informed by epistemic goods acquired through experience (e.g., grasping the impact of a fast-moving river). Yet it is highly unlikely that anyone can have the experience required to automatically respond with ‘the right action’ (i.e., the best act to perform given one’s virtues and the relevant characteristics of the situation) in every single situation she could potentially find herself in. Moreover, the agent who needs to deliberate on the right line of action remains practically wise. Lastly, the motivational element of practical wisdom does not require the agent to possess fully virtuous dispositions. After all, its function is, in part, to motivate the agent to ignore desires that oppose virtuous values, i.e., to allow the agent to avoid vicious behaviour. In Chapter 5, I argue for the differentiation between knowledge (including know-how) that is
necessary to avoid undermining (an element of) practical wisdom, and knowledge that merely adds to one’s practical wisdom.

So, with this in mind, we can present an example of an act in line with practical wisdom that undermines a quality of a different wisdom concept. Imagine an agent who aims to be kind and a good friend, who decides to accept the truth of some information that does not correspond with her previously held beliefs, e.g., that horses have four stomachs, as it was shared by a friend. The agent’s love for this friend leads her potential doubt to be sidelined, as she takes friendship to be characterised by mutual trust. Yet doing so would undermine theoretical wisdom, as the agent fails to be sufficiently epistemically motivated to avoid losing true beliefs or acquiring false beliefs within her understanding of mammal biology. Likewise, it would undermine Socratic wisdom, as she does not assess the justification she nor her friend has to support this claim.

6. Conclusion
This chapter introduced the contemporary consolidation account of wisdom – the epistemic good that, as I argue in the following chapters, is the end of intellectual virtue. This account incorporates the practical, theoretical, and Socratic wisdom concepts, thereby reflecting the most prominent wisdom conceptions within western philosophy. The novelty of this account, however, is based in the way in which these concepts are combined to form a complex and holistic account, where the elements of these three wisdom concepts add to and constrain one another. I also argued that this conception fits with the common understanding of the term ‘wisdom’, represented in the implicit theory. This was employed as an argument in favour of this contemporary consolidation account, as it supports this concept being a contemporary and highly valued epistemic good, instead of a categorisation of values only endorsed in Ancient Greece and some philosophical circles. Lastly, as this wisdom concept is active, the intellectual virtues can stand in direct relation to this good, and its products – epistemic actions – can be partly constitutive of it. That intellectually virtuous actions are indeed directly and constitutively related to wisdom will be argued for in the following three chapters, where I clarify what an apt intellectually virtuous act entails and the ways in which such acts can be wise.

The similarities and distinctions between ‘kindness’ and ‘friendliness’ are discussed in Chapter 9.
Chapter 3
Adroit and Successful Action

1. Introduction
In this chapter I discuss four existing accounts of success for intellectual and moral virtue: successfully establishing the immediate end, the ultimate end, the immediate target, and the *telos* of an action. The latter two are derived from skill accounts of moral virtue (Annas 1995; Stichter 2018), while the former two are proposed by Zagzebski (1996, 2003a) and supported by other virtue epistemologists (e.g., Baehr 2006, Watson 2015). These four potential measures of success can be divided into two categories of assessment: whether the virtuous act was successful, and whether the act was successfully virtuous. Recall the concern that focusing on knowledge or understanding excludes intellectual virtue from having a direct and constitutive relation with these goods. The products of these virtues, after all, are acts rather than beliefs, and an act cannot be true or false. As such, truth or accuracy with regards to an acquired belief or representation cannot be the accuracy condition of intellectual trait virtues without making the relation indirect: it is the product (a belief or representation) of a product (the act) that would be assessed, rather than the act itself. To provide a framework where intellectual trait virtues are constitutive, rather than auxiliary, with regards to an epistemic good, we must focus on assessing the behaviour rather than the consequences of this behaviour.

To illuminate this distinction, Section 1.1 employs Annas’ (1995) differentiation between the *telos* and the *skopos* of an act. Section 2 then applies this distinction to the *immediate end* success condition. This entails that an act is successful if it reflects the characteristic behaviour of a specific virtue. While this condition indeed assesses the behaviour rather than its product, I argue that the immediate end of a specific virtue rather forms the final ingredient to assess that an act is successfully *adroit* (the other ingredients being those introduced in the first chapter). This will thereby result in an account of adroit action which, when accurate and apt, would be partly constitutive of wisdom.

I then discuss two manners in which a virtuous act can be successful. First, in Section 3.1, that the agent is successful in establishing the state of affairs she intended
to establish. The second end is the ultimate end of intellectual virtue; the goal that all intellectual virtues have in common. As discussed in Chapter 1, Zagzebski (e.g., 1996) argues that the ultimate end of all intellectual virtues is to come into closer cognitive contact with reality. For an intellectually virtuous act to result in closer cognitive contact with reality, or CCCR, the act must lead one to acquire information that is true (in the case of propositional epistemic goods) or accurate (in the case of epistemic goods such as know-how and understanding, which may or may not be reducible to true propositions; see, e.g., Stanley and Williamson 2017 or Zagzebski 2001 for a discussion). Or, to avoid reducing one’s cognitive contact with reality, the act cannot lead the agent to accept falsehoods. As some form of CCCR, rather than the immediate target, appears to be the more popular success condition within responsibilist virtue epistemology (e.g., Baehr 2006; Watson 2015; Zagzebski 1996), this ultimate end of intellectual virtue will be employed as the good the intellectual virtues are connected to on the orthodox account of responsibilist virtue, i.e., the alternative to the account proposed in this thesis.

### 1.1 Telos and Skopos

To illustrate the difference between focussing on the product (e.g., belief) of the product (the act) and focussing on the act itself, we can look at the differentiation between these two levels of success within virtue ethics. The notion of success in theories of moral virtue is mainly discussed in accounts that take the virtues to be skills one develops over one's life – a strand of enquiry best represented by Annas (1995, 2011) and Stichter (2018). While they both conceptualise the moral virtues as skills, they differ in the success condition they focus on. While Stichter focusses on whether a virtuous act was successful, Annas argues in favour of determining whether an act was successfully virtuous – something she illustrates by categorising the former as an act hitting its skopos, and the latter as it hitting its telos.

While Aristotle uses skopos and telos interchangeably, both referring to the goal of the agent or act, Annas applies the Stoic distinction between these terms and the function they fulfil in assessing the success of actions and behaviours. The differentiation employed in this thesis between an act being successfully virtuous and a virtuous act being successful is reflected in her distinction between the agent’s telos, his doing or obtaining something, expressed by verbs, and his skopos, the thing done or obtained, expressed by nouns. [This]
telos suggests an end or goal not in the sense of the thing aimed at but in the sense of the agent’s aiming at that end
Annas, 1995. p. 34

So, when an agent performs a courageous act, e.g., saving someone from a burning building, its skopos is established when the agent is successful in saving this person. Its telos, on the other hand, refers to the agent’s overall character and motivation.

The telos refers to the final end of the agent’s life as a whole, which can entail being happy or eudaimonia, which in Ancient Greek philosophy would often entail living well and doing well (Annas 1995, p.44, 47), or it can refer to living well alone, i.e., possessing the virtues and living in line with them (Annas 2003, p. 24). It appears to be the case that an act can only be successful qua telos if the agent possesses all virtues. After all, she (2003, p. 29) notes that when an act was successful qua telos, it is only bad luck that stands in the way of it being successful qua skopos as well. It is also apparent in her (2011) acceptance of the unity thesis, entailing that for an agent to possess one virtue, she must possess them all. This is not to say that we cannot call someone’s actions kind or courageous despite lacking other virtues. Rather, Annas (2011) notes, we cannot state that they possess the virtues of kindness or courage in full when they lack others. In other words, for an act to be successful qua telos, it must be constitutive of the agent’s achievement of living a morally virtuous life – not merely with regards to the virtue relevant in the particular normatively laden situation, but with regards to her character as a whole.

Yet we can also interpret the telos of an act as it being in line with all the relevant virtues. In this sense, after all, the agent’s act would be constitutive of her intended aim of living well. This would align with Annas’ (1995, 2011) conceptualisation of living towards one’s telos, rather than hitting the telos itself. In the following chapter, I argue for a similar account of success, or accuracy. However, while the account Annas (1995, 2003, 2011) proposes still requires one to perform the act that the fully virtuous agent would have performed, and from a motivation the fully virtuous agent would possess, I will suggest a less demanding account. Namely, one that does not necessitate the knowledge of what the virtues entail and that they are connected to flourishing or wisdom (see Chapter 6). This will allow us to avoid concerns directed towards Aristotelian virtue ethics, which has been labelled elitist and impracticable, leading some to deny this theory’s ability to provide effective normative guidance (e.g. Driver, 2001; Sidgwick, 1907).
Annas (2003) argues that, while telos is the condition with which to measure the success of a morally virtuous act, the same need not apply to intellectual virtues. If intellectual virtues are directed towards, and used to define, knowledge, then the skopos has to be taken into account as well. After all, no matter how well an agent lives in line with the intellectual virtues, if she fails in acquiring a true belief, the resulting state cannot be deemed knowledge, or an accurate representation of a particular subject when referring to non-propositional epistemic goods. In other words, as knowledge is a success term, the intellectual virtues ought to be successful in acquiring this immediate target of the virtues (Annas 2003, p. 23).

There are two ways in which to interpret this skopos: successfully bringing about a state of affairs one intended to bring about, or successfully establishing the end that the virtue is (implicitly) aimed at. The former thereby reflects the intended immediate target of an act which, as I discuss in Section 3.1, is employed by Stichter (2018) as the measure of success for morally virtuous action. The latter possibility is the one endorsed by virtue epistemologists who adhere to Zagzebski’s account of closer cognitive contact with reality (CCCR). As I argue in Section 3.2, however, this success condition would have to be altered somewhat to include all responsibilist virtues.

2. Adroit Action and the Immediate End
Zagzebski’s distinction between the ultimate end and the immediate end of an intellectual virtue entails a differentiation between the end that all intellectual virtues share, and the aim of individual virtuous traits. As discussed in Chapter 1, the ultimate end refers to coming into closer contact with reality (Baehr 2006; Zagzebski 1996, 2003b). This entails the acquisition of epistemic goods such as understanding, knowledge, and true beliefs, as well as avoiding epistemic ills; mental states that reduce one’s cognitive contact with reality (e.g., false beliefs). The immediate ends of the individual virtues, on the other hand, pertain to whether the behaviour is adequately in line with the relevant virtue. In this section, I argue that this immediate end refers to the behaviour that distinguishes one intellectual virtue from another, as well as providing an account of competence required for the possession of the relevant virtue.

Baehr illustrates the immediate end of intellectual virtue by applying it to open-mindedness, whose end is ‘to consider the plausibility of others’ views even when they conflict with [the agent’s] own’ (2006, p. 482). Say that two agents, Anne and Becca, who are epistemically motivated and aim to engage with their epistemic environment in
an openminded manner, listen to a friend’s testimony on cognitive systems in octopuses. This friend states that all eight arms of an octopus contain neurons, making its brain not only located inside its head. Both agents have prior beliefs on brains in human and non-human vertebrates which contradict the idea that an animal can have such a distributed brain as the friend describes, thinking that the brain is intracranial. Anne considers the content of the testimony, temporarily suspending her beliefs that are in conflict with this testimony to be open to other evidence. This includes the information shared by the friend, as well as previously acquired information, such as the ever-present possibility that within a complex scientific field, a general rule can have some exceptions.

Becca, on the other hand, automatically perceives their friend’s testimony as implausible as it is in conflict with her previously acquired belief that the brain is located inside the head. As such, Becca fails to consider the justification or accuracy of prior conflicting beliefs, or to temporarily suspend them altogether, to take on the evidence provided by the friend. She thereby still aimed to consider the plausibility of the information in an openminded manner, possessing the right motivation, yet without possessing or acting on the skill allowing her to assess this plausibility without automatically giving more credence to her own, conflicting, beliefs. As such, while Anne was successful in performing the defining feature of open-mindedness, Becca did not hit this immediate end.

The same can be applied to other intellectual virtues. Recall Section 3.2 of Chapter 1, where I noted that one project of autonomous responsibilist virtue epistemology entails analysing and proposing individual responsibilist virtues (e.g., Battaly 2010; Riggs 2015; Roberts and Wood 2007; Watson 2015). This is, in part, constituted by finding the defining goal of particular intellectual virtues. For inquisitiveness, for example, this defining element is to sincerely engage in good questioning (Watson 2015). This thereby entails a motivational component, as the agent must sincerely engage in such questioning, rather than merely doing so for purely instrumental reasons. Second, the agent must engage in good questioning, whether this entails asking articulated or non-articulated questions, reflecting a skill component of the virtue. Imagine Cara, who sincerely aims to understand how tree rings can reflect the age of a tree through questioning an expert. If she chooses to ask whether trees can grow under water, this act thereby fails to reflect the immediate end of inquisitiveness as it is a poor question to ask given Cara’s particular goal. While Cara still asks a question sincerely, reflecting her epistemic motivation, which results in CCCR as she learns that trees do not grow under water even though their roots might be
submerged, she failed to acquire or apply the skill of asking relevant and clear questions that partly constitutes inquisitiveness. She thereby failed to hit the immediate target of inquisitiveness which, as I argue in what follows, means that her act failed to be adroit.

I argue that immediate ends of the virtues just discussed, entailing the characteristic behaviour and the competence required for this behaviour, are constitutive of the adroitness of an act. Recall the necessary conditions for intellectual virtue discussed in Chapter 1. This came down to intellectual virtues being acquired and admirable epistemically motivated dispositions to act. As these elements refer to all intellectual virtues, thereby not being sufficient to determine whether a particular act is, e.g., openminded or diligent, the immediate end of individual virtues can be incorporated to provide an account of adroit action. An adroit act of open-mindedness, then, is an act performed from an acquired, admirable, and epistemically motivated disposition to consider the plausibility of the views of others, despite these views potentially being in conflict with previously acquired beliefs or positions. Similarly, an adroit act of inquisitiveness is an act performed from an acquired, admirable, and epistemically motivated disposition to sincerely engage in good questioning.

Incorporating the immediate end thereby reflects the differentiation between individual virtues, even when the agent does not possess or apply the linguistic labels connected to these virtues. If Anne, the agent who succeeded in performing an openminded act, performed this act due to an acquired, admirable, and epistemically motivated trait, yet without explicitly possessing the intention to be open-minded, her act would have nevertheless been successfully openminded, i.e., adroit.

In contrast, Cara possesses the epistemic motivation required for adroit acts of intellectual virtue, and she may have acquired a disposition to ask articulated or non-articulated questions due to this epistemic motivation, yet she lacks the skill of asking relevant questions that partly constitutes inquisitiveness. Her action thereby fails to be adroit. If Cara happened to have posited her question to someone who happens to incorporate the workings of dendrochronology into every tree-related question, then Cara’s question would have led to the understanding she was aiming for. Nevertheless, despite this particular quirk of the expert, Cara would have failed in her inquisitiveness as her questioning did not hit the immediate end of this virtue. 30 Similarly, Becca, despite her

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30 Note that, hypothetically, an epistemic agent can perform an adroit act of inquisitiveness despite asking questions that appear to be irrelevant given the epistemic good she aims to acquire. For example, when an expert only divulges a particular piece of information on x when their questioner
intentions, failed to perform the behaviour characteristic of open-mindedness. In short, an adroit act of a particular intellectual virtue entails that this act is performed from an acquired, epistemically motivated, and admirable disposition to perform the behaviour reflected in the immediate end of the relevant virtue.

3. Successful Action: Immediate Target and CCCR

In this section, I discuss two ways in which a virtuous act can be successful. Where the virtues are construed as directed towards the acquisition of knowledge or understanding, then an intellectually virtuous act would be successful if one indeed acquires knowledge or understanding. For the purposes of this thesis, these goals fall under the umbrella of closer cognitive contact with reality, i.e., CCCR (Baehr 2006; Watson 2015; Zagzebski 1996). Yet one can also be successful or not in reaching goals that may aid one in establishing this ultimate end. For example, where the ultimate end of inquisitiveness is to acquire information that would lead to CCCR, the targets of individual inquisitive actions are more fine-grained, such as the goal to acquire accurate information on the dietary requirements of ostriches. This latter measure of success is the measure supported by Stichter (2018) and reflects whether the act is successful in reaching its immediate target.

As I have already argued, to possess a direct and constitutive relation to an epistemic good, the accuracy of an exercise of responsibilist virtues ought to be assessed based on the behaviour, rather than the consequences of this behaviour. However, in the upcoming chapters I aim to argue in favour of my account when compared to ‘orthodox’ theories of intellectual virtue, as discussed in Chapter 1. As such, the goal of this section is to provide a cohesive and plausible account of successful intellectual virtue when the virtues are not directed towards wisdom. This allows me to compare the wisdom account to this orthodox account, showing the ways in which the wisdom account is preferable, especially within our current sociotechnical environment.

3.1 The Immediate Target

Moral expertise, on Stichter’s (2018) view, is the same as expertise in any other skill. It refers to an ability to reliably act appropriately, even in demanding or difficult cases. To attain this expertise, virtues must be actively practised. Moreover, similar to other skills, an agent fails in her skilful action when she does not hit the immediate target. After all, an asks about the unrelated topic of y. If the inquisitive agent is aware of this quirk, then asking about y to acquire knowledge about x would be adroitly inquisitive.
archer aiming for the bullseye fails when she misses this target, even when this failure was due to a gust of wind rather than their lacking level of skill. Moreover, if the archer intends to hit the outer ring of the board as an exercise and succeeds in doing so because of her skill, it would be odd to deny that this act is apt. As such, rather than focussing on the generally accepted goal of a practise, whether this is knowledge or hitting the bullseye in archery, it seems fitting to focus on the intended goal of the individual. However, as I argue in what follows, this account would exclude examples that would be considered intellectually virtuous on the orthodox account.

According to Stichter (2018), virtues are acquired in the same way that other skills are acquired, where feedback prompted by one’s successful or failed skilled action aids this process. When a footballer scores, as was her intention, this successful action induces positive affective feedback, motivating future actions to succeed in a similar way. When she fails, on the other hand, the negative affective feedback motivates her to avoid making a similar mistake in the future. As this negative affective feedback directs attention to the elements of the situation and her action that caused this failure, it also allows her to learn how to avoid making a similar mistake in the future, improving her footballing skill. To apply this to moral virtue – the focus of Stichter’s account – consider the example of a courageous agent attempting to save a drowning child that was discussed in the previous chapter. When this agent jumps into the river right away, rather than first running along the riverbank to catch up with the child, she is likely to fail in establishing her intended goal. The negative affect that follows from their failure motivates her to assess whether she could have saved the child through a different course of action. She comes to the conclusion that running along the riverbank would have helped her to succeed in her attempt, making her better equipped to save a drowning child in the future.

Stichter argues that this process can be improved through fine-grained goal-setting, planning, and regular action-evaluation. When a student aims to improve upon her inquisitiveness as it would aid her in acquiring the understanding conveyed during her studies, she can apply Stichter’s method of virtue acquisition to do so. She can plan to be proactive in asking the right questions during class to learn the course content. This plan is instantiated through more fine-grained goal-setting, such as asking at least one question every class, where this question would aid her in understanding the course content discussed in the relevant tutorial. In this case, the immediate target is similar to CCCR. However, it is more fine-grained, as it refers specifically to increasing one's understanding of the aimed for content. If this student thereby asks a relevant and clear...
question that starts a discussion, where others draw upon the content of previous weeks, she may succeed in attaining CCCR yet fail in her immediate target: increasing her understanding of this week’s content. Through her frustration of not achieving the fine-grained goal she planned to achieve, she can improve upon her ability to ask clear and relevant questions by, e.g., making her question more specific in the future. The immediate feedback resulting from succeeding or failing in one’s intended epistemically valuable goal thereby allows one to improve upon the virtues by motivating previously successful courses of action and preventing actions that have been unsuccessful.

On Stichter’s (2018) account, it is thereby the immediate target – the intended outcome of an action – that is the central condition of success. This is the immediate target set out by the agent who either actively aims to acquire the relevant skill or virtue through fine-grained goal setting, or the goal the agent simply has in mind which happens to incorporate the skill or virtue in question.

However, taking the intended target of an adroit action as the success condition on the orthodox account would exclude behaviour or lines of action that lack a fine-grained goal set by the agent, as well as examples where the goal set by the agent might be too fine-grained, causing an act to fail where, on the orthodox account, it might be deemed successful. To illustrate the latter, imagine an inquisitive agent aiming to acquire knowledge on the habits of drop bears – carnivorous koalas from Australia – who, through her research, find out that there is no such thing as a drop bear. She thereby did not acquire the knowledge she intended to acquire. As such, her adroitly inquisitive act did not hit its immediate target. Nevertheless, her inquisitiveness allowed her to adjust her beliefs and acquire knowledge, i.e., that the existence of drop bears is a hoax, producing CCCR.

Likewise, if an agent is curious about how life evolved from non-living matter, she may spend days trying to find information on this topic, using several other intellectual virtues in the process. However, while there are theories that attempt to answer this question, no definitive answer has been presented, nor is there a theory that has support from most scientists working on this issue. As such, the agent’s epistemic behaviour does not result in the knowledge she is after, and she is likely to remain curious about this topic. Yet the epistemic behaviour motivated by curiosity led to increased CCCR as she now has an understanding of the current scientific position with regards to this subject.

Second, some intellectually virtuous actions are performed without an immediate target in mind. For example, while an intellectually humble agent might have the
underlying value of accurately estimating the justification behind, or veridicality of, her beliefs, this value need not produce an intended goal for all individual instances of intellectual humility. After all, intellectual humility may rather express itself in an automatic intellectually humble mental attitude, leading her to, e.g., not get defensive when a casual conversation partner implicitly endorses the veridicality of a premise the agent strongly believes to be false. When asked to explain her behaviour, this agent may shrug her shoulders and say that she might have felt a pang of doubt, both with regards to the testimony of the acquaintance as to her own beliefs, leading her to become agnostic with regards to the veridicality of the relevant premise, yet that she was not aware of ‘acting’ in one way rather than another, let alone acting with an intention in mind.

So, while this agent may have developed an epistemically motivated disposition to be intellectually humble, causing her to avoid giving too much credence to her beliefs resulting in the behaviour described above, this individual instance of intellectual humility was not enacted with a specific (epistemic) goal in mind. As the behaviour itself reflects the immediate end of intellectual humility, and this act is likely to generally increase the agent’s CCCR as she automatically questions her own, possibly false or unjustified, beliefs, it seems right to call this a successful act of intellectual humility. However, this agent did not intend to, e.g., doubt the relevant beliefs, to acquire knowledge during this conversation, or to further the conversation with this acquaintance to learn more about certain subjects, which would be halted if she did not accept the potential truth of the proposition. As such, she did not hit an immediate target through this behaviour, simply because there was not one.

From this discussion we can gather that taking the intended immediate target as the success condition of virtuous action would lead to excluding examples where the immediate target is not acquired, yet where the ultimate end of intellectual virtue is reached in a way that the agent would (in all likelihood) endorse. As such, it is likely that orthodox accounts of intellectual virtue would endorse the ultimate end as the accuracy condition of intellectual virtue, put forward by Zagzebski (1996). This results in an account where an act is successful as it establishes the functional end of intellectual virtue.

3.2 The Ultimate End
As stated, the ultimate end of intellectual virtue, on Zagzebski’s account, is to come into closer cognitive contact with reality (CCCR). Moreover, one possesses an intellectual virtue when one “is reliable at bringing about the end that is the aim of the motivational
component of the virtue” (1996, p. 136). This can refer to two aims of intellectual virtue that must be reliably established. First, the immediate end of a specific intellectual virtue, as discussed in Section 2, and second, the ultimate end of intellectual virtue in general, i.e., CCCR. I argued that the previous interpretation is required on the AAA account for an act to be adroit. That exercises of intellectual virtue reliably attain CCCR, on the other hand, is required for Zagzebski’s (1996) account as she aims to argue that the intellectual trait virtues ought to replace the reliabilist virtues as the most important for explaining the acquisition and non-instrumental value of these epistemic goods. After all, as noted in Section 1.1, truth is necessary for a belief acquired through intellectual virtue to amount to knowledge. Likewise, understanding is only acquired when it accurately represents the topic of one’s understanding.

The positive element of this account is that, when all intellectual virtues share this end, it becomes the function of all these virtues to lead to CCCR. As such, even when an act is performed automatically, without a goal in mind, or where the fine-grained goal does not correspond with the outcome, the act would still be successful if it led to CCCR. The negative quality of this account, however, is that it excludes acts and traits that are not directed towards CCCR from being successful.

In Chapter 1, I noted that the functions of intellectual virtues are to acquire, evaluate, and share epistemic goods. The first function is covered by CCCR: intellectual virtues motivate epistemic acquisition behaviour that is reflective of the (skilled) behaviour characteristic of a particular virtue. The second function is likely to be in favour of CCCR, as it allows one to avoid or reject falsehoods that would counter CCCR. It is the final function that would not be accepted under the CCCR account. This would be a problem as, for example, epistemic generosity is directed towards sharing epistemic goods with others. When we recall that Zagzebski (1996, 2020) argues that one only possesses a virtue when it is reliable in producing the end of this virtue, it would be impossible to possess epistemic generosity if its end would be CCCR.

We can account for this sharing function by expanding the ultimate goal of intellectual virtue: rather than merely aiming to improve one’s own cognitive contact with reality, one can aim to improve CCCR for one’s epistemic community as a whole (Kawall, 2002). So, if one possesses an epistemic good, sharing this with others would increase CCCR of the epistemic community. Likewise, if an agent acquires an epistemic good herself, she increases CCCR of her epistemic community in doing so. After all, she is part
of this community, causing her knowledge-acquisition to positively impact the cognitive contact with reality of her epistemic community as a whole.\textsuperscript{31}

So, to increase CCCR of the epistemic community, one’s epistemic generosity ought to be informed by other virtues that allow one to assess the veridicality of one’s own beliefs (e.g., intellectual humility, self-scrutiny, and transparency) and information shared by others (e.g., thoroughness, objectivity, and diligence), as well as to frame and convey the information in such a way that it increases CCCR of the community.\textsuperscript{32} This latter element, then, reflects the skill partly constitutive of epistemic generosity: one must not merely convey information; one must do so in a way that is understandable for one’s intended audience, decreasing the possibility of misinterpretation. Sharing sufficiently justified information in an understandable way is thereby the implicit end of epistemic generosity.

The same holds for intellectual virtues such as epistemic courage, which can entail being courageous in one’s acquisition of epistemic goods (e.g., accepting the potential distressing nature of the knowledge one acquires) or sharing these goods (e.g., sharing a trustworthy article despite knowing that some friends or colleagues will not agree with its findings, potentially harming one’s social status). To avoid undermining epistemic generosity when performing this second function, one ought to assess the veridicality and justification behind the shared information, and convey it in a way that reflects this veridicality.

When we include this epistemic community element into the orthodox account, it seems likely that the intellectual virtues can be directed towards this good. Of course, there may be examples where an agent does not aim for CCCR while nevertheless acting in a way that seems adroit. For example, employing one’s open-mindedness, perceptiveness, or imaginativeness to construct an epistemic cohort can still be adroit, where it is epistemically motivated and reflects the characteristic behaviour of the virtue in question, yet without this act directly leading to CCCR. After all, while it would be a fruitful endeavour to construct an epistemic cohort given this cohort’s potential role in acquiring, evaluating, and sharing epistemic goods, the initial actions establishing this cohort would only be indirectly related to the potential epistemic good this cohort can provide. Nevertheless, we could consider those acts mere outliers on the orthodox account.

\textsuperscript{31} As I argue in Chapter 8, epistemic responsibility with regards to sharing information is especially important to keep in mind given our current sociotechnical environment.

\textsuperscript{32} For a discussion of intellectual vices that may hinder epistemic generosity in relation to intellectual humility, see Tanesini (2018).
account of intellectual virtue, claiming that the intellectual virtues are not virtuous because they allow one to create an epistemic cohort. Rather, they are virtuous as they allow one, and one’s epistemic community, to come into closer contact with reality (the individual-focused version of this being endorsed by, e.g., Zagzebski 1996).

4. Conclusion
In this chapter, I discussed two ways in which a virtuous act can be successful: hitting the immediate target and establishing CCCR. I argued that the latter would likely be preferable for agents supporting the orthodox account of intellectual virtue. I also presented the final, virtue-specific ingredient that makes an act adroit: hitting the implicit target. This entails that an act reflects the (skilled) behaviour characteristic of the virtue in question. While this would make an act, e.g., successfully openminded, whether this act is also successfully virtuous is not a given. As such, in the following chapter I argue for an accuracy account that does fulfil this condition, without making the account of apt intellectually virtuous action overly demanding.
Chapter 4
Accuracy and Aptness

1. Introduction
As stated in the introduction, the aim of this thesis is to provide and apply a framework of intellectual virtue directed towards wisdom that aids one in navigating our current sociotechnical epistemic landscape. I do so by placing responsibilist virtues in the AAA structure of competence, arguing that the resulting apt act is partly constitutive of wisdom. In the previous chapter, I argued that we ought to formulate an accuracy condition that assesses whether an act is successfully virtuous, rather than a virtuous act being successful. While this could be construed as the telos condition proposed by Annas (1995, 2003), I also noted that this condition could be overly demanding.

So, in this Chapter I propose an accuracy condition that, similar to the telos condition, takes other virtues into account to determine whether an act is accurate, yet without requiring the agent to possess these virtues in full. Moreover, while Annas’ account (2003) is applied to either moral virtues or responsibilist epistemic virtues, I argue that my account can incorporate the importance of both. Namely, I propose that an adroit act of intellectual virtue is accurate when it is successfully virtuous, i.e., when it is virtuous with regard to an intellectual virtue, without undermining another intellectual or moral virtue. In this thesis, I conceptualise this accuracy condition as admirability, and I do so for two reasons. First, defining accuracy as ‘successfully virtuous’ would lead to confusion due to the different interpretations of successfully virtuous action. Second, as the intellectual virtues are conceptualised as admirable traits of character. This, as I argue in Section 2, also provides the foundations for including moral values into the accuracy condition.

In Section 3 and 4 I argue for the resulting conception of apt intellectually virtuous action. Where Section 3 focusses on this account’s effect on virtue possession, Section 4 argues for the value of incorporating both intellectual and moral values to determine an act as being apt. However, note that this refers to moral values, rather than moral virtues; the account of apt intellectually virtuous action employed in this thesis entails that the
virtues are directed towards wisdom. While this includes practical wisdom, recall that this wisdom concept is distinct from the moral virtues. After all, the motivational component of practical wisdom allows one to perform acts in line with the moral virtues despite opposing inclinations or desires. In other words, it stops one from performing vicious acts, rather than supplying the passions constitutive of moral virtue.

2. Admirability
As discussed in Chapter 1, epistemic trait virtues are often conceptualised as admirable – as traits which reflect well on the agent (Baehr 2006, 2011; Battaly 2009; Code 1984; Zagzebski 1996).33 While one may argue that this admirability is reducible to the instrumental value of the intellectual virtues given their effect to establish CCCR (Closer Cognitive Contact with Reality), this does not align with the inclusion of the other necessary elements for an epistemic act to be adroitly intellectually virtuous. After all, if the intellectual virtues would be admirable merely due to their skill component reflected in one’s ability to hit the implicit target, then an epistemic motivation would not be needed for one’s trait to be intellectually virtuous. Moreover, if we would argue that a dispositional epistemic motivation would possess a similar instrumental function, leading agents to acquire epistemic goods, this would fail to account for the relevance of one’s epistemic motivation to reflect a final POG or NOI, i.e., a positive orientation towards epistemic goods that reflects that one finally values these goods, or a negative orientation towards epistemic ills (such as falsehoods) that reflects that one finally disvalues these ills. After all, an agent may simply value the acquisition of truths and avoidance of falsehoods as this allows her to impress her friends, yet this would not reflect an epistemically virtuous motivation. Finally, popular contemporary accounts of responsibilist virtue, consider the virtues to be admirable. This is as they add to the agent’s “personal worth,” that is, to the notion of being a “good person” or of being good qua person’ (Baehr 2011, p. 92). Or, following Zagzebski (2015, 2020), because these traits tend to be admired, upon

33 While the intellectual virtues are also said to be praiseworthy to possess, which seems like a similar characteristic, praiseworthiness rather derives its value from the acquisition of the virtue reflecting an achievement (Baehr 2011). Given the potential influence of luck that would allow one to practice particular intellectual virtues (e.g., whether one knows about the intellectual virtues, is raised in an environment where practising these virtues is rewarded, etc.) I remain agnostic about the relevance of the praiseworthiness in acquiring an intellectual virtue that is not already covered by admirability – the characteristic discussed in this section.
reflection, due to the positive ways they reflect on the agent’s character, where this admiration itself tracks whether the relevant trait is virtuous or not.

In this section, I explore how the admirability that tends to be attributed to intellectually virtuous dispositions can function as the accuracy condition constitutive of apt intellectually virtuous action. To do so, I first argue that intellectual and moral virtue are both admirable within the same context: they make one admirable qua person, in contrast to merely qua, e.g., teacher. When we accept this, then an act would not be admirable in this context if it reflects poorly on the agent as a person. This account of admirability is then applied as the accuracy condition of intellectual virtue.

Where an act is reflective of a trait or skill and is successful due to this trait or skill, it is admirable in the applicable context. For instance, a darts player hitting the bullseye in a skilled manner is admirable in the context of darts as it displays the agent’s excellence as a darts player. Aply hitting the inner ring of the 20 point area is thereby admirable in the same way, i.e., within the context of darts. Moreover, when we take the context to be pub sports in general, rather than only darts, aptly cleaning the table in pool may be admirable in the same way as these other two actions. Similarly, being attentive and thorough may make one admirable as a scientist, teacher, or knower when these traits present themselves in these respective contexts. However, when these traits reflect intellectual virtues, meaning that they are stable across contexts and motivated in the right way, they also make one admirable as a person. In other words, the context in which intellectual virtues (or apt intellectually virtuous acts) are admirable, is the person as a whole: they reflect well on the agent as a person. This is thereby similar to the admirability of moral virtues. After all, acting in line with justice or kindness can make one admirable or good as a judge or teacher respectively, yet when these behaviours reflect moral virtue, they also make one good as a person.

This incorporation of moral values has precedence in both Baehr’s and Zagzebski’s accounts of intellectual virtue. Zagzebski (1996), after all, suggests that the intellectual and moral virtues can both lead to living well, in part because the intellectual virtues allow one to acquire knowledge relevant to act on moral virtue – an epistemic end I discuss in the following chapter – supporting the value of intellectual virtue. Similarly, Baehr argues for the connection between intellectual and moral virtues by stating that

intellectual and moral virtues are fundamentally similar, not merely because both are admirable traits of character, but also because some particular instances or
tokens of intellectual virtue are also instances of tokens of moral virtue, and because any intellectual virtue possessed completely or in its fullness is also a moral virtue
Baehr 2011, p. 219

Nevertheless, both Baehr and Zagzebski argue that the intellectual virtues are admirable in a different way to moral virtues. Zagzebski (2020) notes that we take the intellectual virtues to be admirable as they are performed from a motivation that reflects well on the agent, and because they are reliably successful in attaining the end of the relevant virtue (i.e., truth or CCCR). In other words, as the intellectual virtues are directed towards CCCR, being motivated to establish CCCR and reliable in doing so makes the intellectual virtues virtuous, and thereby admirable, while moral virtues are admirable as they reflect a morally virtuous motivation and disposition.

Likewise, Baehr takes the intellectual virtues to add to the personal worth of the agent in an intellectual dimension, as an agent’s thorough, openminded, and inquisitive dispositions make her better as a person without necessarily making her better as a moral person (2011, p. 93). This potential objection to considering the admirability of intellectual and moral virtues within the same context, i.e., that they reflect well on the agent as a person rather than just as, e.g., a teacher or knower, will be countered in this section. Baehr further justifies this difference in dimension of admirability through the different ends the moral and intellectual virtues are directed towards, as the latter are ‘aimed at “distinctively epistemic” ends [...] like knowledge, truth, and understanding’ (2011, p. 220).

The crux of Zagzebski’s and Baehr’s argument thereby appears to rely on the fact that intellectual virtues are directed towards epistemic ends, whereby the intellectually virtuous agent is admirable because she is motivationally and behaviourally directed towards these ends. If a responsibilist account aims to define the intellectual virtues in relation to knowledge, as is the case for conservative accounts of responsibilist virtue discussed in Chapter 1, moral concerns would not impact the admirability of these virtues (Baehr 2016). However, responsibilist accounts can rather define their virtues in terms of the epistemic good of wisdom. As I argue in this and the following chapter, wisdom allows us to take epistemic, moral, and prudential considerations into account when assessing the accuracy of an intellectually virtuous action. That is, it allows us to assess whether an intellectual trait or action indeed reflects well on the agent as a person. In what follows I
apply this admirability condition to construct an account of apt intellectually virtuous action. First, however, I show that taking admirability as the accuracy condition allows us to account for Baehr’s concern that an intellectual trait or action does not necessarily affect the agent’s moral standing, that supported his differentiation between the intellectual and moral dimensions of personal worth.

If we accept that intellectual virtues reflect well on the agent as a person, then an act of intellectual virtue can fail to be admirable when it reflects poorly on the agent as a person. This does not mean that an intellectually virtuous act is (partly) admirable for its moral qualities. Rather, an adroit act of intellectual virtue is admirable as it is the product of an intellectual trait that is admirable due to its motivational and behavioural qualities: the act reflects well on the agent as a person as it results from intellectual virtue. However, an adroit act can fail to be admirable by undermining an intellectual or a moral virtue and so, if we accept admirability as the accuracy condition, fail to be accurate and apt.

To illustrate, if an epistemically generous agent chooses to share her knowledge during a game of basketball as she knows that the receiver of her testimony will be more open to this information while playing, her very poor basketball performance may make her less admirable as a basketball player, without reflecting poorly on her as a person. This adroit act is thereby accurate, i.e., admirable as it reflects well on her as a person, and accurate as it was adroit. After all, the act was admirable as it was epistemically generous (i.e., adroit). However, if this agent chooses to lock the receiver of her testimony in a cage so they are forced to listen, this cruel act undermines kindness and thereby reflects poorly on her as a person. The admirability related to the epistemic generosity displayed in this action is thereby undermined by the despicability of the cruelness of this action. As such, an adroit intellectually virtuous act can fail to be accurate when it undermines a moral virtue, thereby failing to be admirable.

Similarly, an adroit intellectually virtuous act may fail to be admirable as it undermines another intellectual virtue. For example, an agent may be thorough in reading and reviewing information related to a topic of interest, yet disregard the justified plausibility of some of the information she reads whenever this information is in conflict with her previously acquired beliefs. While her behaviour would normally be admirable by virtue of being adroitly thorough, her display of closemindedness during this thorough research undermines the admirability of this act. Her thorough behaviour is therefore not accurate, thereby failing to be apt.
An apt act of intellectual virtue is thereby an act performed from an intellectual virtue (e.g., attentiveness or intellectual humility), that is admirable because it is adroit (i.e., as it was performed from a virtuous disposition to be attentive or intellectually humble). It can fail to be admirable by undermining another virtue, moral or intellectual, thereby failing to be apt. In other words, an adroit act can fail to be virtuous by undermining another virtue, or an adroit act can be successfully virtuous as it does not undermine another virtue.

Note that admirability being a characteristic of intellectual virtue as well as the accuracy condition is compatible with the AAA structure applied to reliabilist virtue. After all, an adroit act of perception tends to result in an accurate percept, as one’s perception has to be reliably accurate for it to be categorised as a virtue. As I argue in the following section, the same holds for intellectual virtue: acts performed from an intellectual virtue tend to be admirable, as the trait has to be reliably admirable to be an intellectual virtue.

3. Virtues as Admirable Traits
So far, I have argued that intellectual virtues are admirable character traits, yet that individual actions can fail to be admirable if they undermine virtue in some way, whether this refers to moral or intellectual virtue. When we accept the reliability condition of intellectual virtue, then, employing this accuracy condition affects the measure of virtue possession. In Section 3.1 I discuss what reliability entails on the AAA account of competence, when the agent’s shape and situation are taken into account. Section 3.2 then argues against a CCCR-based account of reliability (e.g., Zagzebski 1996, 2020), as establishing CCCR does not adequately track intellectual virtue possession. However, as I argue in Section 3.3, admirability can track virtue possession, allowing for the virtues to be conceptualised as epistemically motivated and stable dispositions to perform acts characteristic of the relevant intellectual virtue in a way that reflects well on the agent as a person.

3.1 AAA, SSS, and Virtue Possession
While the first chapter merely noted that an adroit act is an act performed from a particular competence, I add to this condition here by introducing Sosa’s (e.g., 2017) SSS structure of competence. This structure refers to the elements required for an act to be adroit (or, simply, competent), entailing the agent’s Seat (or Skill), Shape, and Situation. Firstly, the Seat simply denotes the competence an agent possesses to act skilfully. She retains this
competence, even during times where she is not in the right state to act skilfully. This state, or Shape, refers to the agent’s mental or physical circumstances that allow her skilful performance to be reliable. This can include being awake, being sober, etc. Lastly, the Situation refers to the circumstances of the agent’s environment that affect her performance. For example, someone who possesses the seat of football and is in the right shape to perform this skill, may be unable to reliably act on this skill on ice.

Together, the SSS conditions allow the agent to perform adroit acts of the relevant competence. So, in the case of the football player, the agent can possess the skill of scoring a goal, which she can reliably act on when she is in the right shape, e.g., awake, not overheating, and (relatively) sober, and right situation, e.g., on a non-slippery surface and with a round and inflated ball. If the football player possesses the right seat and is in the right situation, yet she is in a shape that significantly impairs her competence (e.g., while hallucinating), then her act of scoring a goal (which would reflect an accurate performance) was not successfully adroit and thereby not apt. Moreover, if she would fail to score while in this shape, the failure ‘doesn’t count in any way against [her] skill’ (Carter 2021, p. 20). So, when applied to reliabilist virtue, an agent possessing the reliable faculty of perception can fail to perceive an object as she is not disposed to see (or see well) in close-to complete darkness. This does not make her perception less reliable. However, if she does happen to perceive an object in this situation, the percept was not adroitly acquired and thereby fails to be constitutive of knowledge. After all, the agent’s perception is not reliable in close-to complete darkness.

Applying this to responsibilist virtue, the seat or skill would refer to the necessary characteristics that all intellectual virtues share, including an epistemic motivation, the trait being acquired, admirable, and stable across situations, as well as the immediate end of the virtue in question. The seat, then, refers to a competence constituted by the elements that make an act adroit. Moreover, as noted, to possess the relevant competence, it must be reliable when the agent is in the right state and situation. However, given the stability condition of intellectual virtue, the situations and shapes where failing does not count against her possession of the relevant virtue are limited. For example, when an agent is in an epistemically hostile or completely novel situation, she is less likely to establish CCCR than under ideal or familiar circumstances. Likewise, when an agent is in a non-ideal shape to act on a particular virtue, such as trying to act on open-mindedness when angered by the view she ought to assess, or inebriated in a situation where attentiveness is relevant, she is less likely to be successful in establishing
CCCR (or to be successfully adroit given the required characteristic behaviour element). However, it is especially in such difficult situations and shapes that the virtues are needed. We should thereby not exclude these situations and shapes from being relevant in assessing one's possession of the relevant virtue.

Note that the required reliability of a competence differs between domains (Carter 2021, p. 20), and to possess intellectual virtue, one need not be successful in one's application at all times to possess the relevant virtue. For example, if an agent is normally openminded in situations where this virtue applies, and merely has one blind spot such that her world would fall apart if the piece of information turns out to be true, causing her to ignore the potential plausibility of this information, we could still attribute openmindedness to this agent in other situations. In other words, one blind spot does not undermine the status of her other acts as adroitly openminded. However, she would be more open-minded if she would also objectively assess the plausibility of a view that fills her with dread. Comparing this to a non-virtuous competence, someone may have the competence (or seat) of driving when on familiar roads and after a good night's sleep, yet she would be a better driver if she would also be competent in driving an unfamiliar car on a dirt road while tired.

In short, if we accept the reliability condition of responsibilist epistemic virtue and take CCCR as the accuracy condition of these virtues, then the possession of an intellectual virtue depends on whether it reliably leads to CCCR. However, as I argue in what follows, this account would lead to unintuitive outcomes – ones that we can avoid by taking admirability as the accuracy condition.

3.2 Admirable Unsuccessful Traits
While Zagzebski (1996, 2015, 2020) accepts that moral and intellectual virtues are admirable as they reflect well on the agent as a person, she also notes that intellectual virtues are admirable, in part, due to a reliable connection to truth. After all, traits such as thoroughness and intellectual humility are intellectual virtues due to this connection to truth and would be less admirable when this connection to truth would be less reliable (e.g., Zagzebski 2020, p. 100, 101). Moreover, most intellectual virtues are defined to establish this reliable connection with truth or CCCR. If one is sufficiently intellectually virtuous, one is more likely to construct rich representations of complex topics (due to, e.g., inquisitiveness, creativity, and curiosity), less likely to acquire false beliefs or inaccurate representations (through, e.g., attentiveness, patience, and objectivity), in
addition to being more likely to test, reflect on, or otherwise assess these beliefs (e.g., thoroughness, reflectiveness, and self-scrutiny). As such, the intellectual virtues tend to be causally related to CCCR. Additionally, when we accept the account of CCCR as including one’s epistemic community, as discussed in Section 3.2 of the previous chapter, then virtues and virtuous acts that aim to share epistemic goods with others are also represented in this relation.

As such, if we accept that reliability is relevant to assess one’s virtue possession, then accounts that define the virtues as directed towards knowledge or CCCR would likely consider the acts’ success in establishing knowledge or CCCR as the measure of the relevant virtue’s reliability. While, as stated, one’s intellectual virtue need not always be successful in establishing CCCR to be sufficiently reliable, recall the argument from the previous section: if an agent’s virtue is more reliable, including in challenging circumstances, she would be more intellectually virtuous than if she would be less reliable. With this context in mind, in what follows I argue that reliability in establishing CCCR does not adequately track virtue possession.

Imagine an inquisitive agent, Belle, who lives in a small village that has an extensive library. The other people in this village are not especially interested in acquiring knowledge, valuing it merely instrumentally (e.g., knowing when the bakery closes, or the pleasure that comes with gossiping). Whenever Belle asks a fellow resident about, e.g., the political system adhered to in the village, the history of a nearby castle, or how eating an excess of eggs affects the digestive tract, the answers she receives are clearly false, if her question is answered at all. Moreover, given the disinterest in epistemic goods within this village, the library is in disarray, with thrillers, mathematical texts, and travel books all jumbled together. To find the answers she is looking for, she simply has to pick the books that seem most relevant given their title, putting them back after being disappointed in their content. Moreover, even when a relevant book is found, Belle is aware that the information contained within it is possibly dated or written as propaganda. In other words, she is aware that she has not acquired knowledge on her topics of interest through her research. So, while she may eventually find a book or person that brings her closer to her epistemic aim by being trustworthy and answering (some of) her questions, Belle’s inquisitiveness has not been successful so far.

While Belle continues to ask insightful, relevant, and clear questions, either articulated or through research, her hostile environment leads her to acquire little
knowledge.\textsuperscript{34} In other words, if establishing CCCR would be the measure of success, her inquisitiveness would usually fail in this respect. Nevertheless, given her unwavering commitment to act on her epistemic motivation despite these failures, in addition to her inquisitive skills and the amount of effort required to get any answers at all, her continued deployment of inquisitiveness remains admirable, i.e., it reflects well on her as a person.

If her experiences would instead lead her to acquire a trait that leads her to only focus on trivial or close-to trivial beliefs – the information her fellow residents are unlikely to lie about and more willing to discuss – Belle’s inquisitiveness would be more reliably successful in establishing CCCR. Yet becoming a gossip, merely employing her inquisitiveness to find out lurid yet trivial details about her neighbours (e.g., how often they wash their underwear) would not be admirable as her inquisitiveness would not be directed towards worthwhile epistemic ends.\textsuperscript{35} In other words, inquisitiveness that tends to fail in establishing CCCR appears to be more admirable – a trait that reflects well on the person – than “trivial” inquisitiveness that does reliably establish CCCR.

Moreover, when we compare Belle to a contemporary agent with internet access, reliable success in establishing CCCR does not track the intellectual virtuousness of the agent. After all, search engines, as well as the search function within documents allowing one to locate key words, allow one to apply one’s inquisitiveness immediately and effectively. For both Belle and the contemporary agent, the success in establishing CCCR is credited to the agent’s inquisitiveness. Yet while the contemporary agent is more efficient in acquiring the answers posited through her inquisitiveness, establishing CCCR to a much greater extent than Belle, this is due to a difference in environment, rather than a difference in virtue possession. Likewise, Belle’s failure to establish CCCR is due to her epistemically hostile environment, rather than her intellectual character, and should therefore not reflect poorly on her possession of inquisitiveness.

\textsuperscript{34} Through her inquisitive efforts in the library, she of course acquires some knowledge, e.g., that a book titled x is about y, or that author s has written p. This knowledge could be useful in her further inquisitive efforts as she knows which books to read or avoid. However, note that she may not finally value this knowledge. This is thereby distinct from the case, discussed in Chapter 3, of an agent inquisitively researching drop bear habits, resulting in the knowledge that the existence of drop bears is a hoax, where her inquisitiveness increased CCCR despite not hitting the immediate target. An analogous case would rather be that the agent happens to acquire knowledge on the autocomplete suggestions her search engine offers when typing ‘drop bears’ in the search bar. In other words, the knowledge acquired through inquisitiveness in these cases, does not fall under the epistemic motivation reflecting a final positive orientation towards epistemic goods.

\textsuperscript{35} The following chapter employs wisdom to argue for an account of valuable versus unvaluable epistemic goods.
Note that similar points have been made by Watson (2015) and Montmarquet (1987). Montmarquet argues against the necessity of truth-conduciveness for intellectual virtues by, e.g., endorsing the common-sense interpretation of intellectual virtue exemplars. We would call Aristotle, Newton, and Galileo intellectually virtuous and would possibly find it difficult to decide who possessed the virtues to a higher degree. Their truth-record, however, differs greatly. So, if we accept that many great thinkers we see as exemplars vary in their acquisition of true beliefs, then successfully acquiring true beliefs is not the (main) factor we use to assess intellectual virtue possession. Likewise, Watson (2015) argues that one can fail to establish CCCR through one’s inquisitiveness due to an epistemically hostile environment, which ought not negatively affect the extent to which one possesses the virtue of inquisitiveness. However, her suggested alternative is to assess virtue possession through the immediate end instead. Yet, as argued in the previous chapter, this is rather constitutive of the adroit quality of intellectual virtue as, e.g., asking random questions would not be an example of inquisitiveness, similar to punching a stranger in the face to make a friend laugh not being an example of a kind act.

Moreover, as argued in this section, even if Belle’s failure to establish CCCR is due to her intellectual character, as she refuses to direct her epistemic acquisition behaviour towards gossip, it would be unintuitive to thereby reject her possession of inquisitiveness, nor the admirability of her trait. As such, while the intellectual virtues may be desirable given their relation to CCCR, an intellectual trait possessed by an individual need not reliably lead to CCCR to be admirable, nor does it track one’s virtue possession. As such, as I will argue in the following sections, we can take admirability itself as the accuracy condition of intellectual virtue, thereby avoiding these problems.

3.3 Applying Admirability to Virtue Possession

In the previous section, I argued that reliably establishing CCCR does not adequately track admirability or virtue possession. This entailed the argument that traits that adhere to the qualities that make the resulting acts adroit allow these acts or traits to be admirable even when they do not establish CCCR. In this section, on the other hand, I take the discussion of Section 2 into consideration, i.e., that an act performed from one virtue can fail to be admirable by undermining another, to propose an account of intellectual virtue possession when we take admirability as the accuracy condition. I first argue that taking admirability as the accuracy condition of intellectual virtue allows us to account for the
importance of other intellectual virtues to acquire epistemic goods. This accuracy condition is then applied as informing the reliability, and thereby one’s possession, of the relevant intellectual virtue. I then incorporate the moral virtues to this structure, arguing that if one regularly undermines moral virtue through acts that would otherwise be considered adroitly intellectually virtuous, one does not possess an admirable intellectual trait. As such, one would fail to possess an intellectual virtue.

It is not controversial that the intellectual virtues are connected in some way. E.g., it would be difficult to be openminded without intellectual humility (see Alfano et al. 2017 for a discussion of this connection), or to be thorough without intellectual perseverance. Moreover, as noted, the intellectual virtues increase one’s chances to establish CCCR (e.g., inquisitiveness, curiosity, or creativity) while avoiding accepting false or unjustified beliefs (e.g., intellectual humility, scrutiny, or diligence). As such, accepting an account where an act fails to be accurate when it undermines an intellectual virtue would still support a relation between intellectual virtue and establishing CCCR, while avoiding the issued previously discussed. First, we can avoid the unintuitive conclusions that an epistemically hostile environment negatively affects virtue possession due to the reliability condition. Second, it allows us to assess whether an act is successfully virtuous, rather than whether a virtuous act is successful.

To illustrate, if Belle would become friends with a fellow villager and, because of her feelings towards this person, accepts the implausible answers that she previously dismissed when presented to her by other villagers, Belle’s inquisitive act would undermine objectivity. So, as Belle was unobjective in her inquisitive interaction, her act would be adroitly inquisitive yet would fail to be admirable, and thereby accurate, as she undermined objectivity.

Yet when an agent regularly fails to perform adroit and accurate (i.e., admirable) acts, her intellectual virtue possession is called into question. Her otherwise virtuous trait, after all, would fail to be sufficiently reliable for the agent to possess this virtue. To illustrate, imagine someone who regularly performs the behaviour characteristic of inquisitiveness from an epistemic motivation that reflects that she finally values epistemic goods. However, as she highly values the knowledge she believes herself to possess, she only accepts the plausibility of the answers she gets when they perfectly align with her existent beliefs, in addition to interpreting all of the testimony she acquires in a way that supports these beliefs. In other words, she is intellectually arrogant and closeminded whenever she acts on her inquisitive disposition. This agent may still regularly establish
CCCR through her inquisitiveness as she, e.g., mainly interacts with those who share her views. However, as she tends to act on this disposition from a closeminded point of view and does not assess her conflicting beliefs in terms of their potential fallibility when interpreting the information she receives from her skilled questioning, her inquisitive behaviour is not reliably admirable. Her behaviour thereby hits the immediate end of inquisitiveness and reflects the other necessary conditions of adroit intellectually virtuous action. Except, that is, for admirability. So, given its frequent connection to intellectual vice, she does not possess the intellectual virtue of inquisitiveness.

The same assessment can be applied when an intellectual virtue conflicts with a moral virtue. In what follows I first discuss a one-off failure of an adroit act to be admirable, similar to an agent who has one blind spot when it comes to her open-mindedness or intellectual humility. I then argue for the importance of incorporating such moral failures to assess the agent’s possession of the relevant intellectual virtue.

Imagine a scientist working in pharmaceuticals who has cultivated her intellectual virtues over time and without any moral missteps, who on one occasion acts on intellectual virtue in a way that undermines moral virtue, thereby also undermining the admirability of this act. For example, being aware of the problem caused by only using male subjects to assess the effectiveness of a drug, she may act on her diligence and thoroughness by giving the drug to herself and other women she knows, allowing her to assess whether the positive effect remains, and that no other side-effects present themselves when the drug is given to women. While her action of secretly putting the drug in the drinks of her mother, sister, and female friends, who she can all observe closely, may still be adroitly diligent and thorough, akin to her previous work on this and other projects, it is no longer admirable as it undermines moral virtue. On the account proposed in this thesis, then, this act would be inaccurate and thereby not an apt act of intellectual virtue. Note that this does not retrospectively make all of her other acts of thoroughness, diligence, or inquisitiveness inapt. After all, recall that perfect virtue is not required on this account. As such, her previous actions were adroit, admirable, and admirable as they were adroit. It is thereby merely this individual action that failed to be apt.36

If we would not take these moral considerations into account, instead focusing on CCCR, this act would likely be conceptualised as admirable or accurate. After all, this

36 Note that we are not assessing the agent’s entire character based on these individual actions. After all, it seems highly unlikely that the scientist who drugs her friends and family possesses the virtue of honesty. Instead, this framework merely entails that her previous acts of intellectual virtue contributed to wisdom, while this act detracts from wisdom.
act resulted from an otherwise admirable intellectual trait. Moreover, this act achieves the ultimate end of diligence, as well as the agent’s immediate target: she becomes certain that the drug is effective for both sexes, fulfilling her intention and establishing CCCR for herself as well as others, as it allows her to endorse the effectiveness of this drug to other members of her epistemic community without hesitation.

Now imagine a scientist similar to the one described in the previous paragraphs. She aims to acquire important knowledge that she intends to share with her epistemic community, which she regularly succeeds in doing as she regularly performs the behaviour that is characteristic of inquisitiveness, thoroughness, and diligence, with this behaviour resulting from acquired, stable, and epistemically motivated traits. In contrast to the other scientist, however, she frequently tests her theories on unknowing subjects, or performs other immoral acts in order to be thorough in acquiring the information she is motivated to acquire. In this case, the agent’s thoroughness, diligence, and inquisitiveness are not reliable, thereby negating the agent’s possession of these virtues.

One may disagree with this assessment, stating that despite the immoral quality of the acts described, the behaviour described is still inquisitive or thorough. In other words, one may categorise this and similar examples as arguments against the relationship between intellectual virtue and wisdom. After all, how else can we describe their behaviour but through these virtue concepts? Yet note that the virtue-specific behavioural element of adroit action (i.e., the agent hitting the implicit target) still allows us to call certain acts, e.g., inquisitive or thorough, without the agent possessing either virtue. In these cases, we merely categorise the behaviour as inquisitive or thorough, rather than the agent. This is similar to behaviour that is characteristic of thoroughness while the agent lacks the required epistemic motivation (a final POG or NOI) as she is, e.g., merely thorough in doing her taxes as she aims to avoid a fine. Likewise, an agent can possess a final POG and therefore act in line with open-mindedness, yet only when talking to her friends. As her open-mindedness is not stable across situations, it is only her act that is openminded, rather than the agent herself.

Similarly, then, someone may lack the relevant virtue as the trait she possesses is not admirable given the way in which it is applied, i.e., because the trait is unreliable in producing admirable acts. So, similar to someone who is a very poor basketball player performing the actions that are generally performed by skilled basketball players, an agent can perform virtue-specific behaviour, and can do so for the right epistemic
reasons, without possessing the relevant virtue as she lacks the ability to reliably perform admirable, and thereby apt, acts.

In short, to possess an intellectual virtue one ought to be reliable in performing adroit acts that are admirable, i.e., acts that are not vicious in some way. This is reflective of the connection between intellectual virtue and the contemporary consolidation account of wisdom. While one may possess the epistemic motivation and skills related to an intellectual virtue, they may act on these elements of intellectual virtue in immoral ways, undermining the phronesis element of wisdom. An intellectual trait that is not reliably admirable, then, is not constitutive of wisdom, nor are the actions that result from this trait.

4. Arguing for Admirability

In this section I argue that admirability as the accuracy condition allows us to categorise intellectually virtuous acts, or the virtuous traits themselves, as non-contingently admirable. This is an element that is likely to be endorsed by those authors who conceptualise the intellectual virtues as personal excellences, yet is currently not sufficiently reflected in the orthodox account of intellectual virtue. As I argue in Section 4.1, this thereby supports the ability of the framework proposed in this thesis to provide an account of virtue possession where the virtues are indeed admirable qualities in the context of the person, rather than merely admirable in the context of epistemic capabilities. Moreover, as I argue in Section 4.2, while admirability allows us to incorporate the importance of other virtues, it avoids the necessity of possessing all the relevant virtues, intellectual or moral, for an adroit act to be apt. Before this discussion, however, recall that admirability here refers to the act being virtuous, i.e., being an act that reflects a particular virtue without undermining others. The agent thereby does not aim to perform admirable acts, as she rather aims to perform acts, from a particular motivation, that are in line with virtue. Admirability is thereby merely a descriptive stand-in that, as I argue, is in line with theories of intellectual virtue that define the virtues in terms of personal worth or qualities that draw admiration.

4.1 Irreducibility

In what follows, I argue that taking admirability as the accuracy condition of intellectually virtuous action adds a moral element to the theory which cannot be reduced to elements of intellectual virtue on the orthodox account. This means that, first, the moral value
cannot be explained by referring to the structure of intellectual virtue as the mean between two vices (e.g., Battaly 2010; Cassam 2019). Second, it cannot be explained through the agent’s epistemic motivation failing to be intellectually virtuous on the orthodox account.37

First, similar to moral virtues, intellectual virtues are the mean between excess and deficiency. Generosity, for example, falls between stinginess (the deficiency) and prodigality (the excess). Likewise, open-mindedness falls between closemindedness (the deficiency) and gullibility (the excess). Failing to act on the mean thereby reflects that one either did not apply the characteristic behaviour at all, or that this behaviour is performed badly, i.e., that it does not reflect the skill component of the virtue in question. So, when rejecting another’s testimony, this can be closeminded as one does not assess the plausibility of the presented information at all, or because one assesses it badly (e.g., relying on one’s own unjustified beliefs, or situational characteristics that are epistemically irrelevant, to judge the testimony as untrustworthy).

When we recall the thorough scientist who tested a drug on her friends and family, she did not enact the excess of thoroughness by applying it due to epistemically irrelevant elements of the situation (e.g., reading a book on geology just in case it aids her understanding of memory formation) or by performing epistemic behaviour to reach an epistemic goal that has already been established (e.g., repeating the same geophysical survey on a daily basis despite potential relevant changes needing a month to become detectible). After all, her epistemic concerns behind performing her act were justified: only testing drugs on men can negatively affect the certainty that the drug works well for everyone. Likewise, when an agent is attentive in the process of learning how the human body works, she does not perform the excess of attentiveness when she enacts it while murdering another person, exploring how their organs are affected by particular cuts or other manipulations. In other words, these actions are not vicious due to intellectual vice. They are vicious, and thereby not admirable, as they undermine moral virtue.

Likewise, the lack of admirability connected to these actions cannot be explained by a corrupt epistemic motivation. After all, if we accept the relationship between CCCR and the epistemic motivation required for intellectually virtuous action, then this

37 In this section, I accept that moral and prudential considerations can be relevant for the agent’s possession of intellectual virtue on the orthodox account. However, as I argue in the following chapter, the orthodox account does not provide the normative foundations necessary to support the inclusion of these elements – a function that is fulfilled by the wisdom account proposed in this thesis.
motivational element need merely be epistemic in nature. The information aimed for can thereby be academically valuable, as proposed by Baehr (2012, 2018), or valuable as it may be practically relevant for living well (Montmarquet 1987; Zagzebski 2003a). In the example of the attentive murderer, the information is both academically important and useful for living well (as knowing how the body responds to specific damage also informs ways in which one can treat this highly specific damage). Moreover, she may be genuinely interested in this topic in a way that reflects a positive orientation to (valuable) epistemic goods. The same assessment can be applied to the thorough scientist. The epistemic motivation driving this behaviour was thereby reflective of the motivation required for intellectually virtuous action on the orthodox account.

However, one may argue that Zagzebski’s (2003a) account of the value of knowledge being derived from the agent’s character supports the incorporation of non-epistemic elements as relevant to assess the agent’s motivation. After all, as she argues that a motivation to acquire trivial knowledge would reflect poorly on the agent’s character, which thereby prohibits it from being an intellectually virtuous motivation, failing to incorporate moral values may make one’s epistemic motivation reflect poorly on the agent’s character in a similar way.

Yet, as noted, both Zagzebski (1996, 2020) and Baehr (2011) distinguish between intellectual and moral admirability. Moreover, moral value is not reflected in Zagzebski’s (2003a) argument, as she merely argues that trivial knowledge lacks value as it is not desirable, whereby desiring it reflects poorly on the agent. So, while she argues that some knowledge is desirable as it allows one to live well, failing to take moral values into account in one’s epistemic motivation need not make this motivation corrupt on the orthodox account. Moreover, as I argue in the following chapter, when the value of intellectual virtue is defined through its relation to CCCR, rather than wisdom, virtue epistemology lacks the normative foundation to include moral and prudential considerations into the assessment of an act being intellectually virtuous or not.

As such, we can interpret Zagzebski’s argument against the value of trivial knowledge within the parameters of CCCR, supporting her claim that it would not be admirable or virtuous to be motivated to acquire trivial knowledge. Namely, that trivial knowledge, such as knowing the number of blades of grass in one’s garden or the phone numbers displayed on the first page of the phonebook, does not significantly improve one’s cognitive contact with reality. It is thereby not the (lack of) value of the topic that problematises valuing trivial information, but rather that it reflects very little of the world
(Treanor 2014). After all, knowing that there are 500,000 grains of lunar dust on a particular square meter on the moon is similar to knowing that there are 100,000 blades of grass in a particular square meter in one’s garden. Both beliefs can be employed to increase CCCR in a sufficiently significant manner (e.g., assessing the average size and distribution of moondust and blades of grass on the soil particular to this area of the moon or one’s garden), yet both represent a very minimal section of reality. We may believe that knowing the number of lunar dust particles is nevertheless more valuable as it tells us something new about the moon, or because it reflects the great effort, curiosity, and innovation required to be able to come to this number, yet if someone would have gone to the moon merely to count the grains of lunar dust within a particular square meter, this would have seemed like a waste of effort that equals or supersedes counting the blades of grass in one’s garden. In other words, trivial beliefs do not sufficiently lead to CCCR, making the motivation behind their acquisition non-reflective of the epistemically virtuous motivation that all intellectual virtues have in common on the orthodox account.

Neither hitting the mean, nor one’s epistemic motivation, is thereby able to support that morally despicable acts would fail to be intellectually virtuous. This would be a problem for virtue responsibilists who consider the virtues to reflect well on the agent as a person. While some virtue responsibilist may bite the bullet and state epistemic value as the only relevant value to assess one’s possession of intellectual virtue, thereby allowing for the attentive murderer, taking admirability as the accuracy condition instead would avoid this unintuitive assessment, while still considering the intellectual virtues to be directed to, and defined by, and epistemic good: wisdom. Moreover, as discussed, the agent who has an intellectual virtue that is thereby reliably admirable, is still likely to establish CCCR to a greater extent than those who lack intellectual virtue, given the inclusion of other intellectual virtues. Lastly, as I argue in the following chapter, taking wisdom as the end of intellectual virtue allows us to differentiate between valuable and non-valuable epistemic goods, taking the topic into account rather than just CCCR.

In short, taking admirability as the accuracy condition explains the potential reluctance of orthodox accounts to consider immoral acts or traits as intellectually virtuous. It also allows us to indeed consider intellectual virtues as reflecting well on the agent as a person (i.e., admirable), where a trait that lacks this quality as it does not reliably produce admirable actions cannot be considered an intellectual virtue.
4.2 The Accessibility of Accuracy and the Problem of Luck

The account of apt intellectually virtuous action suggested in this thesis entails an assessment of adroit acts as successfully intellectually virtuous, without necessitating the agent’s full possession of all of the relevant virtues for the resulting act to be apt. In what follows, I first argue why the (full) possession of the situationally relevant moral virtues is not required on my account. I then argue that for an agent to possess an intellectual virtue, she need not possess all other intellectual virtues (i.e., I argue against the necessity of the unity thesis applied to intellectual virtue). This is because the concern about the relevance of luck need not apply.

While the previous sections have argued in favour of the relevance of moral virtue, recall that the account I propose posits that the intellectual virtues are directed towards wisdom. As such, we need to differentiate between the moral virtues themselves, and the practical wisdom that guides them. To see this difference most clearly, recall the discussion of the moral element of practical wisdom. There, I noted its function of guiding the agent to act in line with moral virtue, despite opposing inclinations. In other words, this element of phronesis would not be undermined when one experiences the inclination to lock someone in a cage to force them to listen to testimony as long as the regulative function of practical wisdom is applied. This can entail the agent’s awareness that this act would be cruel, or the intuition that it would be a morally wrong thing to do (Hursthouse 2001). In other words, an act of intellectual virtue is not undermined when the agent does not possess a relevant moral virtue. Rather, it would be undermined if the agent fails to regulate an inclination that is in conflict with moral virtue, i.e., behaviour that would be reflective of moral vice.\(^{38}\)

Even when we exclude the need for the possession of moral virtue for an agent to possess intellectual virtue, one may still consider the resulting account to be either too demanding if it requires a unity thesis of intellectual virtue, or too dependent on luck when it does not. First, note that the unity thesis is not required on my account. After all, an apt act must merely be adroit with regard to the relevant intellectual virtue, and be accurate as it is adroit and as it does not undermine another virtue. In other words, one need not possess the other virtue that may be relevant; one merely needs to avoid behaviour characteristic of its excess or deficiency.

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38 In the following chapter, I further illuminate the distinction between failing to act in line with a virtue or element of wisdom and undermining this element of wisdom. For now, merely note that an act from intellectual virtue does not fail to be accurate when it is not the “right act”, i.e., the act that would be the best to perform when taking all moral virtues and the relevant knowledge into account.
While this means that lacking a morally virtuous motivation need not exclude an act reflective of intellectual virtue from being adroit or accurate, the same does not apply to intellectual virtue: acting from a final POG or NOI is required for an epistemic act to be adroit. Yet it is due to this requirement that an adroit act of intellectual virtue cannot undermine another intellectual virtue based on the agent’s motivation alone. After all, if an agent fails to be openminded while acting on inquisitiveness as she does not value the strived for epistemic good, then she also lacks the epistemic motivation for her act to be adroitly inquisitive.

However, one may worry that, when an agent lacks the other relevant virtues, the fact that she does not undermine one of them while performing an adroit act of intellectual virtue would merely be due to luck. As such, the concern would go, can an adroit act of intellectual virtue be apt, if the accuracy of this act depends, in part, on luck? In what follows, I push against this concern by reiterating the reliability condition of intellectual virtue, whereby one must act from an epistemically motivated, acquired, stable, and reliably admirable trait for an act to be adroit.

First, if an agent lacks an intellectual virtue or moral value (constitutive of practical wisdom) that tends to be relevant in cases where a particular intellectual virtue is exercised, then she is unlikely to be reliable in her virtuous disposition, leading her to lack the relevant intellectual virtue. For example, lacking intellectual humility is likely to affect one’s reliability in acting on open-mindedness. The same holds for epistemic agents whose environment or vocation leads to a similarly regular co-occurrence of an intellectual virtue and behaviour reflective of an intellectual or moral vice. For example, a teacher who does not value justice may include important yet highly complex topics in her course material, performing the behaviour characteristic of epistemic generosity by explaining these complex and important topics as well as she can. As this teacher does not value justice, she does not care that her students are held to a much higher standard than students at other schools, where the low grades resulting from the relative complexity and extensiveness of the material that has to be grasped and remembered, giving her students an unfair disadvantage when applying to schools who accept students on their grade average. Likewise, an academic researcher may attempt to be tenacious while working on her project, yet without attentiveness this goal-directed behaviour is unlikely to be performed well or at the right times (e.g., missing information that affects the likelihood of her overall premise).
Second, if this effect on reliability is not applicable as the relevant vice is never or rarely significant for the apt exercise of the intellectual virtue (e.g., stinginess and thoroughness, or unimaginativeness and diligence), or is rarely relevant in the environment inhabited by the epistemic agent (e.g., a thorough and objective mathematician who lives and works alone, thereby rarely being in the position to act kindly or cruelly towards another person, let alone through her thoroughness or objectivity), then the accuracy of the adroit act is not sufficiently contingent for this accuracy to be due to luck.

To see this, we can compare this account to the AAA structure of reliabilist virtue. After all, even when the accuracy of a faculty virtue, such as perception or reason, can be negatively affected by the agent lacking another faculty virtue, the beliefs acquired through the former virtue are nevertheless are accurate because of this virtue, and are therefore apt. For example, even someone with a poor capacity for memorisation can be able to rely on her perception to present her with true and justified beliefs. While there may be occasions where her perception is inaccurate given her poor memory (e.g., interpreting external stimuli as her husband entering a room as she forgot that her husband has passed away), she can still aptly perceive that there is an apple on the table or that there are white sheets on her bed. The percepts of an apple on the table and white sheets on her bed are still accurate because of her reliable perception, making her percepts apt, and thereby constitutive of knowledge.

Similarly, then, acting on an intellectual virtue whose reliability may be negatively affected if another virtue is relevant for the resulting act to be accurate, need not negate the aptness relation between the initial virtue and the accuracy of the act. Nevertheless, recall the argument that one would possess a virtue to a greater extent when this virtue would be more reliable. As such, if one’s lack of a stable disposition to perform behaviour characteristic of, e.g., thoroughness, attentiveness, inquisitiveness, or intellectual humility would lead one to be less reliable in terms of their objectivity, then acquiring these virtues would lead one to possess objectivity to a greater extent. The same thereby holds for developing the elements of practical wisdom including, as I argue in the following chapter, the constitutive moral and prudential values.

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39 Note that this is distinct from the question whether they are aptly apt – see Sosa (2017) or Carter (2021) for a discussion of this differentiation.
5. Conclusion

Intellectual virtues tend to be formulated in relation to their role in acquiring epistemic goods, and knowledge in particular. While acquiring knowledge remains an important function of intellectual virtue, I have argued against taking this acquisition, or establishing CCCR in general, as the measure of success informing the reliability component. Rather, I have suggested that we can take admirability as the accuracy condition of intellectual virtue, informing its reliability and thereby its possession.

This admirability condition applies to traits or acts that reflect well on the agent as a person (rather than only as a teacher, judge, or figure skater). While the intellectual virtues have been described as admirable traits of character, acts performed from an intellectual may fail to be admirable as they undermine another intellectual virtue or moral values (or another element constitutive of wisdom – more on this in the following chapter). Moreover, when acts performed from an intellectual trait are not reliably admirable, then the agent does not possess the corresponding intellectual virtue. I also noted that the relevant moral concerns cannot be explained through an account of intellectual virtue where the virtues are defined solely through their connection to CCCR. This is supported further in the following chapter, where I argue for wisdom as the proper end of intellectual virtue.
Chapter 5

Apt Action and Wisdom

1. Introduction

This chapter further analyses and argues for the account of apt intellectually virtuous action put forward in the previous chapters. It does so by, first, illustrating the constitutive relationship between intellectual virtue and wisdom (Section 1.1). Second, by arguing that wisdom as the end of intellectual virtue still reflects the function orthodox accounts ascribe to responsibilist virtues: acquiring knowledge, understanding, and other epistemic goods that increase CCCR (i.e., Closer Cognitive Contact with Reality). This is established by discussing the epistemic goods that can partly constitute or aid Socratic (Section 2.1), theoretical (Section 2.2), and practical (Section 2.3) wisdom. In fact, as I argue in Section 3, taking wisdom as the end of intellectual virtue provides support for including epistemic goods that are generally considered valuable as epistemic objects that the intellectually virtuous agent can acquire or share, while excluding acts directed towards the acquisition of epistemic ills or trivial knowledge from being intellectually virtuous. Third, wisdom as the end of intellectual virtue supports the normativity of intellectual virtues that incorporate moral and prudential concerns, such as epistemic temperance (Section 4.1) and attunement or attentiveness (Section 4.2). After all, if intellectual virtues are defined in terms of their effectiveness to increase CCCR, where an adroit act is better or worse if it is more or less effective in increasing CCCR, then moral or prudential concerns do not seem relevant in determining the intellectual virtuousness of this act. If the normativity of intellectual virtue is defined through their relation to wisdom, on the other hand, moral and prudential concerns can be added to the epistemic concerns that provide the parameters of intellectually virtuous action.

1.1 Intellectual virtue and wisdom

This first section aims to clarify the relation between intellectual virtue and wisdom. To do so, I address a potential point of confusion: how can an apt intellectually virtuous action be partly constitutive of wisdom, if wisdom is itself an intellectual virtue? I argue that if we
accept that wisdom is an intellectual virtue, it is too complex to be a responsibilist epistemic virtue as it lacks an immediate end. Rather, I argue that the characteristic behaviour connected to wisdom is constituted by apt intellectually virtuous acts.

That wisdom is an intellectual virtue is supported by Aristotle himself, who categorised *phronesis* and *sophia* as intellectual virtues, while moral virtues are character virtues. This is reflected in Zagzebski’s (1996, 2003b) argument in favour of the relation between intellectual and moral virtues, as she notes that wisdom, by which she means *phronesis*, is virtuous in both moral and intellectual terms. After all, it is an intellectual virtue that is necessary and sufficient for moral virtue.

Additionally, Roberts and Wood (2007) mention practical wisdom as an intellectual virtue that entails good judgement in a way that reflects the application of the other (intellectual) virtues they discuss (e.g., humility and love of knowledge). Similarly, Baehr (2012) suggests that *sophia* could be formulated as an intellectual meta-virtue, performing a similar function to intellectual virtue as *phronesis* has with regards to moral virtue. While I will not deny that the wisdom concept proposed in this thesis could be considered an intellectual virtue on Aristotelian accounts, I do argue that it is not a responsibilist character virtue given its complex nature. As such, I argue that intellectual virtues and intellectually virtuous actions partly constitute wisdom, yet that wisdom itself is not a responsibilist virtue that can be contained in the AAA structure of competence proposed in this thesis.

As *sophia* has been described as a life of contemplation, the responsibilist virtue of contemplativeness is constitutive of this theoretical wisdom concept. However, *sophia* does not merely refer to contemplating valuable epistemic topics. It also entails the motivation that results in this epistemic activity and the competences that allow one to perform this epistemic activity well, making the intellectual virtues that are characterised by these elements similarly constitutive.

First, the motivational element of sophia would paradigmatically entail a positively valenced affective experience directed towards epistemic goods, one that reflects a final POG (i.e., where one is positively orientated towards epistemic goods as one finally values these epistemic goods). After all, recall that Aristotle considers both *sophia* and *phronesis* as ways to reach *eudaimonia*, and needing to acquire an understanding of complex topics

\[40\] Recall that in later work, Baehr (2018) suggests that sophia can be the end of intellectual virtue. In relation to this argument, however, he defines sophia as a deep understanding of the fundamental principles of a particular, epistemically significant domain (2018. P. 809).
as one is externally pressured to do so, rather than being motivated through, e.g., interest, curiosity, or wonder, would not reflect a life of flourishing or happiness (see NE 177a18-28). Apart from reflecting the motivational element constitutive of adroit intellectually virtuous action, this constitutive element of *sophia* also entails the exercise of curiosity and wonder – two intellectual virtues that are partly constituted by the epistemic emotions of the same name.

The valuable epistemic goods one wonders or is curious about, must be competently, rather than accidentally, acquired. In other words, while I argue that the intellectual virtues need not successfully lead to CCCR to be possessed or admirable, CCCR of the kind of complex topics constitutive of *sophia* without the behaviour characteristic of the relevant virtues would be incidental, rather than part of a life that strives towards the understanding of noble subjects. For example, thoroughness, careful observation, and tenacity are needed to acquire the kind of understanding strived for in the context of *sophia*. Additionally, the relevant epistemic motivation and the ability to ask relevant and articulated or non-articulated questions contained in *sophia* is reflected in inquisitiveness. These motivational and skill elements of intellectual virtues, as well as their admirability, are reasons for Baehr (2018) to argue that the intellectual virtues are directed towards *sophia*, where *sophia* is defined as an understanding of the fundamental principles of significant epistemic objects. The difference with my account, then, is that I focus on the behavioural and motivational elements of *sophia* that are likely to lead to such understanding, rather than the understanding itself.

Additionally, given the content matter *sophia* tends to be aimed at, to lead the life of contemplation one is likely to require imaginativeness and creativity. After all, *sophia* is not merely the drive and ability to acquire knowledge provided by others, it also motivates and allows one to (attempt to) uncover previously unknown information. On the other hand, getting to the stage where one can apply one’s imaginativeness or creativity to a complex topic may often require, or is aided by, learning from (other) experts. After all, by living in an epistemic community, one does not need to reinvent the wheel when exploring an academic topic. Being inquisitive, thorough, and diligent by reviewing previous work thereby aids the epistemic goals one sets in one’s life of contemplation.

Moreover, when one is creative or imaginative by coming up with novel ideas or views regarding a complex topic or term, or when one is in the process of acquiring an understanding of a complex topic by reviewing the literature on this topic, interacting with others possessing similar or greater expertise or understanding of the relevant topics or
practises would aid theoretical wisdom. While the intellectual humility and open-mindedness that such a process may require (as one has to be aware of, and open to, the possibility that one’s novel idea or view is inferior to existing ideas or views, or that one’s interpretation is inaccurate) are better reflected by Socratic wisdom – especially as these traits do not seem to be mentioned as productive qualities in Aristotle’s account of *sophia* – one’s life of contemplation does seem to be improved by interaction with others. After all, when engaging in *sophia*’s activity, there is ‘no doubt [that] he will study better with the aid of fellow-workers [despite being] the most self-sufficient of men’ (NE 1177a34-1177b1).

Here, Aristotle notes that a life of contemplation is more self-sufficient when contrasted to the acquisition and enactment of practical wisdom. However, I argue that to improve both one’s theoretical or one’s practical wisdom, it is important, or at least advantageous, to learn from others, including by forming an epistemic community that supports such educational interaction.

Having friends, or simply living and interacting with acquaintances or strangers, named by Aristotle as a useful means to acquire or improve upon one’s *phronesis*. Recall, after all, that Aristotle argues for the importance of friendships as other virtuous agents aid one in living well. This is not merely due to some form of social pressure that may supplement the motivational element of *phronesis*. Rather, friendships, or treating virtuous acquaintances or strangers as friends (categorised as the moral virtue of friendliness by Aristotle in NE 1155a), allow one to exchange knowledge and understanding that contributes to living well:

For it is possible that the many, though not individually good men, yet when they come together may be better, not individually but collectively, than those who are so, just as public dinners to which many contribute are better than those supplied at one man’s cost; for where there are many, each individual, it may be argued, has some portion of virtue and wisdom, and when they have come together, just as the multitude becomes a single man with many feet and many hands and many senses, so also it becomes one personality as regards the moral and intellectual faculties. This is why the general public is a better judge of the works of music and those of the poets, because different men can judge a different part of the performance, and all of them all of it. 

*Politics* 1281a-1281b
In other words, Aristotle argues that living a good life can be complex and demanding, yet when people from various levels of virtue and, perhaps more importantly, different levels of practical wisdom come together, they can inform one another on how to respond to situations. On this account, all members of a social group bring something to the table by sharing their experiences, insights, and opinions. This thereby requires the agent to be openminded as the instances of learning may often centre around hearing a point of view that does not correspond with her own. Moreover, to get the most out of her interactions with others, she ought to engage with them in an inquisitive manner, asking clear and relevant questions to acquire the information that would aid her in living well. Moreover, to be part of such a cohort, she ought to be epistemically generous, sharing her own views, experiences, and teachings with the others.

From this quote we also gather that social interaction directed towards works of art allows for a greater understanding of these works. One can thereby enrich one's potentially imperfect understanding of an object by interacting with others, and enrich the understanding of others by sharing one's own, informed, views (reflecting epistemic generosity). Moreover, when we apply the final sentence of this quote to epistemic goods concerning topics reflective of *sophia* (specified in Section 2.2) attainable in our contemporary society, it certainly appears that different people can judge or illuminate different parts of a subject or topic and that, by incorporating the judgements of these different people, an understanding of the topic within the epistemic community can be acquired. As such, both one's *sophia* and *phronesis* can be improved upon and enacted through epistemically motivated interaction with one's epistemic community, where this interaction is shaped by virtues such as inquisitiveness, open-mindedness, and epistemic generosity.

Coming back to *phronesis*, needing to act in line with its perceptive, deliberative, or motivational quality illuminates the importance of other intellectual virtues. The insight required to interpret complex normatively laden situations, which is constitutive of the perceptive element of *phronesis*, is reflected in the intellectual virtue of insight. The same goes for attentiveness, perceptiveness, and careful observation, as they are likely to be required to correctly assess a normatively laden situation, informing one's perception of
the right act, motivated by moral virtue. Additionally, given the deliberative quality of *phronesis*, where one deliberates on the right course of action given one's values, abilities, and situation, one is likely to need intellectual virtues such as self-awareness, consistency, tenacity, intellectual flexibility, or agility. After all, if one's practical wisdom does not sufficiently inform the application of one's moral virtues in novel situations due to a lack of self-awareness, consistency in one's evaluation of morally relevant elements, or ability to (quickly) assess and adapt to the novel situation, then the moral virtues are highly unlikely to be stable dispositions.

Third, the contemporary consolidation account also includes Socratic wisdom. While the main virtue connected to this concept is intellectual humility, other intellectual virtues are also of importance to be aware of the limits of one's knowledge and to act accordingly. These include transparency, self-awareness, and intellectual integrity. Moreover, the process that leads one to build such an awareness of one's cognitive limitations is constituted by, e.g., self-scrutiny and reflectiveness when directed towards held beliefs or cognitive limitations such as maladaptive tendencies, as well as thoroughness, careful observation, scrutiny, and patience when directed towards epistemic goods one is in the process of acquiring. After all, before proclaiming to possess knowledge, or to wittingly endorse the accuracy of the information one acquires, one ought to make sure to possess sufficient justification to avoid undermining intellectual humility—a feat that is accomplished through careful engagement with potential epistemic goods.

Recall that Socratic wisdom does not merely entail reflection on one's own knowledge. Rather, Socrates viewed the proclaimed knowledge of others through the same reflective lens as he applied to his own. The objectivity this requires is thereby also partly constitutive of this wisdom concept. Additionally, as he remained open to the plausibility to the views of others, despite frequent disappointment, open-mindedness allowed him to fairly and reliably assess the provided beliefs and justifications. Moreover, in his exploration of the knowledge possessed by others, Socrates was not influenced by previous disappointment, nor the rank or status of those he questioned; everyone was given the level of credence they were able to justify. In other words, Socratic wisdom entails assessing the testimony of others by focusing on the epistemic justification for

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41 In the following section I argue that the epistemic motivation behind intellectually virtuous acts, when the intellectual virtues are directed at wisdom, can be provided by moral values rather than purely and final epistemic values.
these claims, rather than epistemically irrelevant elements of the situation. Apart from objectivity, this reflects both epistemic justice and intellectual courage. After all, questioning influential individuals without letting this influence affect the credence given to the testimony reflects epistemic justice, and sharing the potentially negative results with others takes intellectual courage – a virtue possessed by Socrates as he accepted even the deadly consequences of his actions.

This is merely an illustration of the ways in which intellectual virtues, or intellectually virtuous acts, partly constitute wisdom. Yet through these examples we can see that the contemporary consolidation account of wisdom is too complex to be ascribed an account of characteristic behaviour. Unless, that is, if we define the characteristic behaviour as the apt exercise of intellectual virtue. It is important that wisdom can provide this function without itself being required for intellectually virtuous action, giving the contemporary consolidation account the same function as phronesis for the moral virtues. Wisdom is thereby not a necessary meta-virtue that guides all intellectually virtuous behaviour, as this would result in an outcome I argued against in the previous chapter: that an agent must be wise to be able to perform wise acts.

One may argue that some of the examples provided above reflect that many responsibilist virtues are complex as well, their exercise being partly constituted by behaviour of another virtue. After all, how can one be intellectually humble without some level of self-scrutiny or transparency? However, note that I do not argue against the complexity or connectiveness of the intellectual virtues. After all, I argue that an act cannot be accurate when it undermines another virtue relevant to the situation. Yet this does not deny that the individual virtues, while complex or potentially constitutive of another virtue, possess their own immediate end. Self-scrutiny, transparency, and intellectual humility, while possessing similar immediate ends, can still be defined without reliance on the other virtues.

42 Note that it is highly unlikely that Socrates was an intellectually just person. While he questioned many people who he all treated the same, epistemically speaking, he is unlikely to have questioned women or slaves. This problematic element is present in all Ancient Greek wisdom concepts, however, and due to the inclusion of contemporary virtues and the implicit theory of wisdom, should not influence our current account.

43 Recall the discussion of Socratic wisdom from the second chapter, where I noted that the intellectual humility constituting this wisdom account is especially relevant in our current socio-technical environment. This was because our environment allows us access to raw data, including anecdotes that may be interpreted as representative for the topic as a whole. As such, the claim that the credence applied to others should not be affected by influence does not mean that the others’ status as an expert in the field should not be taken into account. It is rather influence or power for non-epistemic reasons that ought to be ignored.
The contemporary consolidation account of wisdom is thereby an active concept, whereby the characteristic behaviour is dependent on the possession and enactment of intellectual virtues. While this presents us with a distinctive way to assess and analyse intellectually virtuous behaviour, taking wisdom as the end of intellectual virtue also informs the ‘static’ epistemic goods that can be the objects or goals of intellectually virtuous action.

2. The Acquisition of Epistemic Goods
In the previous section I argued for the constitutive relationship between intellectual virtue and wisdom. In this section, I explore this connection in more depth, arguing for wisdom’s ability to provide fitting parameters of the epistemic goods that are strived for, and epistemic ills that are avoided, by the intellectually virtuous agent in a way that fits with our intuitions and the existent literature. Moreover, it provides a hierarchical structure of value, informing which content is better or worse to aim to acquire given one’s abilities and situation.

So far, I have argued that wisdom is a *modus vivendi* which combines epistemic goods and personal qualities, with the former informing the latter and vice versa. Recall that on the orthodox account, the intellectual virtues are directed towards knowledge or understanding. However, I argued that this connection is indirect, as the product of intellectual virtue is an act or process rather than a belief. Rather than an intellectually virtuous act partly constituting knowledge, then, it partly constitutes wisdom as it is wise to (attempt to) acquire some epistemically good epistemic goods, i.e., epistemic goods that make one wiser, and to do so in a manner that corresponds with the other elements of wisdom.

Which epistemic goods an intellectually virtuous agent ought to strive for is in part a question of content. For example, we intuitively do not think that intellectual virtues ought to be used to acquire trivial knowledge or beliefs – an intuition shared by, e.g., Roberts and Wood (2007), who argue that a love of knowledge ought to be conditional with regards to the significance, relevance, and worthiness of the knowledge pursued. Likewise, according to Zagzebski (1996, 2003a, 2003b), the epistemic motivation required for intellectual virtue must reflect well on the agent’s character, thereby excluding curiosity on trivial matters as intellectually virtuous. After all,
If a truth is trivial, believing it is not improved by the fact that the epistemic agent has peculiar or perverse interests. In fact, the interests may even make it worse, because we add the perversity of the interests to the triviality of the belief. Zagzebski, 2003a, p. 21.

One of the main tasks of wisdom as the end, then, is explaining the minimal value of trivial beliefs and the intellectually virtuous agent’s lack of motivation to acquire them.

Moreover, for Zagzebski (1996, 2003a) and Montmarquet (1987), the moral and epistemic are interwoven; an act can only be considered moral when it is accreditable to the agent, requiring the agent to act on true and justified beliefs rather than an inaccurate or unfounded interpretation of the situation. This function of informing moral virtue is, according to them, one of the reasons for epistemic goods being derisible. Knowledge that aids one in one’s ability to act on the moral virtue is thereby a potential object for intellectually virtuous acquisition, one that is reflected in practical wisdom. Baehr (2011), on the other hand, suggests that the prototypical knowledge acquired through intellectual virtue is academic in nature, directly connecting intellectual virtue to theoretical wisdom.

Apart from content, using wisdom to provide these parameters also informs the kind of epistemic goods strived for by intellectually virtuous agents. Through Socratic wisdom, unjustified yet true beliefs are excluded from appropriate epistemic goods to pursue, while practical wisdom provides support for acquiring skills through intellectual virtue. In what follows I present the parameters placed on pursuable epistemic goods by Socratic, theoretical, and practical wisdom respectively. I then summarise the ways in which wisdom can account for the value and disvalue of trivial beliefs, as well as provide a context-dependent hierarchy in value of the epistemic goods that may be strived towards.

2.1 Socratic Wisdom

As an activity, Socratic wisdom drives one to understand or assess the justifications behind the beliefs held by oneself or others. As such, the content of the beliefs assessed through Socratically wise action is rather broad; while it may be more important to assess whether one’s beliefs on the policies of one’s favoured political party are accurate than one’s belief on the birthdate of a loved artist, Socratic wisdom prevents one from endorsing either without an adequate justification. Acquiring true yet unjustified beliefs through intellectual virtue thereby undermines Socratic wisdom. So, rather than placing
parameters on the content of the epistemic goods that are aimed towards by an intellectually virtuous agent, Socratic wisdom excludes unjustified true beliefs from being a strived for or endorsed epistemic good. Moreover, it provides guidance for the enactment of epistemic generosity, as one ought to assess the justification behind the testimony one aims to share before sharing it. Or, at least, to be intellectually humble in presenting the testimony, not describing it as fact when an adequate justification is lacking.

It can even be Socratically wise to consider the justification behind, or truth of, a trivial belief. For example, imagine an agent who decides to embark on the trivial epistemic endeavour of finding out how many Citroën cars there are in her (considerably long) street. As she already possesses the belief that the people in her street do not drive cars of a French brand, she expects to find less than two. If the agent notices that there is at least one Citroën car on every block, she may act intellectually humble by accepting that her prior belief was wrong, i.e., accepting that it is likely that some people in her street drive cars of a French brand. The act of counting Citroën cars was not wise, as this was merely an endeavour to acquire a trivial belief. Her intellectually humble act to accept that she was mistaken in her prior beliefs, however, does appear to be Socratically wise.

Additionally, recall that reflection and self-scrutiny are examples of intellectual virtues that may be required for intellectual humility. This is because one may possess many beliefs, including simplistic or false ones possibly acquired during childhood. If one is never confronted with situations where such beliefs are relevant, one cannot be intellectually humble by rejecting, or placing less credence in, these beliefs. As such, actively reflecting on the beliefs one holds about topics she considers valuable or potentially relevant to understand aids Socratic wisdom. Yet even when a belief pops into mind, however trivial or irrelevant to the topic at hand it may be, a subsequent realisation that this belief is not sufficiently justified and should therefore be rejected, suspended, or checked reflects Socratic wisdom.

2.2 Sophia

Sophia is perhaps the kind of wisdom most intuitively connected to the intellectual virtues, given the requirement that their motivation must reflect a final, rather than purely instrumental positive evaluation of epistemic goods. This intuition is supported by Baehr (2018), who suggests that the virtues ought to be directed towards sophia, which he conceptualises as a ‘deep explanatory understanding of epistemically significant subject
matters’ (2014: 310; 2018: 10). Moreover, as argued in Section 1.2 of Chapter 2, theoretical wisdom need not merely refer to the study of (what Aristotle considered to be) unchangeable information. After all, the study of species is accepted as a topic for theoretical wisdom, yet which species exist or what the accepted characteristics of these species are changes over time. As such, the epistemic goods theoretical wisdom is concerned with are academic subjects, generally construed. These subjects include, but are not limited to, history, biology, geology, death, maths, linguistics, astronomy, and philosophy. So, sophistically wise acts are those that are directed towards acquiring knowledge or understanding of these and similarly valuable subjects where, as argued, this acquisition process must be motivated by these goods being finally valued.

One can also acquire seemingly trivial information which, in the context of sophia, would not be considered trivial. For example, as discussed in Chapter 4, counting the blades of grass in one’s garden or the grains of dust on the moon would lead to trivial truths as they reflect very little of the world, non-significantly affecting CCCR. However, if these truths are acquired as part of a larger process that reflects a motivation to acquire knowledge or understanding of topics representative of sophia, the relevant beliefs would no longer be trivial on the account proposed in this thesis. Counting the blades of grass in one’s garden to assess whether the introduction of a particular weed leads to a competitive soil environment detrimental to the growth of grass, for example, is connected to sophia to a greater extent than counting the blades of grass as one is simply interested in the final number. Assessing the behaviour rather than the immediate product of this behaviour by applying sophia, then, allows us to explain the impact of the agent’s motivation, plans, or other contextualising factors on the value of the behaviour.

Note that this can coincide with the CCCR account. On this account, after all, the agent’s epistemic motivation ought to reflect a final positive evaluation of CCCR and ought to induce epistemic behaviour, reflective of a particular intellectual virtue, directed towards CCCR. As such, when one’s epistemic motivation is directed towards some greater academic project, then acquiring beliefs that only initially appear to affect CCCR non-significantly could be accepted as non-trivial when this acquisition aids one’s overall understanding. Nevertheless, when CCCR is assumed as the source of normativity for the intellectual virtues, thereby determining what epistemic goods are better or worse to acquire, this would be reduced to how much of reality this epistemic good reflects. This would thereby ignore further contextual factors informing the topic of the content, such as the agent’s plans and interests. This will be discussed further in Section 3 and 4.2.
Given the accounts where intellectual virtues ought to be directed towards, amongst other things, acquiring potentially relevant knowledge (Roberts and Wood 2007) and are, in part, valuable as they allow one to acquire knowledge relevant for moral (Montmarquet, 1987; Zabzebski, 1996, 2003a) or practical (Cassam 2019) action, the understanding or knowledge constitutive of sophia cannot be the sole end at which intellectually virtuous knowledge-acquisition can strive.

As such, we want to be able to discuss the intellectual virtues when directed towards practical knowledge, rather than merely academic knowledge. This practical knowledge can, as I argue in the following section, be covered by the knowledge potentially constitutive of practical wisdom. This is the knowledge that allows one to perceive ‘the ultimate particular thing’, i.e., the right thing to do in any given situation. Note that the inclusion of sophia, i.e., the positive evaluation and pursuit of valuable theoretical knowledge, does not place a parameter on the knowledge a wise act can aim to acquire, in contrast to Socratic wisdom excluding unjustified true beliefs.

2.3 Practical wisdom
Phronesis allows one to perceive ‘the ultimate particular thing’, i.e., the right thing to do in any given situation. This is quite the task. However, note that akin to theoretical wisdom, the epistemic goods acquired may simply add to one’s practical wisdom, rather than being requirements for its possession. In the case of practical wisdom, we can differentiate between common sense knowledge that is required to reliably act on moral virtue in one’s environment, and epistemic goods whose possession can make one’s morally virtuous acts more effective, adding to practical wisdom. As will become evident in what follows, where this distinction lies depends on context, differing between individuals. This context is, in part, determined by the kind of normative situations the agent is likely to find herself in, as well as the knowledge she has access to and ought to have acquired, i.e., whether she can be blameworthy for lacking a piece of knowledge (NE 1113b; Montmarquet 1995).

In what follows I illustrate the extent of practical knowledge which can inform one’s perception of the right action given the situation – knowledge that informs one’s practical wisdom. I do so by discussing practical knowledge in relation to generosity and courage respectively. By showing the extent of epistemic goods that inform one’s practical wisdom, I argue that intellectual virtues, when directed towards wisdom, can be employed to acquire practical knowledge, as well as understanding and skills, providing a broader
account of goods potentially aimed for by an intellectually virtuous agent than is normally discussed. Moreover, in this section and in Section 3, I discuss the differentiation between epistemic goods that are required for one’s context-dependent possession of practical wisdom and epistemic goods that merely add to one’s practical wisdom, reflecting a difference in epistemic value.

2.3.1 Generosity
Generosity reflects the Aristotelian virtues of magnificence (or liberality) and magnanimity. The former can be characterised as spending one’s money well, i.e., not being stingy or a miser (NE 1120a25, NE 1122a10-16), and the latter as the disposition to donate one’s wealth to worthy causes (NE 1122a34-1122b6). Where one has the means, then, generosity involves donating money to causes that are both important and effective in directing funds. In other words, donating to a fund for wealthy politicians to have lunch in the Plaza hotel, or a fund known for distributing donations merely to the managers of this fund, does not reflect the magnanimity element of generosity. While many gifts or donations can be considered generous, including paying the bill for one’s friends after a night out or setting up a monthly donation to a charity, practical wisdom can allow one to determine what one is able to donate, how to donate, and the best causes to spend one’s money on.

To hit the mean between deficiency and excess with regards to the liberality component of generosity, one needs to possess an awareness of what one is able to donate or share. This thereby requires knowledge of one’s income, possessions, and required expenditures, including healthcare costs, food costs, and one’s rent or mortgage. While this knowledge may be effortful to acquire during a time of frequent changes, such as during the cost-of-living crisis plaguing the UK since late 2021, or while moving between various jobs or rented apartments, a rough awareness of one’s income and expenditures can still be considered common knowledge – knowledge required for hitting the mean between the excess and deficiency of generosity. There are however at least two categories of knowledge that would add to one’s practical wisdom in relation to generosity. This is information that allows one to, first, create a deeper understanding of one’s financial standing and, second, to donate or share one’s funds more effectively given one’s moral values.

First, to understand the changeability of one’s circumstances and the potential effects on one’s financial standing, one would require complex knowledge with respect to
changes in one’s individual circumstances (e.g., the possibility of being evicted, becoming a parent, or losing one’s job), or national (e.g., does one’s government provide financial safety nets in the form of applicable benefits, subsidies, and economically accessible healthcare, and are these safety nets sufficiently stable or supported that they are not affected by a change in government) and even global circumstances (e.g., the likelihood of natural disasters due to climate change, or the effects of political shifts on the availability, and thereby cost, of goods one relies on). These are merely some of many examples of information relevant to assess one’s financial standing. Optimising one’s ability to act generously thereby involves acquiring an understanding of the maximum amount one is able to share or donate without harming one’s ability to financially support oneself, and potentially one’s loved ones, in relation to the current and potential future cost of living. This process would entail aiming to understand many complex personal, economic, and political topics. However, where this understanding would make one’s generosity more effective, lacking this understanding does not diminish one’s generous acts based on a rough understanding of one’s income and expenditures, i.e., the common knowledge component of *phronesis*.

Second, when an agent is able to perform generous actions as her (rough or complex) awareness of her financial position allows her to hit the mean between deficiency and excess, her generous act can nevertheless be suboptimal. For example, while one would be generous when treating an underpaid teacher to lunch, extending the same favour to an investment banker would be superfluous. One example of knowledge that would helpfully inform one’s generous actions, then, entails an awareness of the (average) earnings of others in her environment.

Rather than just people, the magnanimity element of generosity entails donating funds to worthwhile causes. There are currently countless causes one can donate to, promoted by the possibility of donating money online to charities spread across the globe, as well as the rise of crowdfunding websites such as ‘gofundme’. What or who to donate to, then, is a complex question to answer and would be aided by an awareness of the available causes, what makes these causes important, and the effectiveness of the relevant organisation to deliver on their promises. As such, acquiring knowledge on which organisations or persons aim to provide aid to relieve suffering or boost the quality of living for those who need it, and do so effectively, adds to the practical wisdom that increases the effectiveness of one’s generosity.
Additionally, determining which causes one ought to donate to can be informed through an up-to-date knowledge of current events. For example, climate change is currently a big problem. While knowledge about the causes, workings, and effects of climate change are part of the intrinsically valuable knowledge that theoretical wisdom motivates one to acquire, it is also relevant for practical wisdom as it allows one to determine whether certain charities should be donated to, either as they directly counteract climate change, or as the goals of the relevant charity may rather contribute to global warming.

Knowledge about current events, as well as knowledge of ongoing injustices or suffering, also shapes virtuous actions pertaining to justice and kindness: knowing about animal cruelty, the cost-of-living crisis, child mortality, climate change, or that the countries who contribute the least to global warming will suffer most from its effects, can inform one’s decision-making process to avoid adding these injustices or cruelties, for example by not buying products containing meat or palm oil, as well as to actively fight against them. As such, generosity, justice, and kindness are aided by the agent’s awareness of current events and ongoing suffering or injustices, which often requires a complex understanding of these events or states of affairs and their causes or potential solutions.

2.3.2 Courage

Enacting courage requires one to be aware of the possible dangers of the relevant situation. For example, rescuing someone from a burning building is not courageous when one is unaware that getting burnt hurts, or is damaging to one’s health. While this knowledge would be constitutive of common sense, there are many examples of knowledge required to estimate the level of danger and how to respond to it that would not be categorised as such.

For example, when trying to save an unaware friend from an upcoming grizzly bear attack, some knowledge seems to be required for this act to be courageous, and even more knowledge would add to one’s practical wisdom, making one’s act more reliable. For the common-sense element, the agent would have to be aware that the grizzly bear is a threat. Whether the other relevant knowledge would count as common sense or not relies on context. One has to know that the animal is a grizzly bear, that grizzly bears can be aggressive and are highly dangerous when they are, and that running away from a grizzly bear will only make it chase you.
People who are not in an area plagued by grizzly bears plausibly do not possess the knowledge required to recognise a grizzly bear, nor the best methods of survival when one crosses their path, without thereby lacking a piece of practical wisdom required for courage. After all, if an agent reliably acts courageously when not confronted with grizzly bears, in part because encountering grizzly bears is not part of their day-to-day lives, it seems odd to deny that this agent is truly courageous, i.e., possesses sufficient practical wisdom to possess this virtue. Nevertheless, possessing knowledge related to grizzly bears does seem to add to practical wisdom when it allows one to perceive the right action in a normatively laden situation, i.e., when coming across a friend preyed upon by a grizzly bear.

Moreover, to further exemplify the importance of context, an agent who regularly hikes through woods that contain grizzly bears may require the knowledge that allows her to recognise a grizzly bear, and how to act when coming across one, to be prudent enough to possess courage. After all, when one’s environment is shaped by this danger, it can be compared to dangers that are ubiquitous no matter the location. Of these dangers, one ought to acquire an awareness of notable characteristics and appropriate responses: fire burns, grizzly bears kill; do not touch fire, do not approach grizzly bears; put out fires using a fire extinguisher or wet fabric and do not pour water on a potential grease fire, avoid physical harm from a grizzly bear attack by climbing up a tree rather than running away. For those who do not live in an environment containing grizzly bears, this would not be common knowledge. Moreover, the initial knowledge of whether this knowledge would be relevant, i.e., whether one may enter a region that homes a lot of grizzly bears, also need not be possessed. Nevertheless, checking the places one travels to for potentially dangerous animals, as well as keeping up to date with migration patterns of such animals and informing oneself on how to act when coming across such animals, does add to practical wisdom.

To further illustrate knowledge that is not required for practical wisdom, yet which could inform kind or courageous acts, take the example of Tilly Smith. This was a young girl who, through help from her parents, warned others to seek shelter as she recognised the signs of an upcoming tsunami at Mai Khao Beach. The reason that Tilly was able to warn others about the upcoming danger was that she recently learned about tsunamis in her geography class. She had no idea that this knowledge would ever become morally relevant, yet as she acquired this knowledge and then found herself in an extremely rare situation, she is now credited with saving the lives of around a hundred strangers. While
we would not posit that all other visitors of this beach during the upcoming tsunami lacked the practical wisdom necessary to possess moral virtue due to their inability to recognise the signs of a tsunami, possessing this knowledge would certainly be helpful to inform their morally virtuous dispositions in the rare circumstances it would be relevant.

So, the practical wisdom required for virtue possession is dependent on one's situation – something that may change over time. For example, when moving from the Netherlands to the UK, one must still possess the common knowledge of the emergency services phone number, despite this entailing learning a new number after the move. Likewise, as one's environment becomes prone to forest fires due to global warming, or one's new job requires interaction with patients with dementia, knowledge that allows one to navigate these novel environments without undermining kindness, courage, or justice would become constituents of the practical wisdom required to possess this kindness, courage, or justice. As I will argue in Section 3, this context affects the epistemic value of one's epistemic pursuits. First, however, I discuss skills as epistemic goods that can aid practical wisdom, making their acquisition an important epistemic end for the intellectual virtues to be directed towards.

I argue that practical wisdom can also be added to when one acquires certain skills or abilities. In the case of the grizzly bear, one would make a lot of noise or climb into a tree, making one's friend do the same. As such, the knowledge regarding grizzly bears entails a certain know-how, i.e., how to interact with a grizzly bear. Likewise, the agent who notices the signs of a tsunami may be unable to save anyone when she is unable to convey her knowledge, convincing others of the imminent danger. For example, if Tilly would not have been believed by her parents who thereupon informed others, their fellow beachgoers would have plausibly perished as Tilly, a young girl, may have been unable to convince others of the imminent threat.44

While the abilities to effectively respond to grizzly bears and potential tsunamis are niche skills (which, in the context of one's physical capabilities and the presented examples, can include making a lot of noise, climbing trees, or convincing others of imminent danger), other skills are more commonly related to examples of morally virtuous action. This could thereby potentially motivate their acquisitions. For example, knowing

44 Note that this refers to the skills one may acquire to share one's knowledge with others in a clear and convincing way. Being a young girl, Tilly's chances of convincing others were not only, or even mostly, dependent upon these skills. Yet a discussion of epistemic injustice is outside of the scope of this chapter (though it is mentioned again in Chapter 9). Moreover, it is plausible that ten-year-old children may be given less credence for purely epistemic reasons.
first aid allows one to help others in certain crisis situations in a more effective way than only calling the emergency services. Calling emergency services when coming across an agent in a medical emergency would still be categorised as a kind act, yet performing this act on top of applying one’s knowledge of first aid would make the virtuous act more effective. As such, while practical wisdom does not require being skilled at first aid, it does add to it.

This can also be applied to a ubiquitous example in moral philosophy: saving a child or loved one from drowning. This example was previously discussed in terms of a drowning child in a fast-moving river: the practically wise agent will run along the stream to get ahead of the drownee, thereby being more likely to save the child than by immediately jumping into the water. As practical wisdom allows one to interpret the situation with reference to one’s values and abilities, an agent who cannot swim would call the emergency services rather than jumping into the river. However, if we accept that know-how concerning grizzly bears adds to one’s practical wisdom as it allows one to enact one’s moral virtues more effectively, then surely the ability to swim can have the same status. Note that it seems likely that learning the skill of resuscitation through a first aid course adds to one’s practical wisdom, as one may be confronted with someone needing first aid to survive. Similarly, acquiring the skill of swimming may be equally useful when one lives in an environment close to the sea, or other waters that increase the risk of drowning.

As such, apart from the common-sense knowledge and know-how required for the possession of the relevant moral virtue, making it required for one’s practical wisdom, there are many epistemic goods, including skills, that would add to this practical wisdom, improving the effectiveness of one’s morally virtuous behaviour. This thereby provides us with a measure of importance or value with regards to the content of the epistemic goods one can aim for through intellectual virtue. While acquiring epistemic goods that may be practically relevant are goods to strive for, epistemic goods that add to the common sense knowledge required for practical wisdom given the context of one’s situation would be more valuable pursuits.

3. The Epistemic Parameters of Wisdom
The introduced epistemic parameters and values have so far been discussed within the context of their respective wisdom concept. With reference to categories of epistemic goods to strive for, it allows us to include skills, understanding, and knowledge, while
excluding unjustified beliefs. Moreover, when we recall that, on the contemporary consolidation account, the three wisdom concepts both add to and restrict one another, we arrive at a more complex and intuitive image of the parameters in question, in addition to the hierarchy of epistemic value they inspire. In what follows I first give an account of this hierarchy, before giving an account of epistemic goods that are not worth striving for due to their content – normally described as trivial knowledge. Additionally, I argue that this account, in contrast to the CCCR account, allows us to explain the disvalue of false trivial beliefs. Lastly, I discuss how this account affects the motivational quality of intellectual virtue.

Where a hierarchy of value with regards to CCCR is relatively straightforward – an epistemic good is more valuable than another when it brings one in closer cognitive contact with reality than this other epistemic good – the wisdom account has various moving parts. After all, the epistemic goods that are required for, or add to, practical wisdom are context dependent, as the agent’s environment ought to be taken into account. Moreover, while beliefs or other epistemic goods related to theoretical wisdom tend to increase in value when they positively affect CCCR within the context of this topic, whether a research topic itself reflects a large (e.g., what are the main characteristics of living things) or small (e.g., what are the main characteristics of the digestive system in ocean sunfish) part of reality is a lot less relevant in assessing the value of the epistemic good aimed for. Both research projects are, after all, topics that are reflective of sophia; a highly specialised ichthyologist is not less theoretically wise than a botanist or a biologist performing interdisciplinary research. Lastly, the value of the awareness of one’s cognitive limitations is also contextual. Following Socratic wisdom, there is a distinction between being aware of the (lack of) knowledge one has and the (lack of) knowledge one proclaims to have. For example, if someone quickly skims the definition of a scientific concept used in an article she is reading, her awareness of the limitations of her understanding of this term is less relevant than when she is prompted to define the term to someone else.

Moreover, when we accept the contemporary consolidation account of wisdom, the elements of these wisdom concepts affect one another. However, given the presented account (where the elements of the wisdom concepts merely constrain and inform one another), this need not affect the hierarchy qua content. Rather, the wisdom concepts provide restrictions with regard to the actions undertaken to acquire or employ an epistemic good. Theoretical wisdom, for example, motivates one to acquire an understanding of complex and epistemically valuable topics. Such an understanding is
likely to take time and effort to acquire. As such, an agent’s motivation to grasp a particular topic, and to share her findings, may also motivate her to accept the veridicality of (at that time) unjustified beliefs as they fit well with, and add to, the construction of the representation of the topic. This, however, would undermine Socratic wisdom, making this element of the research process unwise.

Likewise, an act that is in line with Socratic wisdom should not undermine practical wisdom. To illustrate, when a normatively laden situation requires a quick response, taking one’s time to reflect on the justification behind all relevant beliefs would undermine the motivational element of practical wisdom. After all, while one may experience the epistemically motivated desire to explore the justification behind employed beliefs, the motivational element of practical wisdom would be undermined when this desire is not regulated to avoid morally vicious behaviour. For example, reflecting on whether one’s belief that one’s mobile phone is able to call the emergency number a country she is visiting without adding the national calling code is adequately justified, can result in the person in need dying or continuing to suffer during this reflection. One’s disposition to reflect, which would normally aid Socratic wisdom, can thereby be unwise when it undermines another element of wisdom.

With these restrictions and the discussed hierarchy in mind, we can also determine what knowledge is not worth getting. On the orthodox account, this is the case when the knowledge is trivial. After all, recall Zagzebski’s (2003a) argument that an interest in trivial information reflects poorly on the agent’s motivation. We tend to categorise a true belief as trivial when we do not value this belief sufficiently to value the knowledge it partly constitutes. This is because the knowledge does not possess any extrinsic value, apart from it being true and justified. In other words, there is no reason to value the knowledge apart from it being, in fact, knowledge. As argued in the previous chapter, the CCCR account explains the lacking value of trivial knowledge as it does not significantly affect CCCR. However, there are some examples of trivial knowledge in the existent literature that do not seem to rely on this maxim. Battaly (2010), for example, names celebrity and sports trivia as trivial information (while nevertheless stating that they can be consumed as the occasional epistemic treat). It seems highly unlikely that knowing the birth dates of ten celebrities is more valuable than knowing the birth date of a friend, despite the former reflecting more of the world.

While I do not aim to argue for a completely novel account of trivial knowledge that ought to replace previous accounts, I do argue that the wisdom account I propose is able
to provide and support an account of knowledge that is not worth getting which makes it, for a lack of a better word, trivial. I argue that a piece of knowledge is trivial when

1. Its content is not required for, and not in aid of, one’s practical wisdom;

2. It is not adequately constitutive of theoretical wisdom as its content is not of the right subject, would not sufficiently inform one’s complex understanding of such a (theoretically or academically) valuable subject, or does not inform and motivate further contemplation on such a subject;

3. It does not inform one’s awareness of one’s cognitive limitations or the cognitive limitations of those providing one with testimony.

This account incorporates, respectively, practical, theoretical, and Socratic wisdom to form the parameters of epistemic goods that virtuous acquisition behaviour can be directed towards. While the content has already been specified in previous sections, I now apply this account to cases of seemingly trivial knowledge and how it would be interpreted on the wisdom account.

The topic of the knowledge and what one can do with it is more important than how much of the world the knowledge reflects. Using seemingly trivial knowledge to perform acts that are intellectually or morally virtuous negates the triviality of this knowledge. For example, to convey understanding to one’s students, one can state that there are exactly \( n \) number of blades of grass in one’s garden to cause surprise, drawing attention to the subsequent valuable information. Likewise, when a friend is obsessed with a particular artist, it could be considered kind to read up on this artist to use this information in conversations with this friend, showing that one cares about their interests.\(^45\)

To explain this element, the actions that a piece of knowledge does allow one to perform should be valuable in some way. After all, knowing the birthdate of several celebrities might give one pleasure, yet knowing the birthdate of one’s friend allows one to perform acts of kindness. One could even argue that acquiring and remembering the relevant belief is an act of kindness. Moreover, acquiring a piece of trivial knowledge to share it with some deeply uninterested friends, making it practical in some respects, does not improve the status of this knowledge. After all, the agent was wrong in categorising

\(^45\) We could argue that on the Aristotelian account of friendship one ought to dissuade this friend from pursuing this interest, rather drawing their attention to more valuable epistemic objects. However, as suggested by Battaly (2010), people remain virtuous when they (occasionally) consume epistemic treats. In this sense, indulging a friend’s interest can be considered similar to baking them a chocolate cake.
the information as a potential source of kindness, which would add to practical wisdom, or of epistemic generosity given the triviality of the shared information. In other words, while the agent’s context, including her motivation, matters to establish whether an epistemic good is trivial or not, the epistemic good remains trivial when the agent is wrong about its part in a broader value (e.g., believing celebrity trivia to be intrinsically valuable).

This account of epistemic goods that can be the object of intellectually virtuous action also affects the motivational element of these actions. In the following chapter I argue for the ways in which an act can be adequately epistemically motivated through epistemic emotions that reflect a final POG or NOI. Without such a motivation, after all, the act would not be adroit. Yet recall that final value is not the same as intrinsic value. Knowledge can thereby be finally valued by an agent as it related to living well, in contrast to it being valued purely instrumentally. Yet even when an agent does only value a piece of information instrumentally, where it is instrumental to exercising a moral virtue, I argue that the focus on wisdom can account for the value of this action.

Agents who acquire information for purely instrumental reasons are excluded from possessing intellectual virtue on the orthodox account. This makes sense: one might possess the acquired skill that characterises inquisitiveness, but merely because one’s highly paid profession demands it. This is not sufficient for the account of intellectual virtue that characterises them as admirable; as traits that make one better as a person. Yet, in doing so, we would also exclude the agent who has acquired inquisitiveness merely because she aims to provide practical advice to loved ones and strangers out of kindness. If we accept the virtues’ relation to wisdom, however, we can account for the intellectual virtuosity of agents who are merely inquisitive, attentive, etc. for moral reasons. After all, it reflects a motivation to improve one’s practical wisdom, constitutive of the contemporary consolidation account of wisdom. While the agent’s motivation is thereby instrumental, it nevertheless reflects a final positive orientation towards an epistemic good, i.e., wisdom.

Apart from epistemic goods that can inform practical wisdom, an intellectually virtuous agent can also acquire epistemic goods that may not be of much practical use, yet are nevertheless finally valuable. These goods and the agent’s interaction with them are reflected in sophia. As sophia is another way to live well, focusing on complex topics one is highly interested in, rather than topics one is only slightly interested in yet may provide more status when acquired, is more likely to lead to the life of contemplation that leads to eudaimonia. In other words, sophia does not merely present us with an account...
of the kind of epistemic goods to focus on, it also makes the final epistemic motivation a requirement.

In the remainder of this section, I apply this framework to the motivational quality of adroit intellectually virtuous action, when aimed towards information that may seem trivial due to its subject. Take an agent who is curious about the diet of a loved celebrity. She can thereby possess a positive orientation towards the epistemic good of knowing about this diet. This POG can reflect a final positive orientation towards practical wisdom. For example, when the agent and the celebrity have similar dietary restrictions (due to moral or health concerns) whereby the acquired information motivates the agent in improving her cooking or eating habits. This is especially applicable if the celebrity is a chef or in another way known for her healthy eating habits or ethical consumption.

On the other hand, the agent may be curious about this diet because the celebrity’s body appears to fit perfectly within certain beauty standards upheld in contemporary society. If she aims to emulate the behaviour of the celebrity for this reason, whereby this is the reason behind her curiosity, then her POG is non-final. While she acquires this knowledge to motivate or inform her cooking and eating habits in a similar way to the previous example, both of which acquiring the knowledge for instrumental reasons, the latter agent’s POG is instrumental, without this reflecting a positive orientation towards wisdom.

The agent can also acquire the information as it is constitutive of an overarching research goal, such as whether the diets of celebrities hailed for their figure can be considered healthy or not, within the context of their physical activities. This seemingly trivial information can thereby become an important data point for this research, constitutive of sophia. If so, the agent’s motivation would reflect a final POG, where the good is wisdom.

However, when this agent is simply curious about the diet of this celebrity, the epistemic motivation behind their acquisition behaviour would not be constitutive of adroit intellectual virtue. After all, the information was not acquired as part of some greater project that can be constitutive of phronesis or sophia. Moreover, if this knowledge acquisition would turn into a research project constitutive of sophia or eventually useful for phronesis, the initial action is still not intellectually virtuous due to the motivation behind this initial action not reflecting a positive orientation towards an element of wisdom.

Lastly, Socratic wisdom allows us to explain the significant negative value of acquiring or holding on to trivial falsehoods or unjustified beliefs. In Chapter 4, I argued
that within the context of CCCR, a motivation to acquire trivial truths can be deemed non-virtuous as trivial truths do not have a sufficiently positive effect on CCCR. However, if we would accept this justification as a reason behind intellectual virtues not being directed towards trivial truths, we would be less able to explain the value of intellectually virtuous acts that lead one to reject trivial falsehoods and trivial unjustified true beliefs. After all, getting the number of blades of grass in one’s garden wrong is an equally minor change of CCCR than getting it right. So, if CCCR were the reason behind the value or admirability of intellectual virtues, then acts of, e.g., intellectual humility and open-mindedness that lead one to reject false or unjustified trivial beliefs would not enjoy this value, similar to an act of curiosity or attentiveness lacking value when they are directed towards trivial truths. When wisdom is the end of intellectual virtue, on the other hand, we can account for the intuitive disvalue of acts that lead one to accept or endorse unjustified trivial beliefs. After all, as argued, Socratic wisdom is undermined by any intellectually arrogant or closeminded act, including those directed towards trivial truths or falsehoods. The influence of practical, theoretical, and Socratic wisdom thereby provides us with a more complex understanding of trivial information, as well as with the foundation for valuing or disvaluing epistemic goods and ills that appear to be trivial due to their content.

Taking wisdom as the end of intellectual virtue thereby provides the parameters of epistemic goods that would be virtuous to (aim to) acquire. It also provides the foundation for designating some knowledge as trivial, or not sufficiently valuable, and other epistemic goods as more valuable than others. Lastly, it allows us to broaden the kind of motivation required for intellectually virtuous action, where one can perform apt intellectually virtuous acts while only valuing the relevant knowledge or understanding as instrumental to moral behaviour, as this motivation is nevertheless epistemic in nature. What one values, after all, is the epistemic good of wisdom.

4. Wisdom’s Effect
So far, we have seen that wisdom provides intuitive parameters for epistemic good acquisition by the intellectually virtuous agent. In the remainder of this chapter, I argue for further benefits that a framework which conceptualises intellectual virtues as directed towards wisdom can provide. I do so by discussing the epistemic virtues of epistemic temperance and attention, or attunement. These epistemic virtues regulate epistemic action, in part by incorporating moral and prudential values.
4.1 Epistemic Temperance

Epistemic temperance is a largely ignored intellectual virtue which ought to regulate one’s love for, and interaction with, epistemic goods. According to Battaly,

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\text{a person will be epistemically temperate only if he: (ET1) desires, consumes, and enjoys only appropriate epistemic objects; and (ET2) desires, consumes, and enjoys them only at appropriate times; and (ET3) desires, consumes, and enjoys them only to the appropriate amount and degree and with the appropriate frequency.}
\]

Battaly 2010: 224

ET1 refers to the agent’s consumption and enjoyment of valuable epistemic goods, i.e., non-trivial goods, and the lack of desire, consumption, or enjoyment of epistemic ills. Additionally, one can occasionally enjoy trivial beliefs, categorised as epistemic treats on Battaly’s account. Yet consuming and enjoying trivial beliefs solely or too frequently would make the agent epistemically self-indulgent. Likewise, if one enjoys acquiring false or unjustified beliefs, while plausibly aware of their falsehood or lack of justification (e.g., wishful thinking), the agent displays epistemic self-indulgence. However, as noted, Battaly argues that one can also consume and enjoy trivial beliefs without undermining epistemic temperance, as these can be considered epistemic treats. However, later in this section I argue that this is not in line with the epistemic motivation that is constitutive of adroit acts of intellectual virtue.

ET2 entails that the activities of ET1 should only be engaged in at appropriate times or situations. For example, enjoying reading about the history of France would not be epistemically temperate during a funeral or while one should be asleep. ET3 similarly limits the way in which epistemic goods can be enjoyed. According to Battaly, people enjoy epistemic goods or activities too frequently if “they prevent one from pursuing, attaining, or enjoying valuable objects” (Battaly 2010: 231). Battaly gives examples of acts that are in conflict with moral values (a doctor who desires truth to such an extent that he forgoes on his ethical duties as a doctor) or epistemic values (the sceptics who value avoiding falsehoods too much, thereby neglecting the value of acquiring true beliefs). I argue that, inspired by moral temperance, one’s health can also be a concern upon which to base the appropriate frequency.
First, however, I argue that temperance can be applied to epistemic activities, despite Aristotle’s insistence that temperance is only concerned with bodily pleasures and effects, specifically noting that someone with a love ‘of learning takes pleasure in the thing he loves without his body being affected at all; the experience is purely mental’ (NE 1117b20). In fact, many pleasures are not subject to temperance,

for men who delight in the pleasures of the eye, in colors, forms and paintings, are not termed either temperate or profligate, although it would be held that these things also can be enjoyed in the right manner, or too much, or too little.

NE 1118a1

One plausible explanation for this distinction is that the bodily pleasures of enjoying food, drink, and sex, as well as specific pleasures that fall within these categories (e.g., being partial to wine or fish) are likely to negatively affect one’s health when one overindulges in them. After all, a temperate agent ought to enjoy certain bodily pleasures, i.e., those which are not detrimental to one’s health or moral character:46

But such pleasures as conduce to health and fitness he will try to obtain in a moderate and right degree; as also other pleasures so far as they are not detrimental to health and fitness, and not ignoble, nor beyond his means. The man who exceeds these limits cares more for such pleasures than they are worth.

NE 1119a 16-19

All these elements boil down to whether the agent who acquires the relevant pleasures was prudent in doing so. After all, ignoble acts are acts that undermine moral virtue, or the motivational quality of phronesis. For example, even when one only enjoys chocolate occasionally, stealing a bar of chocolate due to their desire for this sweet undermines honesty and temperance, as acting dishonestly to experience this pleasure indicates that one values this pleasure too much. Yet if the virtues are united in some way, as Aristotle claims, acquiring pleasure by undermining a moral virtue would already be vicious on his account. What temperance adds, then, is the relevance of protecting one’s health.

46 Note that Battaly incorporates a similar discussion of health in her account of Aristotelian moral temperance. However, she does not appear to apply this health condition to epistemic temperance: the only examples she gives of values that ought to be taken into account are epistemic and moral in nature.
This thereby gives us another important value that affects the frequency, times, and situations where acquiring epistemic goods is epistemically temperate. After all, while Aristotle takes epistemic goods to be irrelevant for one’s health, except where their content is health-related (e.g., too much sugar is bad for you, yellow sclera indicates liver failure, etc.) it certainly seems true that acquiring epistemic goods in a way that stops one from eating or sleeping would lead to health problems. One’s mental health is similarly important. This is in part due to the bidirectional relationship between mental and physical health (instantiated through, e.g., behavioural factors, biological pathways, neurochemical impact, and psychosocial factors). This inclusion of mental health can also be supported through Aristotle’s account of self-indulgence, which refers to pain experienced due to desire, which cannot be reduced to physical dependencies. In other words, while moral temperance regulates the consumption of physical pleasures, it is also directed towards minimising mental pain. If we accept this, then epistemic temperance would regulate one’s consumption and enjoyment of appropriate epistemic goods (ET1), where ET2 and ET3 incorporate epistemic, moral, and prudential values.

However, one may argue that this conclusion is not supported by the incorporation of wisdom. After all, the acquisition of epistemic goods that are partly constitutive of wisdom appears to be a noble goal while, following Aristotle, the bodily pleasures one can experience up to the moment that they negatively impact one’s well-being merely aid one in leading a happy life. In other words, even when the wisdom concepts are intertwined in the way I argue they are, does Aristotle’s account of phronesis allow for the prudential concerns outlined when the end entails the acquisition of a valuable epistemic good?

I argue that it does, as the health or general well-being of the agent is taken into account when determining the mean of other virtues as well. For example, recall the discussion of generosity (liberality or magnificence on Aristotle’s account) in Section 2.3.1. There it was argued that, to hit the mean of generosity, one should not spend to the extent that one is unable to financially support oneself or one’s dependants; one ought to protect one’s ability to afford housing, food, and healthcare. If one is fully virtuous, then acting generously is a pleasurable activity. As such, one would be able to give away a lot of one’s wealth as, e.g., champagne or fish would not bring one more pleasure than one’s generosity. However, once one can barely afford food in general, one has given enough. Only when someone is in absolute dire need would it be generous to share the little amount one possesses.

47 This will be discussed in depth in Chapter 7.
Similarly, to determine the mean between cowardice and recklessness, i.e., courage, prudential values are relevant. After all, the courageous agent only faces pain or death when it is noble to do so (NE 1117b). When someone does not take potential physical (or, as argued in Section 4.1, mental) harm into account when deciding upon an action, they would be reckless rather than courageous. In fact, as life is pleasurable for the virtuous agent, they have more to lose than non-virtuous agents (NE 1117b). Possessing courage can thereby add to, rather than lessen, the experience of fear when facing the possibility of death. Nevertheless, the courageous agent would be willing to face this fear when, e.g., fighting for her country (NE 1116b), or perhaps when able to save another’s life. Yet even in these cases of heroic courage, one ought to take one’s health into account. E.g., choosing to go into battle wearing a linen tunic would be reckless when breastplates and helmets are available.

As one’s physical and mental well-being is incorporated alongside moral values in the deliberative quality of practical wisdom, we can consider this prudential value as a constitutive element of this wisdom concept. This can thereby be applied to the AAA structure of intellectual virtue. If an agent fails to take this prudential value into account, similar to failing to take the value of kindness or justice into account, leading her to act in a way that undermines this value, she would undermine an element of wisdom. As such, the prudential and moral considerations constitutive of epistemically temperate behaviour are supported by taking wisdom as the end of intellectual virtue. This is in contrast to accounts of intellectual virtue directed to knowledge or CCCR.

While the value of CCCR could be employed to explain the disvalue of epistemic insensibility (the excess of epistemic temperance), explaining the disvalue of examples of epistemic self-indulgence would be limited. Epistemic insensibility entails a lack of desire, enjoyment, or consumption of epistemic goods. So, even when one frequently acquires epistemic goods, if one feels no desire to do so or does not enjoy the acquisition process or the possession of these goods, she would be epistemically insensible. A CCCR account could be able to support the viciousness of this epistemic insensibility if this lack of desire or enjoyment would negate the agent’s possession of a final and dispositional POG (positive orientation towards epistemic goods). As such, if an epistemically virtuous motivation has to include a love for epistemic goods, whereby this love induces positively valenced affective experiences directed towards acquiring or possessing epistemic goods, then not experiencing the desire to acquire valuable epistemic goods, or never enjoying their acquisition, can indeed reflect an intellectual vice.
Epistemic self-indulgence, where its normativity is derived from the value of CCCR, would merely entail that one values an epistemic good to such an extent that it inhibits one’s acquisition or adherence to another epistemic good. To illustrate, Battaly (2010) argues that skeptics working within the area of epistemology are epistemically self-indulgent as their desire to avoid falsehoods prevents them from acquiring knowledge. This thereby excludes other applications of epistemic self-indulgence where, e.g., the agent’s desire to acquire an epistemic good is excessive given the moral or prudential considerations their self-indulgence motivates them to ignore.

So, if CCCR is indeed the source of normativity for the intellectual virtues, then acts that would be considered epistemically self-indulgent due to prudential (e.g., consistently ignoring one’s need to eat or sleep due to one’s desire to acquire epistemic goods) or moral (e.g., stealing someone’s medical files to understand how a disease affects them) concerns, could be considered epistemically temperate when they are effective in establishing CCCR and the agent enjoys the acquisition-process or the possession of the relevant epistemic goods. After all, while the intellectual virtues on the orthodox account are supposed to reflect well on the agent as a person, making them admirable, they do so as they lead the agent to value and acquire valuable epistemic goods. Without moral or prudential restrictions in place, then, this orthodox application of admirability does not provide the foundations to categorise the mentioned examples as epistemically self-indulgent.

In addition to informing when and to what extent one ought to enjoy and consume epistemic objects (ET2 and ET3), wisdom also provides the foundation for determining what epistemic objects are appropriate (ET1). According to Battaly (2010), it is possible for an epistemically temperate agent to consume the occasional epistemic treat in the form of trivial information. This is, after all, not an epistemic ill – one does not take pleasure in acquiring or possessing false or unjustified beliefs. However, on the wisdom account, it may also not be an ‘appropriate’ epistemic good given its trivial nature. While I accept that enjoying trivial treats does not make one epistemically self-indulgent, I do argue that

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48 As the intellectual virtues are dispositions and traits that are acquired, enacted, and sustained on the long term, one could argue that sleep deprivation or depression negatively affects one’s ability to act on intellectual virtue. This may also hold for being in prison, depending on the educational programs and libraries in place. Nevertheless, these potential consequences would not be necessary to determine and support the mean between to intellectual vices when wisdom is the end of intellectual virtue.
these acts of acquisition and enjoyment are non-virtuous, i.e., they are not adroitly temperate either.

This is supported by the discussion in Section 3, where I presented the example of someone aiming to acquire knowledge on the diet of a celebrity. Within this context of seemingly trivial celebrity knowledge – an example Battaly (2010, p. 228) mentions – I discussed the difference between a motivation that reflects a final POG, as required for adroit intellectually virtuous action, and a motivation that does not reflect a positive orientation towards wisdom or its elements. This led to a context-dependent account of trivial knowledge, where its triviality is partly determined by whether its content is characteristic of the wisdom concepts (i.e., epistemic goods that are required for, or can aid, one’s practical wisdom; can constitute or aid understanding of a complex academic topic; or can constitute or aid an awareness of the cognitive limitations of oneself and others). Moreover, whether the relevant epistemic good falls within one of these categories is contextual. If an agent is (epistemically) motivated to acquire epistemic goods that fall outside of these parameters, then this motivation is not reflective of a final POG on the wisdom account. As such, the acts that follow from it cannot be adroitly intellectually virtuous, making the act of enjoying its acquisition or possession not adroitly temperate.

When we take wisdom as the end of intellectual virtue, then, we are able to account for the value of epistemic temperance, including its moral and prudential elements, in addition to supporting an account of appropriate epistemic objects. The same benefit is applicable to another surprisingly underexplored intellectual virtue: attentiveness.

4.2 Attention and Attunement – Defining Normativity

In the previous chapters, I have mentioned the intellectual virtue of attentiveness multiple times. As is the case with other intellectual virtues, attentiveness requires an epistemic motivation, stability, being acquired, and being admirable, in addition to the virtue-specific behavioural element. For attentiveness, this may refer to the ability and disposition to focus on the epistemically relevant elements of a situation. While this virtue is currently underexplored, there is another intellectual virtue discussed in the existent literature that regulates attention, where attentiveness is merely one component. Namely, the virtue of attunement.

Gardiner argues that virtue epistemology can illuminate ‘the normativity of attention’ (forthcoming, p. 48) through the virtue of attunement. This entails ‘paying
attention to the right things in the right way, at the right time; ignoring what should be ignored, and being sensitive to significant features' (Gardiner, forthcoming, p. 49). Immediately we see some correspondence with epistemic temperance, yet rather than consuming and enjoying the right epistemic objects in the right way and at the right time, attunement refers to attending to objects in the right way and at the right time. However, unlike Battaly’s (2010) account, Gardiner’s account of the right objects to attend to is informed by epistemic, moral, and aesthetic values.49

In relation to the moral values she incorporates, attunement appears to be similar to the perceptive element of practical wisdom, as this quality allows it to guide moral virtues: ‘Virtuous friendship requires understanding and helping friends, for example, which requires perceiving and appreciating their foibles, strengths, values, challenges, and so on. It requires noticing patterns, including ones they may themselves overlook’ (Gardiner, forthcoming, p.54). Similarly, justice requires one to attend to undeserved punishment, and kindness to suffering that may be alleviated through one’s action. Even when one cannot help, Gardiner argues that one ought to attend to such suffering: one ought to attend to someone falling off a pier, even when one cannot prevent this from happening.

Gardiner appears to treat attunement as a collection of ‘attentional traits’ (forthcoming, p. 49), which would fit with the discussion presented in Section 1.1. After all, even when we merely focus on attunement in relation to moral contexts, it would be constituted by the perceptive element of practical wisdom, including the intellectual virtues of insight, attentiveness, perceptiveness, and careful observation, as well as the moral values relevant for the deliberative and motivational elements of practical wisdom. While attunement therefore appears to be in line with the wisdom account (apart from the aesthetic value, as discussed later in this section), it also appears to be too broad to be a responsibilist virtue. This is partly as a proper act of attunement does not require an epistemic motivation, nor a final POG or NOI implicitly guiding one’s attention (Gardiner, forthcoming, p. 82). After all, her example of attending to someone falling off a pier, despite not being able to help, is categorised as ‘inappropriate disregard’ (forthcoming, p. 50). Attending to the stranger falling off the pier would thereby merely be in line with

49 This aesthetic value is illustrated by attending to the exit signs hanging in the Louvre, rather than the paintings. Discussing this aesthetic value falls outside of the scope of this thesis. Merely note that, e.g., failing to attend to the beauty of the Arnolfini Portrait by Van Eyck, instead merely attending to the interesting symbolism of the dog and colours of the portrayed garments, does not undermine wisdom on the proposed account of wisdom.
kindness, rather than with an epistemically motivated trait. After all, one would already be aware of the epistemically relevant elements of the situation: that someone is falling off the pier and that one cannot help.

Nevertheless, we can employ Gardiner’s description of attunement as a collection of attentional traits to refine our account of attentiveness. After all, as she argues that the value of an attentional pattern can depend on the agent’s ‘attitudes and motivations’ (Gardiner, forthcoming, p. 82), the relevant motivation can simply entail or reflect a final POG or NOI. The immediate end of attentiveness would thereby entail attending to the appropriate epistemic objects – avoiding epistemic ills and trivial epistemic goods – and to the epistemically significant elements of a situation, and doing so in the right way and at the right time. An adroit act of attentiveness thereby reflects this behaviour due to the connected acquired, epistemically motivated, admirable, reliable, and stable disposition. This behaviour is apt when it is admirable as it is adroit, where this admirability requires one to not undermine another value or quality constitutive of wisdom, including the perceptive, deliberative, and motivational elements of practical wisdom Gardiner appears to incorporate in her account of attunement.

The above discussion is not the first time that the AAA structure is applied to this virtue. Carter (forthcoming) argues that this structure can be employed to inform the normativity of attention which, he argues, has not been sufficiently established by Gardiner’s discussion of attunement. After all, why are some applications of attention better than others? For example, why is attending to the content of a lecture on anthropology better than attending to a whispered conversation in the background? From Gardiner’s discussion we can gather that, ceteris paribus, the content of the lecture would be more attention-worthy than a private conversation between strangers, making attending to the lecture reflect attentunement to a greater extent than attending to the whispered conversation. However, why this is the case has not been illuminated through Gardiner’s application of virtue epistemology. Nevertheless, Carter argues, by applying the AAA structure of competence, virtue epistemology can support a normative account of attention. An apt exercise of attunement (or attentiveness) would thereby entail successfully attending to a task or object, where this success is due to one’s reliably successful disposition to attend in this way (Carter, forthcoming, p. 75).

The account presented by Carter, however, would run into the same problems discussed in Chapter 3. This is because the accuracy condition on his account can be fulfilled by the implicit end, the immediate target, or CCCR:
For example, suppose we intentionally aim to focus on a cognitive task $T$, whether it be a simple task or a more complex task. With reference to this aim, we can then assess our apportioning our attention as successful or not, on the basis of whether the relevant aim is attained (or not)

Carter, forthcoming. P. 74-75

First, if we interpret the accuracy of one’s attentiveness in terms of whether one successfully attends to, or focusses on, cognitive task $T$, then one would be successful in performing the behaviour characteristic of attentiveness, i.e., it would be successful in hitting the immediate end of this virtue. This, however, has been argued to be constitutive of the adroitness of the act, rather than its accuracy.

Second, an attentive act can fail to be accurate when it fails to establish the aimed for end, i.e., the immediate target. Both Gardiner and I take issue with an AAA account where the implicit target is the accuracy condition, and we do so for similar reasons: as many attentive acts are not performed with a goal in mind, we cannot establish whether these acts are successful. This is in part because, as Gardiner argues, attunement involves habits that can be automatically performed, thereby lacking an intended goal. Moreover, one can fail to be attentive through inaction, i.e., where there is no act of which we can assess its success. Taking wisdom as the end of intellectual virtue avoids this concern: if the accuracy condition is admirability, then actions without an immediate target can be accurate on the AAA framework. Moreover, given the stability requirement of intellectual virtue, failing to act on a virtue when this virtue is relevant can be assessed as a failure of attentiveness.

Third, to avoid this issue, the aim of attentive action can be functionally determined (Carter, forthcoming, p. 75n7). This aim could thereby entail the acquisition of knowledge, or the ultimate end of intellectual virtue: establishing CCCR. Yet this would lead to the same problems previously discussed: the rejection of moral or prudential considerations, despite the intellectual virtues supposedly adding to the personal worth (Baehr 2011) or admirability (Zagzebski 1996) of the agent.

While Gardiner argues that virtue responsibilism, rather than reliabilism, is able to support the moral function she ascribes to attunement, given its consideration of ‘social, moral, and contextual features’ (Gardiner, forthcoming. P. 81), I have argued that existing

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50 See Chapter 3.
accounts of responsibilist virtue cannot account for the inclusion of these considerations – a judgement Carter shares (forthcoming, p. 75). Moreover, Carter argues that Gardiner needs a source of normativity to support the distinction between appropriate or ‘the right’ epistemic goods and the inappropriate or ‘wrong’ epistemic goods (or epistemic ills) to attend to. As it stands, Carter argues, there is no normative ground found in virtue epistemology to differentiate, in terms of value, between cognitive tasks directed towards trivial or non-trivial knowledge, where this differentiation would be a task for intellectual ethics. In fact, ‘[w]hether virtue epistemology (of any stripe) can illuminate those norms of attention that fall within intellectual ethics—and so those norms of attention stand outside of the kind of telic assessment applicable to aimed attempts as such—remains to be seen’ (Carter, forthcoming, p. 75).

However, as I have attempted to show in this and previous chapters, accepting wisdom as the end of intellectual virtue within an AAA structure would provide the normative foundations to incorporate moral, prudential, and epistemic concerns, including those that differentiate between trivial and non-trivial cognitive tasks. After all, if we accept the discussion presented in Section 2 and 3, then the wisdom account provides us with an intuitive hierarchy regarding the epistemic value of epistemic goods in terms of kind and content, within the context of the agent’s abilities and environment. The account of intellectual virtue directed at wisdom is thereby able to illuminate and support norms of epistemic conduct, including what epistemic goods should or should not be objects of acquisition for this acquisition to be intellectually virtuous.

The ‘normativity of attention’ that Gardiner (forthcoming, p. 48) sets out to provide within the context of virtue epistemology can thereby still be illuminated within this context. Namely, by applying the model proposed in this thesis. Similar to the AAA structure Carter (forthcoming) suggests, I have argued that apt acts of intellectual virtue are better than epistemic acts that fail to be adroit (as they do not result from an acquired stable and reliable disposition, motivated by a final POG or NOI, or fail to hit the implicit target), that fail to be accurate (as the act fails to be virtuous, thereby failing to be admirable), or that fail to be apt (as the admirability of the act was not due to the relevant intellectual virtue).

5. Conclusion

This chapter supported the conceptualisation of intellectual virtue as directed towards wisdom. I first argued that wisdom can account for the various functions of intellectual
virtue, including the acquisition, assessment, and sharing of epistemic goods, as well as the importance of an epistemic cohort. This was followed by an analysis of the epistemic goods that partly constitute or aid Socratic, theoretical, and practical wisdom. This referred both to the kinds of epistemic goods that fall under the wisdom umbrella (e.g., knowledge, understanding, and skills, excluding unjustified beliefs), as well as the content of these epistemic goods. This thereby allows us to distinguish between the value of two pieces of knowledge that share their CCCR value (e.g., learning about the new relationship of a celebrity and learning about the new relationship of a friend), yet differ with respect to wisdom.

Apart from presenting an account of appropriate or valuable epistemic objects to acquire, I argued that taking wisdom as the end and source of normativity for intellectually virtuous behaviour also supports the incorporation of moral and prudential concerns as restricting factors on the aptness of this behaviour. This thereby allows us to support the assessment that, e.g., adroitly thorough behaviour would fail to be apt if the agent does not eat for days, or takes dangerous stimulants to perform these otherwise thorough actions. Likewise, behaviour resulting from an otherwise curious disposition would fail to be apt if this curiosity motivates one to perform cruel experiments.
Chapter 6

Virtuous Motivation and Epistemic Emotions

1. Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have set out to provide and argue for an AAA framework of intellectual virtue directed towards wisdom. This chapter fills out this model further by presenting the epistemic motivation required for adroit action, arguing that such a virtuous motivation can be reflected by dispositionally experiencing and acting on epistemic emotions. This chapter forms a bridge between the AAA structure proposed so far and its application on our contemporary sociotechnical environment, by exploring epistemic emotions that are ubiquitous and influential in this environment, including external uncertainty and epistemic FOMO.

In the following section, I give a short overview of the affective side of intellectually virtuous motivation on the orthodox account of intellectual virtue. According to Zagzebski (1996) and Baehr (2011), this entails a positive orientation towards epistemic goods. Zagzebski takes the required intellectually virtuous motivation to entail a love of truth which supports a disposition to experience epistemic motives reflective of the intellectual virtues. Moreover, according to Baehr (2010) and Zagzebski (2003a, 2003b), it may also entail a negative orientation towards epistemically bad objects, which I conceptualise as epistemic ills. This account does not substantially differ from the required motivation I propose, the main difference being that what counts as an epistemic good that is sufficiently valuable to strive for, is informed by the guidelines presented in Section 2 and 3 of the previous chapter. This means that the epistemic goods an intellectually virtuous agent can be positively orientated towards are those that partly constitute or aid wisdom, or wisdom itself.

In Section 2 I discuss the two elements of a POG or NOI: the mind (reasons) and heart (affective states). I argue that reasons reflecting that one finally values epistemic goods may not always be epistemically accessible to the agent. As such, I argue that if one dispositionally experiences epistemic emotions that motivate the acquisition of valuable epistemic goods, and these emotions are brought about by the agent valuing
the content and accuracy of these epistemic goods, then such an emotion is sufficient for this agent to possess an epistemically virtuous motivation. This will allow us to conceptualise intellectually virtuous actions as adroit when they are motivated by an epistemic emotion, rather that the conscious judgement that the knowledge strived for is finally valuable.

In Section 3, I discuss what makes an affective state an emotion, using the constructed account of emotion, and note the necessary role that emotions or other affective states play in action selection. This will form the basis for my definition of epistemic emotions, introduced in Section 4. There, I argue that epistemic emotions are emotions that reflect a POG or NOI and which inherently motivate or direct attention to epistemic action. This discussion draws on the relatively new field of epistemic emotion research, which already contains links to virtue epistemology. As stated, while experiencing an epistemic emotion reflects a POG or NOI, it ought to reflect a final POG or NOI to be sufficient for the epistemic motivation of the agent to be intellectually virtuous (and thereby potentially constitutive of an adroit intellectually virtuous act). In the remainder of this chapter, I apply this definition to several paradigmatic epistemic emotions – respectively, doubt (§5), uncertainty (§6), and curiosity (§7), in addition to introducing three affective states that, when the proposed definition is applied, are epistemic emotions: external uncertainty (§6), morbid curiosity (§7.3), and epistemic FOMO (§8).

2. Epistemic motivation directed towards goods and ills
Epistemic goods, such as true beliefs, justification, knowledge, and understanding, are objects or practises that bring one into closer cognitive contact with reality (Baehr 2011, p. 101; Zagzebski 1996, p. 45). This tends to entail that the good reflects part of the world, whether that entails knowing at what time the sun sets or understanding how solar panels work. Acquiring such objects brings one in closer cognitive contact with reality and thereby makes one better off, epistemically speaking. If we accept this, then we can conceptualise epistemic ills as objects or practises which make one epistemically worse

51 Note that I focus on epistemic emotions rather than cognitive feelings (e.g., the feeling of knowing).
52 Section 7.3 on morbid curiosity contains potentially triggering examples on the topics of violence, death, and rape.
off by negating or undermining one’s possession or acquisition of epistemic goods. These epistemic ills thereby include falsehoods, a lack of justification, and ignorance.\(^5\)

Recall that on Baehr’s personal worth account, intellectual virtues are admirable – which I argued to be the success-condition of intellectual virtue – because they contribute to one’s personal worth. For one’s virtues to reflect on one’s personal worth, they must reflect a positive orientation (or love) towards epistemic goods (POG) (Baehr 2011) or a negative orientation (or hate) towards epistemic ills (NOI), or epistemic “bads” (Baehr 2010). This orientation is, paradigmatically, constituted by both “heart and mind” (2011, 100), i.e., reason and desire, or cognitive and affective processes. However, I argue that only experiencing the “heart” or possessing the “mind” elements of a POG is sufficient for an agent to act from an intellectually virtuous motivation.

This chapter mainly focusses on the “heart” of a POG or NOI, entailing the affective states that may be constitutive of an intellectually virtuous motivation. I argue that experiencing affective states that motivate epistemic behaviour can reflect overarching epistemic values, including a final positive orientation towards epistemic goods and a negative orientation towards epistemic ills. In this way, one can act from an intellectually virtuous motivation, without necessitating a conscious belief that one finally values epistemic goods. Likewise, it is possible for an agent to deem various epistemic goods important to possess, despite not being motivated by positively valenced affective states directed towards their acquisition or possession, nor negatively valenced affective states towards their absence. She thereby actively guides her attention to reliable sources of information. While never or rarely experiencing affective states motivating the acquisition of epistemic goods would reflect epistemic insensibility – that is, if we accept Battaly’s (2010) account discussed in the previous chapter – individual instances of adroit intellectually virtuous behaviour need not always contain the affective element of a POG. In what follows I discuss how one’s POG or NOI can reflect an intellectually virtuous motivation, before applying it to the “mind” and “heart” elements specifically.

As discussed in the first chapter, to reflect an intellectually virtuous motivation, one’s POG must be final, where one has a positive orientation towards epistemic goods because one values these goods due to their inherent (e.g., truth) or extrinsic yet non-

\(^5\) While one may disagree that a lack of justification is an epistemic ill, note that for the purposes of this thesis, it is automatically included as something to be avoided given the inclusion of Socratic wisdom on the contemporary consolidation account of wisdom. In other words, if one possesses a NOI directed towards a lack of justification, this would reflect a motivational element of Socratic wisdom.
instrumental (e.g., interest or achievement) qualities. In contrast, one’s POG or NOI can be instrumental, where one has a positive orientation towards epistemic goods as these goods would be in service of accomplishing other goals, such as acquiring money or status. Yet note one can possess both a final and instrumental orientation, whereby the instrumental orientation does not exclude one from possessing an intellectually virtuous motivation: I may be negatively orientated towards ignorance both because I negatively value ignorance and because I want to impress my social circle with my knowledgeability. So, for a POG or NOI to entail an intellectually virtuous motivation, they must reflect a final positive or negative evaluation of epistemic goods or ills, i.e., a final POG or NOI.

Second, one’s final POG or NOI may be part of a disposition, where one generally values epistemic goods or disvalues epistemic ills which in turn reliably affects her behaviour, or it may simply arise occasionally, motivating individual actions. Where a final POG or NOI is the psychological basis for one’s possession of a stable intellectual virtue, one is disposed to be positively orientated towards epistemic goods or negatively orientated towards epistemic ills, where this disposition reflects a stable and final evaluation of epistemic goods or ills. So, while an intellectually virtuous agent’s POG can arise in many forms, such as being interested in biology, being motivated to learn something new, or believing that understanding a topic is more valuable than vaguely knowing what it entails, the agent is disposed to experience these POGs due to her overarching positive evaluation of epistemic goods.

However, when we recall the ways in which a POG can reflect a final positive evaluation of an epistemic good, we ought to accept that one need not be positively orientated towards all epistemic goods one comes across. For example, one can be positively orientated towards knowledge about geology, without possessing a POG directed towards the works of Immanuel Kant (despite his work on volcanoes – see Watkins and Kant, 2012). A potentially inquisitive, attentive, and thorough geologist who finally values accurate information on her field of interest need not be denounced from possessing the relevant intellectual virtues due to lacking interest in Kant – the extrinsic yet non-instrumental reasons behind her finally valuing epistemic goods related to geology (e.g., taking it to be important or interesting) simply do not apply, in her case, to 18th century philosophy.

This is in line with my discussion of sophia – one can acquire or live in line with sophia through possessing the right motivations, skills, dispositions, and a deep, complex understanding of an academic subject or topic. One can be more theoretically wise by
acquiring further understanding on other topics, but one already lives a life of contemplation when one merely focusses on, e.g., astronomy or atomic physics. As such, one’s disposition to possess a positive orientation towards epistemic goods need not be general – as long as an agent is disposed to be positively orientated towards some valuable epistemic goods, this POG can be constitutive of an intellectually virtuous motivation.

In contrast, one ought to be disposed to be negatively oriented towards all instances of certain epistemic ills, i.e., falsehoods or otherwise inaccurate representations of reality. This entails a disposition to negatively valence acquiring, accepting, or sharing information that one believes to be false. To illustrate, the intellectually virtuous geologist who does not possess a POG directed towards knowledge about Kant, would nevertheless possess a NOI directed towards acquiring, possessing, or sharing falsehoods about Kant. Moreover, as alluded to in the previous chapter, for an act or agent to be intellectually virtuous on the account I propose, she must also possess a dispositional NOI directed towards a lack of justification. This entails that an intellectually virtuous agent is disposed to be negatively orientated towards accepting or sharing information as if it were knowledge when lacking the necessary justification to support their treatment of that information as knowledge. However, a final NOI need not be directed towards all instances of lacking knowledge or understanding. I.e., a final NOI regarding absent knowledge or being uninformed, or a final POG, is sufficiently dispositional when one regularly experiences either in relation to valuable epistemic goods.

2.1 The “Mind”: POGs and the Content of Practical Wisdom
When one’s epistemic motivation reflects the “mind” element of a final POG or NOI, one acts on beliefs regarding the value of epistemic goods and ills. For example, an agent may be motivated to acquire an understanding of the universe beyond Earth, leading her to acquire knowledge about Mars, avoiding all insufficiently justified information, as she deems this to be part of an important topic. She never plans to live on Mars or to become a planetologist; she is aware that she finally values the knowledge she acquires, and that this is her reason for action. However, one may have other reasons that motivate

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54 As I will discuss in Chapter 8, one can share information or beliefs with others despite a lack of justification when one informs the other of this lack of justification.
epistemic behaviour – ones that do not seem to reflect an intellectually virtuous motivation on the orthodox account.

I have argued that intrinsically valuing knowledge – the epistemic good rather than an instance of it – would entail that one also values trivial knowledge. After all, trivial knowledge possesses the same intrinsic elements as non-trivial knowledge. While one may argue that one can value trivial knowledge less as it reflects less of the world, or not at all as it does not sufficiently affect CCCR, we have also seen that some knowledge is deemed trivial due to the topic of its content. This allowed us to say that one merely needs to finally value knowledge, meaning that one does not only value it instrumentally.

However, we can imagine an agent who is dispositionally negatively orientated to the acquisition, possession, and sharing of falsehoods, yet who lacks a motivation to acquire novel information unless when she believes it will have a practical application. In other words, she merely has a dispositional instrumental POG. To illustrate, a doctor in training may act diligently and attentive during her studies. Yet rather than evaluating the knowledge she acquires as finally valuable or even as interesting, she merely acts on her diligence and attentiveness for instrumental reasons: to acquire knowledge that she can apply when treating patients. Likewise, an agent can enact the behaviour of similar intellectual virtues to acquire knowledge that allows her to perform well as a person in her particular society. While it seems to be true that both agents value knowledge instrumentally, I argue that the behaviour of both can nevertheless be interpreted as adroitly virtuous. After all, rather than being positively orientated towards knowledge, they are positively orientated towards the epistemic good of wisdom – practical wisdom in particular.

Recall that, as argued in Chapter 2 and 5, merely possessing knowledge is not sufficient for an agent to be wise. Additionally, epistemic good-acquisition on the practical wisdom account is motivated by an aim to live well – to live in line with moral virtue. As argued, this does not necessitate the agent to possess an account of moral virtue. The agent merely requires motives that reflect moral virtue. For example, an agent can be motivated to learn CPR not because she aims to make her moral virtue of kindness more efficient, but rather because she simply wants to help people in need. Likewise, this agent may also acquire information to establish the most inexpensive data plan that still fits her

55 Having a strong negative orientation towards falsehoods and unjustified beliefs, ignoring the value of acquiring (novel) true beliefs, has been discussed by Battaly (2010) as a form of epistemic self-indulgence – a vice that she attributes to skeptics.
needs, as she would prefer to spend her money on her friends or people in need. This agent thereby acquired knowledge that allows her to act on her generosity more effectively.

So, while an agent might lack a dispositional and final POG directed towards knowledge or understanding, she can nevertheless possess a dispositional and final POG directed towards practical wisdom. While the following section will discuss the possibility of an intellectually virtuous agent who lacks (conscious) beliefs regarding the final value of epistemic goods, instead possessing a final POG through dispositionally experiencing affective states that reflect such a positive orientation, note that the agent acquiring practical wisdom might also lack the belief that she finally values epistemic goods. After all, she need not even be aware that the epistemic goods she acquires inform specific moral virtues, let alone needing to be aware of the overarching wisdom concept guiding and informing morally virtuous behaviour. When we accept that the intellectual virtues are directed towards wisdom, then, reasons that reflect a positive orientation towards epistemic goods that aid or partly constitute wisdom, including where this orientation is directed towards potential actions that incorporate the perceptive, deliberative, or motivational element of practical wisdom, are sufficient for an intellectually virtuous motivation.

2.2 The “Heart”

The “heart” element of a POG is perhaps best reflected in Montmarquet’s (1987) and Zagzebski’s (1996, 2003) formulation of an intellectually virtuous motivation involving a love of truth. As one loves truth, or other epistemic goods containing truth (after all, remember the problem of trivial knowledge), one is affectively motivated to acquire it, positively valancing possessing it, and happy to share it with others. While the reasons discussed in the previous section may result in the experience of motivating affective states (e.g., information one considers of interest plausibly induces the emotion of interest in the agent, further motivating her epistemic actions), I argue that one need not possess and endorse a belief that knowledge is finally valuable when one dispositionally experiences the “heart” element of a final POG.

For example, an intellectually virtuous agent may believe that she merely values epistemic goods as acquiring them bring her joy, thereby interpreting her POG as
instrumental. However, as noted, a love for epistemic goods may often lead one to enjoy acquiring or possessing these goods. Moreover, acquiring epistemic goods because this acquisition or the possession of these goods is pleasurable is explicitly mentioned as an example of an intellectually virtuous motivation (e.g., Battaly 2010; Ross 2020). As such, one may display the “heart” quality of a dispositional and final POG by enjoying the acquisition, possession, or sharing of epistemic goods, or by being affectively drawn to objects or qualities that bring one in closer cognitive contact with reality. This is despite this agent potentially lacking the belief that her enjoyment is due to her finally valuing epistemic goods. This argument is similar to the one made in the previous section: one need not possess a concept of practical wisdom for one’s reasons or affective states to be implicitly directed towards this epistemic good.

When we accept this, the same can be applied to a final NOI. For example, someone may experience unease directed towards her ignorance about x. Such a negatively valenced affective state may be induced by the potential consequences of her ignorance (e.g., getting an answer wrong on a test), making this unease reflective of an instrumental NOI. However, she may also experience this affective state as a response to her ignorance itself, whereby this reflects a final NOI. This is despite the agent’s potential lack of epistemic access to her possession of this final value. She may rather believe that she merely wants to reduce her negatively valenced affective state by taking away its intentional object, i.e., her ignorance of the relevant topic.

As such, dispositionally experiencing affective states that reflect a POG or NOI, where this disposition is directed towards the epistemic good or ill itself rather than merely to the consequences of its possession, can be sufficient for instances of such affective experiences to constitute one’s intellectually virtuous motivation. Note that this is still applicable to epistemic goods constitutive or in aid of practical wisdom: being positively orientated towards practical knowledge as one may be able to apply it in normatively laden situations is, after all, constitutive of this wisdom concept.

So, with these restrictions in place, I argue that the experience of an epistemic emotion can reflect an epistemic motivation constitutive of adroit intellectually virtuous action. In what follows I first give an account of emotion simpliciter. This also entails an

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56 Note that this may also be the case when the agent adheres to certain philosophical points of view, such as hedonistic utilitarianism, thereby believing that acquiring epistemic goods brings her more pleasure than pain, as she enjoys acquiring epistemic goods in general which she takes to outweigh the possibly heart-breaking knowledge she may acquire, thereby reducing her POG to hedonic reasons.
exposition of how affective states guide attention and motivate action. From there, I argue that epistemic emotions are affective states that reflect a POG or NOI (final or not) and motivate epistemic action.

3. Emotions

To find what counts as an intellectually virtuous emotion, we first need to establish which affective states count as emotions simpliciter. To do so, I employ accounts that have become increasingly popular in interdisciplinary research involving psychology, philosophy, and neuroscience (Barrett et al. 2016). These accounts consider emotions to be complex states or processes that result from the agent’s ongoing interaction with their environment, incorporating the agent’s values, concerns, and history as well as her physiological state.

Lewis (2005), for instance, gives a dynamical systems account of emotions from a neuroscientific perspective. He notes that, in this field, it was generally accepted that emotions guide attention and action, that they are accompanied by affective feelings, and arise in response to an event or state of affairs. However, they were modelled as static states rather than processes continually influenced by other processes and continually influencing these processes in return. By construing the emotional episode as a dynamical system, Lewis argues that emotions are self-organising temporal stable structures which integrate neural processes, constraining them into (neural) activity usually associated with such an episode. As cognitive and affective processes are explained in terms of dynamical systems, emotions are not one static discreet state. Rather, the processes are continuously reconfigured by internal and sensory events and how these events are interpreted is in part through the initial state of the agent. On the orthodox view, the emotion “fear” is a high arousal state with negative hedonic valence which causes the agent to judge the event causing the fear as dangerous. For Lewis, and others working on a dynamical construction of emotion, the causal relation as described above is an inaccurate model. Rather, the interactions between processes in a dynamical system are non-linear. This means that the relations are rather bidirectional or multidirectional: processes shape one another in a complex way.

From clinical psychology, Lisa Feldman Barrett has created a new wave of emotion research with her interdisciplinary affective science research group. On Feldman-Barrett’s account of constructed emotion, emotions are constituted by affective states entailing valence (roughly, pleasure or displeasure) and arousal (activation or
deactivation), which are informed by sensory signals, i.e., physiological changes (interoception), sensorimotor information (proprioception), one’s environment (exteroceptive information), and prior experience. An affective state or feeling becomes an emotion when the interoceptive and exteroceptive information is categorised as belonging to an emotion category, which is a concept, usually entailing a linguistic label, that is informed by prior experience. In other words, an emotion is an affective state which is constructed as belonging to a specific emotion category by the agent. For instance, an affective state with high arousal directed at a (loud) fireworks display can be constructed as joy or excitement by the agent. But when the fireworks start unexpectedly, the same situation and core affect can be constructed as the emotion of surprise.

Once the emotion is constructed it motivates action. E.g., when an agent experiences joy, surprise, or fear, she may smile, jump up, or run away, but all of these emotions can also make her laugh, freeze, or widen her eyes. The emotion-relative behaviour, then, is informed by the agent’s concepts, the situation, and the characteristics of the affective state in question. That emotions guide action is, first, explained by Feldman‐Barrett’s account of emotion concepts as generally goal-orientated (Feldman Barrett 2011, 2016, 2017). Second, as will be discussed in the following section, affect directs attention to possibilities for action one’s environment offers, making salient and motivating the enaction of the possibilities relevant to the particular affective state. This action-guiding quality carried by emotion concepts is the function of epistemic emotions I argue for in this chapter.

3.1 The function of affect

In recent years, psychology, neuroscience and philosophy of mind have become increasingly open to the possibility that cognitive processes, including perception and action, are inherently intertwined with affect (e.g., Duncan and Barrett 2007; Gallagher 2017; Thelen et al. 2001; Woodward 2016). Moreover, the effects of emotional states on perception are well-documented (e.g., Barrett and Bar 2009; Brady 2013). This section explains how affect modulates cognitive processes through the interaction of the agent and the world in terms of affordances.

Affordances are the possibilities for action the environment offers, the good or bad animal-relative properties it provides (Gibson 1979). They are the possibilities for action that an organism could perceive if it was present, based on its physical capabilities, its learned skills, and its current needs. People do not perceive all affordances they stand in
relation to. After all, a water bottle that affords drinking from also affords throwing, crushing, hiding, balancing on one’s forehead, and countless other options that may or may not be perceived. In other words, every situation is laden with countless affordances, from which we only perceive a fraction.

To explain how our attention is directed to some affordances and not others, our affordance-perception can be compared to that of less complex organisms. As every organism has certain needs or goals, it aims to satiate these needs or achieve these goals through responding to the relevant affordances the environment offers. For example, an organism experiencing hunger will attend to affordances which would help it to reduce this negatively valenced state, i.e., the affordance to consume certain (eatable) objects. Likewise, when a dog comes across a bad smell, the resulting negatively valenced affective state directs the dog’s attention to the affordance of moving away their nose, which they promptly respond to. Or, when the dog feels threatened, they may perceive the affordance to run away or bite the threatening object.

Upon perception of a relevant affordance given the organism's core affective state, the organism experiences an affective change called bodily arousal. Bodily arousal directs attention towards, and motivates, responding to the relevant affordances. This affective state is shaped by either a positive (attracting) or negative (repelling) valence of the intentional object (Bruineberg and Rietveld 2014; Kiverstein and Miller 2015). So, on this model, affect directs attention to those affordances that are relevant to the animal’s current needs and concerns, which in turn alter the affective state, bringing about the action readiness to respond to the affordance.

Note that the affective state of the dog, which we might perceive as disgust, would not be considered an emotion on the constructed account. After all, we do not know whether this dog has a concept referring to disgust that was applicable here, rather than multiple concepts to do with eatability, sniffability, not-eatability, and badness. So, while we perceive the dog as experiencing disgust, the dog, most likely, did not construct their affective state as the emotion of disgust. Nevertheless, the dog’s affective state motivates the related behaviour through an interaction between their physiological changes, sensorimotor information, and their exteroceptive information. In short, the dog feels a certain way in response to their environment which motivates action.

A similar process directs our attention to relevant affordances, yet often in a more complex manner than that of an organism needing to eat. The cognitive abilities of humans allow for additional epistemic or mental affordances such as remembering,
believing, reasoning and conveying. For example, the fridge may afford memorising what it contains; an affordance that is more likely to be perceived when the agent is hungry, yet may also be perceived in the process of deliberating what to make for dinner. Likewise, our ability to communicate allows us to attend to affordances that are irrelevant to our own experienced physical needs. For example, when someone asks for a cup of tea, one may perceive the affordance that one’s kettle offers which would have gone unnoticed without this request. Additionally, our environment is shaped by cultural and social forces and institutions, which affect affordance perception (Rietveld and van Dijk 2017; Rietveld and Kiverstein 2014). For instance, the bus stop affords waiting for the bus, a field affords playing football, and a ballot affords voting. Moreover, affordances for certain kinds of conduct are perceived or experienced as more attractive than others when they are seen as fitting given the location and situation (e.g., a shop or a dinner party). So, because of socio-cultural practices our environment is socio-material, which shapes the affordances available and attractive to the agent.

Note the intuitive pull of this affective explanation: when hungry, you will be quick to notice the smell or sight of freshly baked bread or ripe strawberries. When angry you may feel attracted to the affordance of hitting someone or shouting at them. Affective states like these give value to the world; they show us what we care about and thus they shape what we perceive, which in turn informs our actions.

On the constructed account of emotion, emotions are more complex than mere feeling or affect. However, as affect partly constitutes the emotions, emotions share the functional role affect possesses, i.e., to give one’s situation meaning and to direct attention to possibilities for action. If we accept that emotion categories are social and psychological constructs, one’s emotion concepts, as informed by one’s culture, affect which actions appear salient. As such, which emotion concepts one possesses and what they entail affect which affordances are perceived as fitting or inviting.

So, when we recall the example of a water bottle affording drinking from, throwing, crushing, hiding, and balancing on one’s forehead, we can understand which affordance is perceived by the agent given the emotion they construct. If they construct their high heart rate, flushed face, dry mouth, and tension in their body as anger, they may perceive the affordance of throwing or crushing the bottle. If they construct these physiological

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57 Note that this description does not claim that we are the only creatures that perceive affordances due to the communicated desires of others. For example, many organisms feed their young when they cry out for sustenance.
changes as having a crush on someone near, however, they may perceive the affordance of balancing the bottle on their forehead to impress this person. Or, if they have this bottle of water on their desk while working on a job application, they may construct these feelings as stress, perceiving the affordance of drinkability to counteract their dry mouth.\footnote{Note that an agent or organism need not possess the concepts of anger, stress, or having a crush for their attention to be directed towards these or similar affordances. After all, non-human animals who do not possess linguistic labels likely experience feelings of aggression, attraction, or a dry mouth which motivates action – although they are likely to perceive different affordances based on their body, abilities, tendencies, and interpretation of their body and environment (e.g., aggression or pent up energy in a dog may lead them to respond to the affordance of destroying the bottle). Likewise, humans experience feelings based on interoceptive and exteroceptive information without necessarily categorising their feeling through an emotion concept. For example, a water bottle can afford picking up to move it out of the agent’s line of sight as it is distracting, without this distraction being categorised as annoying or stressful. Moreover, where an agent does not possess the concept of stress or a concept closely linked to that category (perhaps due to their age), they may construct flushed face, dry mouth, and tension in their body as feeling too warm or thirsty,\footnote{Whether HUNGER or THIRST are emotion concepts is still a topic of discussion (Feldman-Barrett 2017).} disregarding their high heart rate in constructing their experience. It is thereby merely argued that the specific concepts of anger, having a crush, and stress are not universal categories, rather being acquired through linguistic labels present in one’s culture, and that possessing and automatically applying these concepts guides one’s perception to some affordances over others.

Note that an agent or organism need not possess the concepts of anger, stress, or having a crush for their attention to be directed towards these or similar affordances. After all, non-human animals who do not possess linguistic labels likely experience feelings of aggression, attraction, or a dry mouth which motivates action – although they are likely to perceive different affordances based on their body, abilities, tendencies, and interpretation of their body and environment (e.g., aggression or pent up energy in a dog may lead them to respond to the affordance of destroying the bottle). Likewise, humans experience feelings based on interoceptive and exteroceptive information without necessarily categorising their feeling through an emotion concept. For example, a water bottle can afford picking up to move it out of the agent’s line of sight as it is distracting, without this distraction being categorised as annoying or stressful. Moreover, where an agent does not possess the concept of stress or a concept closely linked to that category (perhaps due to their age), they may construct flushed face, dry mouth, and tension in their body as feeling too warm or thirsty,\footnote{Note that stress is used as a concept that refers to a subjective experience informed by interoceptive and exteroceptive information and the concept STRESS as it is learned through one’s culture. This is in contrast to how stress is measured in human and non-human animals, where increased cortisol levels and heart rate are taken as the key constitutive elements of a stressed state. For example, where these factors are applied to dogs to assess whether certain environments contain stressors for the dog, increased cortisol and heart rate are taken as elements that positively evaluate that the environment contains stressors (Beerda et al., 1998; Perego et al., 2014). However, those observing the behaviour of these dogs may rather believe them to be afraid, aggressive, or anxious, rather than stressed as they apply the concept to themselves.} disregarding their high heart rate in constructing their experience. It is thereby merely argued that the specific concepts of anger, having a crush, and stress are not universal categories, rather being acquired through linguistic labels present in one’s culture, and that possessing and automatically applying these concepts guides one’s perception to some affordances over others.

Moreover, the application of particular emotion concepts in response to core affect may not always be fitting. This is most famously illustrated by Danziger et al.’s (2011) study where judges deciding on parole right before their lunch break were far more likely to deny parole when compared to decisions at the start of the day or after lunch. While
this particular study may not have taken other potential factors that would result in a similar effect into account (Glöckner and Danzinger 2016), Feldman-Barrett (2017) presents an interpretation of this effect by employing her model of emotion. She argues that these judges constructed the emotion of suspicion or dislike in response to their negatively valenced core affect, caused by hunger, and the situation they were in. While these judges did experience suspicion or dislike on this model, they did so due to factors irrelevant to their goal, i.e., proving a fair trial for people who appear in court. The emotion constructed, then, shapes the behaviour of the agent in fundamental ways, and in ways which this agent may not realise or support.

This element of emotion construction is important as it brings to light that the relation between the agent’s goals and their experienced affective state may not be in the best interest of the agent. Yet if an agent possesses (chronically available) emotion concepts which are more fine-grained, one’s emotion construction may be more fitting to one’s goals. For example, if the judges would possess the concept “hangry”, which has recently become a generally known term for experiencing negative affective states such as anger and irritation because of one’s hunger, these judges may have been able to recognise their bias against cases brought before them right before lunch. For an example that is not based on potentially unreplicable studies, imagine an agent who lacks the HANGRY concept and therefore responds to her partner’s tardiness with anger, rather than slight annoyance or acceptance, as she links her interoceptive information, which was (partly) caused by a calorie deficiency, with the context. As she normally does not care about the tardiness of her partner, her anger leading to a fight would not serve her goals. Even if she does normally mind her partner’s tardiness, an anger-induced fight may not be the optimal method to address this issue.60

In this section I have combined the general action-generative role of affect, inspired by accounts of embodied cognition, with the constructed account of emotion. This led to the conclusion that emotions draw attention to the emotion-relevant affordances and motivate their enaction. In what follows I propose an account of epistemic emotion based on this attention and action guiding account.

60 This will inform the discussion of emotion regulation in the final chapter of this thesis.
4. Constructed Epistemic Emotions

With this definition of emotion in mind, this section focuses on what makes an emotion epistemic. Generally, epistemic emotions are considered to be those emotions which aid us in acquiring epistemic goods (Morton 2009; Scarantino and de Sousa 2021). However, as I will illustrate in what follows, many if not all emotions can aid or motivate the acquisition of knowledge, simply because they direct attention to information that can be accurate and justified when it is acquired through reliable faculty virtues. Merely aiding the knowledge-acquisition process is thereby not sufficient for an emotion to be an epistemic emotion. I then suggest that epistemic emotions are emotions that reflect a POG or NOI and direct attention to, and motivate the enactment of, epistemic affordances.

4.1 Emotion and Knowledge-Acquisition

In this section I note that, if epistemic emotions would be construed as emotions that directly aid knowledge acquisition, the Venn-diagram of emotion categories and epistemic emotions would be a circle. That is to say, for emotions to be epistemic in some way, while also being a discreet category, other epistemic characteristics must be applicable.

As discussed in the first chapter, faculty or reliabilist virtues, such as perception, memory, and introspection, result in knowledge when the exercise of the faculty in question was apt. As discussed in the previous section, perception is shaped by affect, which means that one’s emotional state shapes what one attends to. When angry, one attends to the source of this anger, as well as other angering aspects of the situation, and while happy, one attends to (other) elements of one’s situation that enforce this emotion (Lewis 2005). On both the dynamical and the constructed account, emotions are partly constituted by affect, but emotions further inform the agent’s interpretation of her environment, physical state, and the relation between the two, in addition to these elements informing the agent’s emotional experience itself. As such, the attention-guiding element of affect is thereby more complex when it is part of an emotion, yet it still guides attention to particular aspects of a situation, or motivates further exploration of this situation. Emotions can thereby motivate and guide the application of faculty virtues, as to acquire knowledge of the situation one’s emotion directs attention to.

Note that this is not reflective of the perceptive account of epistemic emotions. There, the emotional states themselves, through their evaluative property, form the basis
of certain beliefs (Brady 2016). Feeling scared can partly constitute your belief that there is something scary or dangerous. However, this does not mean that all discreet emotions are reliable faculties, i.e., epistemic virtues. After all, experiencing an emotion does not indicate reliably enough that the evaluation this emotion brings with it is true (See e.g. Brady 2016).

Introspection on the other hand, another faculty virtue (Sosa 2012), allows agents to form justified beliefs about their current (affective) state. For example, when I feel like I enjoy that there is a cat on my lap, this justifies the belief that I enjoy that there is a cat on my lap. Likewise, when I feel angry in response to someone cutting me off in traffic, my introspection produces the knowledge that I am angry because someone cut me off. Note that introspection can only get you so far; the knowledge acquired refers to one’s mental state and its cause, rather than beliefs one may form in response to this mental state. For example, take the example of someone experiencing jealousy upon seeing her spouse closely interacting with a co-worker. Introspection merely leads to the knowledge that she is experiencing jealousy in response to the interaction between her spouse and the co-worker. While an accurate interpretation of this jealousy would entail a belief such as “I feel uncomfortable when my spouse closely interacts with someone who understands a part of my spouse’s life I do not have access to”, the agent may also interpret her emotion as “my spouse is having an affair with their co-worker”. One’s jealousy may thereby motivate further enquiry to determine which belief is correct, based on the knowledge one’s affective state and introspection already produced – the epistemic function of emotion Brady (2016) argues for.

That seemingly all emotions can aid the acquisition of knowledge through the application of introspection reflects the lack of a coherent category of epistemic emotion. This is further supported as a similar analysis can be applied to the way emotion shapes the faculty virtue of perception. This is the case even when we account for the fact that emotions can potentially lead one’s attention to be drawn to elements of a situation that cause a misinterpretation of this situation. For example, when one experiences sadness, one may perceive the frown and pursed lips on the face of a friend as signs that this friend is sad as well. Yet this facial expression may also be due to the friend being angry, focussed, or stressed. Nevertheless, one does acquire the apt belief that one’s friend is frowning and has pursed lips, i.e., one has acquired knowledge of the friend’s facial expression. Moreover, we can again apply Brady’s suggestion here, where this potential misinterpretation can motivate further enquiry through communicating with this friend.
Where it comes to memory, emotions may initially seem a vitiating factor. After all, anger may lead an agent to only recall negative aspects of an event or object related to the intentional object of her anger, leading to a contextualisation of the memory which might be incorrect. However, akin to the argument presented in the previous paragraph, emotions still prompt one to memorise related occurrences, resulting in beliefs one would not have access to if not for the emotionally induced memories. For example, someone's anger during a fight may make one remember other instances where this person wronged them. Likewise, one's happiness upon hearing a friend is coming to visit may result in apt memories of past enjoyable visits. While these memories may lead to a more or less rosy interpretation of the event or person that induces the emotion, they nevertheless partly constitute knowledge of past events. In other words, emotions make one attend to relevant objects, whether they are percepts or memories, thereby aiding the acquisition of knowledge where one's exercise of perception or memorisation was apt.

In short, emotions often guide, aid, and motivate knowledge-acquisition. Moreover, these emotions can motivate epistemic behaviour beyond the initial application of a faculty virtue, such as the jealous agent attempting to figure out whether her spouse is having an affair. In this sense, all emotions could potentially be epistemic emotions. This means that, when we discuss these examples in a responsibilist framework rather than a reliabilist framework, all emotions can, but need not, motivate intellectually virtuous action. For example, anger can lead one to acquire more information about a topic initiating this anger, or it can lead to the closeminded act of rejecting the information and stopping the discussion. Merely being constitutive of a knowledge-acquisition process or as the motivation behind an epistemic act thereby leads to a category of epistemic emotion that is too broad for it to function as a useful category.

To employ a cohesive account of epistemic emotion that is vested in contemporary philosophical literature on epistemic emotion, and that supports their connection to intellectual trait virtues, I suggest a definition entailing two necessary characteristics: first, an epistemic emotion inherently draws attention to, and motivates the enactment of, epistemic actions. Second, epistemic emotions reflect a POG or NOI, final or not.

4.2 Inherently Epistemic Emotions
In current literature, there appear to be three methods through which one can determine that an emotion is an epistemic emotion. First, assessing whether the emotion is directed towards, or has as its intentional object, an epistemic good one may or may not possess
(e.g., Dokic 2012); second, whether it has an epistemic evaluative property such as truth (Meylan 2014; Arango-Muñoz and Michaelian 2014); and third, whether it motivates epistemic action (e.g., Brady 2013; Candiotto 2020; Morton 2010). The last category tends to be employed when discussing the relevance of epistemic emotions in the context of intellectual trait virtue – the topic of this thesis. Moreover, as discussed in the previous section, emotions inform which affordances appear salient to the agent and often motivate their enactment. I thereby first discuss this method of defining epistemic emotion.

When we focus on the motivational quality of epistemic emotions, I argue that this emotion category can best be defined through which affordances it inherently draws attention to. These affordances refer to a broad array of possible epistemic actions, including acquiring new information, suspending judgment, giving testimony, evaluating evidence, and updating a held belief. When we focus on the motivational quality of epistemic emotions, I argue that this emotion category can best be defined through which affordances it inherently draws attention to. These affordances refer to a broad array of possible epistemic actions, including acquiring new information, suspending judgment, giving testimony, evaluating evidence, and updating a held belief.

That epistemic emotions draw attention to epistemic affordances and motivate their enactment is seems rooted in the analysis of epistemic emotions since the term of coined. Morton (2010), who introduced the term ‘epistemic emotion’, argues that epistemic emotions motivate intellectually virtuous action. Moreover, Candiotto (2010) argues that epistemic emotions may be required for intellectually virtuous action, as they direct attention to possibilities for virtuous action. So, on Candiotto’s account, epistemic emotions direct attention to epistemically virtuous affordances. As argued, epistemically virtuous actions reflect behaviour characteristic of an intellectual virtue, including acquiring, evaluating, and sharing epistemic goods in a variety of ways. However, while epistemic emotions motivate epistemic action, one can experience an epistemic emotion

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61 While there are other existent definitions of epistemic emotion, such accounts where an emotion is epistemic if it is involved in belief acquisition (Arango-Muñoz and Michaelian 2014) or if it has truth as the subject of its evaluative property (Meylan 2014), the idea that epistemic emotions motivate epistemic action is widespread (Brady 2013) and fits with the constructed account of emotion presented in this chapter, as well as other emotion accounts where emotions motivate action.

62 The introduction of the concept and analysis of epistemic emotions thereby creates a rift between previous accounts of, e.g., noetic feelings as a category of epistemic emotion and the novel account where the focus is rather on the motivational element.

63 While I discuss more typical epistemic emotions in what follows, such as surprise and doubt, Candiotto and Morton rather argue for epistemic emotions that are directly connected to intellectual trait virtues, e.g., the emotion of intellectual courage or intellectual generosity. This is inspired by Zagzebski’s (1996) account of epistemic motivation, as she argues that this motivation for specific virtues or virtuous action must have some corresponding, motivating emotional state.

64 Note that I do not argue that epistemic emotions are required for epistemic or even epistemically virtuous action. For example, fear or indignation may motivate looking for more information to support one’s beliefs, and one’s final POG can be reflected by reasons for action.
without having the disposition, skill, or reliability required for the performance of an adroit intellectually virtuous act. Epistemic emotions, then, can be defined as affective states which draw attention to, and motivate the enactment of, epistemic affordances.\textsuperscript{65}

I previously noted that other methods of defining epistemic emotions focus on the evaluative element of an emotion, requiring it to be epistemic in nature (Meylan 2014), or on the intentional object of the emotion, requiring to be directed towards epistemic evaluations (Dokic 2012). The former, according to Meylan (2014), refers to a requirement that, for an emotion to be epistemic, the positive or negative valence constitutive of this emotion ought to entail an evaluation of the information it is directed towards being, respectively, true or false. While experiencing, e.g., interest or curiosity when coming across a particular topic does not entail that this topic as a whole is somehow true or false, one’s emotion does reflect a positive orientation towards true (and justified) information on this topic.\textsuperscript{66} After all, if one is curious about the first words someone uttered on the surface of the moon, one is curious about the words that were actually spoken, i.e., about an accurate representation of what occurred. In other words, the epistemic emotion reflects a positive orientation towards an epistemic good, rather than a positive orientation towards information, no matter its truth value. The latter, requiring the epistemic emotion to be directed towards an epistemic evaluation, may rather be interpreted as an epistemic feeling, or as a noetic feeling: the category that was the origin of, but is now separate from, the contemporary account of epistemic emotion. As such, I argue that epistemic emotions positively or negatively evaluate an epistemic good or ill and thereby reflect a POG or NOI respectively.

In short, while many emotions may lead to epistemic behaviour, I argue that epistemic emotions reflect a POG or NOI and inherently make one attend to, and motivate the response to, epistemic affordances. This account is supported by its applicability to frequently mentioned examples of epistemic emotion, such as doubt, uncertainty, interest, and curiosity, as discussed in the following sections. I also introduce external uncertainty, morbid curiosity and epistemic FOMO as epistemic emotions, as all reflect a POG or NOI and make salient epistemic affordances, motivating their enactment.

\textsuperscript{65} While epistemic emotions do not necessarily motivate epistemically virtuous action, they motivate epistemic action which may be virtuous if it fulfils the requirements put forward in Chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{66} Note that this is not an overly narrow representation of Meylan’s (2014) argument: on her account of epistemic emotion, the emotion must reflect that its intentional object is true, in addition to adhering to her suggested requirements for an affective state to count as an emotion.
5. Doubt
Doubt is often mentioned as an epistemic emotion (Brady 2018; Turri et al. 2021) or epistemic feeling (Meylan 2014; De Sousa 2009). It tends to be directed towards some proposition, where the veridicality or justification thereof is negatively assessed. The epistemic character of this affective state is either attributed due to its possession of an epistemic evaluation, i.e., as it evaluates the truth of some belief, or because it motivates further enquiry to satiate one’s doubt (Brady 2018; de Sousa 2009). Experiencing doubt also seems to inherently motivate the epistemic action of suspending judgement on the belief or testimony that is doubted, even when the doubting agent decides against further inquiry.

Doubt reflects a NOI, as one experiences doubt as a negatively valenced affective state in response to the possible falsehood of a proposition. This emotion may be constructed because of an instrumental or final NOI. For example, where someone doubts that the car salesman is being honest about the value of a car they aim to sell, this doubt does not indicate a general negative orientation towards falsehoods. Rather, the emotion is experienced as the buyer wants to avoid being fooled into paying a higher price. On the other hand, one may experience doubt in response to possibly false or unjustified testimony because one wants to avoid acquiring false beliefs in general, thereby reflecting a final NOI.

6. Uncertainty
Uncertainty has previously been categorised as an epistemic feeling directed towards one’s beliefs (Arango-Muñoz and Michaelian 2014; Bach and Dolen 2012). Similar to doubt, this entails a negative evaluation of the veridicality or justifications of the beliefs one’s uncertainty is directed towards. This affective state, then, motivates the epistemic action of suspending judgement.

However, it seems apparent that one can also experience uncertainty directed towards the future or one’s environment. In this case, it is not the veridicality of some proposition that is up for debate, but it rather entails a sensed inability to predict what will happen in the future, or a conscious gap in one’s knowledge on what is currently
happening in one’s environment. \(^{67}\) I call this latter form of uncertainty *external uncertainty* and the uncertainty directed to a held belief or testimony *internal uncertainty*.

At the start of the COVID19 pandemic, many experienced a sense of external uncertainty as unfamiliar and disruptive lockdown regulations were put in place and it seemed impossible to predict when life would go back to normal. During this time, many aimed to reduce their external uncertainty by looking for more information, causing news consumption to rise significantly (e.g., Anand et al. 2021 – see the following chapter for discussion). This external uncertainty, then, directed attention to corresponding affordances for epistemic action: researching the virus, its effects, and possible government mandates. While the following chapter discusses this behaviour at length, I here merely take note of external uncertainty as an emotion that inherently motivates epistemic action and reflects a NOI.

External uncertainty tends to entail negatively valenced affect directed towards the unknown or, in other words, a conscious experience of not knowing which is negatively evaluated. It thereby directs attention to possibilities for action that may reduce this sensation, motivating epistemic actions aimed at acquiring more information. However, as was often the case at the start of the COVID19 pandemic, information gathering may not reduce one’s uncertainty if the relevant information cannot be acquired. This is similar to an agent who experiences uncertainty about what would change in their life when a supervolcano, such as the volcano underneath Yellowstone, would erupt. As there are no available epistemic affordances that would lead to knowledge on when the volcano would erupt or the exact effect this would have on the agent’s particular life or residence, this uncertainty may not motivate epistemic action as there is no epistemic action that would regulate this sense of insecurity. So, while uncertainty tends to direct attention to affordances whose enaction would reduce this affective state, such as calling a friend one is supposed to meet to reduce uncertainty about when they will arrive, when these affordances are not available, uncertainty should only lead to one epistemic action: suspending judgement on the relevant topic.

Both internal and external uncertainty indicate a NOI. Where it comes to internal uncertainty, one negatively valences the epistemic ill of possessing an unjustified, and thereby possibly false, belief. In the case of external uncertainty, the agent negatively

\(^{67}\) In the latter sense, it may have the same motivation as epistemic curiosity, as discussed in the following section. However, uncertainty seems to be inherently negatively valenced, while curiosity may be pleasurable.
evaluates their ignorance or inability to acquire knowledge with regards to the topic in question, again reflecting a NOI. Whether this NOI indicates a final evaluation in either case depends on the situation. After all, one may disvalue their lack of knowledge merely because this knowledge would aid them in making plans for the future, or they may disvalue this epistemic ill because they finally disvalue the relevant epistemic ill (e.g., being uninformed on a particular topic or lacking information they consider finally valuable.

7. Curiosity
Curiosity is another standard example of an epistemic emotion – unsurprising as it shares its name with an intellectual virtue. Curiosity seems omni-present in both human and non-human animals as the driving force behind exploring one’s environment and seeking out novel stimuli (Berlyne 1954, 1957; Iurino et al. 2018; Kidd and Hayden 2015). This automatic impulse, also known as perceptual curiosity, is contrasted to epistemic curiosity: a desire or drive to acquire knowledge, mainly directed towards gaps in one’s knowledge (Berlyne 1954; Litman and Spielberger 2003). This distinction is also reflected in the definition employed by William James (1899), who describes curiosity as an “impulse towards better cognition”. In children, this impulse is directed towards novel sensations, reflecting perceptual curiosity, while in adults it entails the impulse or desire to better understand epistemically valuable topics.

Perceptual curiosity, given its status as a biologically determined automatic impulse, is not what virtue responsibilists have in mind when discussing curiosity as the epistemic emotion related to the virtue of curiosity. This section, then, first explores epistemic curiosity as the kind of curiosity generally accepted as an epistemic emotion. I connect this emotion to the epistemic emotion of interest, as both states share their name with an intellectual virtue. I then discuss perceptual curiosity in depth, analysing whether this may be an epistemic emotion as well. Finally, I introduce morbid curiosity as a novel epistemic emotion.

7.1 Epistemic Curiosity and Interest
As stated, epistemic curiosity refers to a desire to know, thereby motivating the enactment of epistemic affordances leading to such knowledge. Recall that, following Berlyne’s (1954) distinction, curiosity may be perceptual or epistemic. Additionally, he differentiates diverersive or specific curiosity. Specific epistemic curiosity would entail the desire or
impulse to acquire specific pieces of knowledge: one may be curious about the results of an election, or about how dogs can find their way home after running away. Diversive curiosity, on the other hand, refers to a more general impulse to acquire information or sensations.

Diversive epistemic curiosity has been equated to boredom and the behaviour boredom motivates (Berlyne 1960; Litman and Spielberger 2003), with Loewenstein (1994, 77) even stating that it can be “exemplified by a bored teenager's flipping among television channels”. However, if specific epistemic curiosity entails a desire for specific knowledge, it seems more apt to describe diversive epistemic curiosity in terms of a general desire for knowledge, or feeling like coming to know something. As such, while this general epistemic curiosity\(^{68}\) may be related to boredom, as one may feel like coming to know something to reduce one’s boredom, it cannot be equated to boredom. As such, in contrast to Loewenstein’s bored teenager’s flipping through channels, general epistemic curiosity may rather motivate this teenager to scroll through, and then watch, documentaries on a streaming service.

Note that while one’s general epistemic curiosity may often motivate specific epistemic curiosity, general epistemic curiosity does not refer to a disposition to experience specific epistemic curiosity. After all, it rather refers to an epistemic emotion. This distinction also leads to a difference in epistemic curiosity’s relation to the emotion of interest. I first define this distinction, before discussing these affective states in terms of a POG or NOI.

While epistemic curiosity seems similar to interest, these concepts refer to distinct emotions relating to distinct epistemic virtues (e.g., Baehr 2011; Scarantino and de Sousa, 2021). Pekrun, (2019) conceptualises the emotion of interest as an intrinsic motivation to explore certain topics or objects, and curiosity as an awareness of a gap in one’s knowledge which one is intrinsically motivated to close. As such, Pekrun (2019) argues, instances of curiosity are a subset of instances of interest.\(^{69}\) However, if we follow the specific-general epistemic curiosity distinction, only specific epistemic curiosity could function as a potential category of interest. General epistemic curiosity, after all, is not

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\(^{68}\) As diversive epistemic curiosity has been defined and empirically researched in terms of boredom and the seeking of stimuli in general, I call the attitude towards novel information or knowledge general epistemic curiosity.

\(^{69}\) Note that on the constructed account of emotion this differentiation is only relevant if an agent does not employ these concepts synonymously. However, as the cited paper presents this differentiation in terms of how these emotion concepts tend to be employed, we can assume that this distinction is reflected in common usage.
directed towards a specific subject, distinguishing it from interest. So, while general epistemic curiosity can induce experiences of interest or specific epistemic curiosity, it cannot be equated to either.

Instances of specific epistemic curiosity and interest appear to generally entail a positive evaluation or orientation towards the epistemic goods one’s curiosity or interest directs attention to, reflecting a POG, thereby motivating the epistemic actions that would lead to the acquisition of these goods. Yet note that the process of acquisition or possessing the epistemic goods in question need not be positively valenced, as one can also be curious about, or interested in, topics that fill her with dread. For example, an agent who is interested in the development of trade in the 15th century. While researching this topic, she will quickly find that as trade became more global, the kidnapping and selling of slaves became more prevalent. As such, acting on her interest rather leads to experiencing distress. Moreover, epistemic agents can also be interested in or curious about trade in the 15th century, or may be interested in slavery as a topic, while aware that this topic will induce distress.

Likewise, curiosity can be directed towards epistemic goods that are only valued slightly, yet where the resulting knowledge results in negative rather than positive affect. For example, after buying tickets for a play, someone may be curious as to whether she could have gotten the tickets for a lower price at a later date, which she considers a possibility. This specific epistemic curiosity, which need not be constituted by especially low or highly valenced affect, is satiated once she checks ticket prices closer to the date of the play. If the tickets are indeed cheaper at that time, she will not experience the positive affect often connected with the exercise of this epistemic emotion. After all, her curiosity was relatively neutral, merely checking the current prices as she was procrastinating or had nothing else to do. However, finding out that the tickets are indeed cheaper leads to very negatively valenced affect, a sinking feeling in her chest that she categorises as disappointment or frustration, rather than the satisfaction of acquiring the belief. As such, while curiosity and interest indicate a POG, this orientation need not entail pleasure or other positively valenced affective states, as it may rather entail a negative orientation directed to not knowing (NOI), or one may highly value the contents of a particular, distressing topic, whereby one’s POG can better be explained in terms of duty.

General epistemic curiosity, given its connection to boredom, may appear to lack a final POG or NOI at first glance. After all, rather than positively valancing epistemic goods, the agent rather negatively valences their boredom. However, this can be
compared to the agent experiencing unease in response to her ignorance: while she may believe that she negatively valences her unease which just happens to be directed towards ignorance, the fact that her unease was directed towards ignorance still indicates a final NOI. Likewise, a bored agent may choose a myriad of methods to minimise her boredom, from meeting up with friends to watching a comedy film. Yet where one’s boredom induces general epistemic curiosity, one is motivated to acquire knowledge, rather than performing other actions which would satiate one’s boredom. This agent thereby desires epistemic goods, perhaps finding their acquisition pleasurable or taking them to be more valuable than what can be acquired through other activities, thereby indicating a final POG.

7.2 Perceptual Curiosity
As discussed in the previous section, perceptual curiosity is the driving force behind exploratory behaviour in both human and non-human animals. The broadness of this concept’s application is illustrated by, e.g., play, neophilia, and exploration being considered expressions or categories of perceptual curiosity (Kidd and Hayden 2015). Moreover, the concept has been applied to explain the behaviour of simple organisms such as roundworms, ants, and moths (idem). While perceptual curiosity tends to be applied to non-human animals and infants to explain their behaviour, it can also shape exploratory behaviour in adults.

Instances of perceptual curiosity in adults tend to be induced when the agent is confronted with ambiguous, complex, or novel information (Berlyne 1957, 1958; Collins et al. 2004; Jepma et al. 2012). This can take the form of specific perceptual curiosity, where it is roused by, e.g., blurry photographs, a shadow moving on the wall, or something that looks like a construction of a face in one’s food. Or one’s perceptual curiosity may be diversive, which refers to an affective state motivating general exploratory behaviour, such as turning the light on in a dark room. On these accounts, perceptual curiosity is characterised by negative valence and an increase in arousal which motivates reducing the ambiguity the agent (or organism) is presented with. Moreover, reducing this ambiguity tends to result in positively valenced affect (Berlyne 1954; Jepma et al. 2012). Akin to the expression in other organisms, perceptual curiosity in adults is, in part, explained as an impulse to explore specific ambiguous or novel information in one’s environment, or to explore one’s environment in general.
pertains to what something is like (Iurino et al. 2018). This appears to be an example of specific perceptual curiosity, as it is directed to specific (kinds of) information.

For example, after being warned that a cup of tea is very hot, the person receiving this cup of tea may nevertheless touch the cup. Often, this action can be explained through perceptual curiosity’s motivating quality of exploring one’s environment, where one’s motivation to check the temperature of the cup is in relation to the tea’s drinkability – an affordance the agent intends to respond to. However, the agent may already know that the cup is very hot, that it will take some time before she can drink the tea it contains, and that it would currently be painful to touch the cup. In this case, touching the cup does not lead to acquiring more environmental information, including information relevant for the drinkability affordance. Nevertheless, she may still touch the cup.

This act, then, may be enacted to experience how it feels to touch a very hot cup of tea. It may seem odd for any organism to seek out this kind of negatively valenced information, especially when this information is of little to no use to the subject. Yet due to perceptual curiosity, which motivates acquiring novel information, including phenomenological information, the agent may still respond to this affordance. Likewise, this kind of perceptual curiosity may motivate agents to see a drama film, putting herself in the shoes of the suffering character, as well as skydiving or going to an experimental immersive theatre piece. There are of course other emotions or reasons which may motivate these actions. One may want to understand the position of the main character in a drama film (reflecting epistemic curiosity) or might be interested in experimental theatre in general (reflecting interest). Perceptual curiosity, however, motivates these and similar actions because the information acquired through experience is novel. In other words, perceptual curiosity motivates actions ranging from seeking out cultural experiences to turning on the light in a dark room.

While a higher-than-average disposition to experience perceptual curiosity is connected with higher levels of sensation seeking (Collins et al. 2004), perceptual curiosity and sensation-seeking are distinct motivations. After all, the experience of perceptual curiosity “is aroused by novel stimuli and reduced by continued exposure to these stimuli” (Berlyne, 1954a, p. 180). Sensation-seeking, on the other hand, need not be directed towards novel experiences or information. For example, after skydiving, the agent has satisfied the perceptual curiosity motivating this action. Yet, recalling the rush of adrenaline she experienced while skydiving, she is motivated to repeat this action. The resulting instances of skydiving would thereby no longer be explained by perceptual curiosity.
curiosity, but rather by sensation-seeking. In other words, perceptual curiosity, akin to epistemic curiosity, is satisfied once the information it was directed towards is acquired.

Nevertheless, due to the connection between sensation-seeking and perceptual curiosity, some impulses to acquire novel information may be, in part, motivated by sensation-seeking. This is the case when one’s perceptual curiosity is directed towards affordances that would induce a high level of arousal, such as skydiving or witnessing a violent altercation. It is, in part, due to this connection that I argue that perceptual curiosity would be a valuable emotion concept for epistemic agents to acquire.

Perceptual curiosity may seem like an unlikely candidate for an emotion, let alone an epistemic emotion, as it currently refers to an affective explanation of exploratory behaviour in even very simple organisms. Nevertheless, as perceptual curiosity has been explored in humans, where it is modelled as a negatively valenced affective state with increased arousal which motivates emotion-specific behaviour in relation to (the ambiguity of) the environment (Berlyne 1954; Jepma et al. 2012), it does possess all the ingredients of human emotion, apart from the concept that refers to an emotion category. After all, the term tends to only be employed by academics to refer to the behaviour of both simple and complex organisms, rather than to describe one’s experience. Given perceptual curiosity’s broad application, it seems likely that it does not refer to a concept one would possess without a linguistic label. In other words, if we construct perceptual curiosity as a human emotion, rather than an explanation of exploratory behaviour in many (simple) organisms, the related concept would be abstract and thereby require a linguistic label to be employed as a category by individuals.

Acquiring this emotion concept would be useful for epistemic agents. Due to the close connection between sensation-seeking and perceptual curiosity, episodes of perceptual curiosity may direct attention to especially arousing possibilities for epistemic action, which may be potentially harmful. This may be especially the case for diversive perceptual curiosity, often connected to the sense of boredom as an experienced lack of stimuli that motivates seeking out the stimulus one lacks. This, then, may result in either specific perceptual curiosity directed to novel, potentially high-arousal states, or sensation-seeking. If someone consciously recognises that she experiences perceptual

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71 Note that this still need not entail a fingerprint view of emotion categories. The affective change in terms of valence and arousal indicates that the affective state possesses the ingredients of emotion, rather than a necessity to define perceptual curiosity in terms of a determined level of arousal or valence.
curiosity, however, she may consider whether she endorses the actions it motivates and whether they are worth the risk.

While perceptual curiosity may be a useful emotion concept to have, it is not an epistemic emotion on the account proposed in this chapter, as perceptual curiosity need not indicate a POG or NOI. After all, when perceptual curiosity experienced as an epistemic motivation directed towards specific pieces of information one currently lacks, even when this entails the sensation of a hot cup or wanting to know what is depicted in a photograph, one’s perceptual curiosity would be reconstructed as epistemic curiosity. As such, perceptual curiosity alone does not indicate a POG or NOI; it needs to be reconceptualised as epistemic curiosity to do so.

7.3 Morbid Curiosity

Morbid curiosity entails a curiosity directed towards morbid topics and, where it is a disposition, seeking out opportunities to acquire knowledge or perceptive beliefs on such topics or events (Oosterwijk 2017; Scrivner 2021). As an emotion, it draws attention to stimuli that portray situations that are morbid in nature, such as instances of death, disaster, or violence, causing action readiness to respond to the relevant epistemic affordances. These affordances may entail reflecting on the topic, or continuing to attend to the subject that induced the affective state to accumulate more information. Given the popularity of documentaries on serial killers and the phenomenon of people slowing down to see the consequences of a car accident, the emotion of morbid curiosity appears to be ubiquitous.

Note that morbid curiosity does not entail a motivation behind epistemic activities that merely happen to be directed at morbid topics. Rather, it refers to being curious about a topic or information because of its morbid nature. Recall the example of the agent interested in trading developments in the 15th century. She does not display morbid curiosity, as she was simply interested in a topic that turned out to entail morbid information. Likewise, the agent interested in the transatlantic slave trade, while experiencing this topic as severely distressing, would not display morbid curiosity if she researches this topic due to reasons such as its historical or contemporary significance. She may attend to the violence and other gruesome acts that slaves had to endure, yet she does so because she wants to understand the topic, rather than because the gruesome and violent acts spark her interest. Of course, slavery is significant not only because of its continual effect on the lives of people of colour, but also because of the
extreme violence that it accompanied. As such, one may be curious about slavery because of this violence, but again, unless one is morbidly curious, the epistemic curiosity is directed towards acquiring knowledge on the topic as a whole rather than the gruesomeness of the information.

Morbid curiosity is a category of curiosity *simpliciter*, rather than a subcategory of epistemic or perceptual curiosity, as its instances cannot be captured by either category alone. After all, some instances of morbid curiosity reflect perceptual curiosity, where the situation induces morbid curiosity as it offers novel information on one’s direct environment that draws attention due to the (potential) gruesomeness of this information. This can be illustrated by being affectively drawn to attend to a picture as it appears to display a dead body (e.g., due to an accompanying headline or title, or where the grainy quality or limited size of the photo requires the agent to attend to the picture further to establish that her immediate impression that it displays death or violence was correct) or slowing down when driving past a car crash. Yet it also entails instances of epistemic curiosity, such as watching a documentary on how a post-mortem is performed when murder is the suspected cause of death. If the agent watches this documentary as she is curious about how suspected murder affects the post-mortem, then this is an instance of epistemic curiosity. If this epistemic possibility stood out to the agent because it contains morbid information, it is an instance of both epistemic and morbid curiosity.

Morbid curiosity also contains instances of curiosity that are less easily categorised into perceptual or epistemic curiosity. For example, upon reading the headline ‘Fifty more women come forward as victims of corrective rape’, an agent may read the article despite having read similar articles before. She knows what corrective rape entails, that it is still quite common, and that this article will do little to stop it from happening. This, then, cannot be categorised as purely perceptual curiosity, as the agent already possesses the phenomenological knowledge of what it is like to read such an article and rather appears to be curious about information that would close a gap in her knowledge: the specifics of the cases presented in the article. Yet it can also not be categorised as purely epistemic curiosity, as she has more than enough background knowledge to predict the information presented in the article. Yet the agent remains curious due to the morbid quality of these specifics.\(^{72}\) As such, morbid curiosity appears

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\(^{72}\) Note that this agent may also read this article out of a perceived feeling of duty: as people were harmed, she may deem it her duty to know who was harmed and in what way.
to combine the sensation-seeking element of perceptual curiosity with the epistemic motivation of specific epistemic curiosity.

So, while instances of morbid curiosity can be interpreted as motivated by epistemic thrill seeking, this ought to be distinguished from non-epistemic thrill-seeking behaviour. For example, a morbidly curious agent may choose to watch a documentary about serial killers rather than a horror film with similar contents as she wants to acquire knowledge on this morbid topic, rather than only experience the related sensations. So, while the thrill, or other high arousal states that often accompany enacting morbid curiosity, may be part of the process, the desire to know must be the central motivation. As such, looking up pictures of homicide victims merely to feel, e.g., disgusted or scared, rather than because one wants to know what a homicide victim may look like, would not be morbidly curious, but would rather entail non-epistemic thrill-seeking.

I argue that morbid curiosity is an epistemic emotion as it is an emotion that directs attention to, and motivates the enaction of, epistemic affordances and reflects a POG. Morbid curiosity is constituted by the ingredients of emotions put forward on the constructed account: core affect contextualised by exteroceptive information and a concept generally interpreted as an emotion category. It is epistemic as it inherently directs attention to possibilities for epistemic action and motivates their enaction, such as information gathering or reflecting on beliefs about certain morbid topics (e.g., what homicide victims look like, the effects of car accidents, or what people eat while battling anorexia). Moreover, similar to epistemic curiosity, morbid curiosity reflects a POG as it inherently motivates acquiring new beliefs as they appear worthwhile or exciting to the agent. Additionally, the information acquired through morbid curiosity does not appear to be inherently trivial. After all, it tends to centre topics like death, violence, and suffering which certainly seem less trivial than grass-counting or celebrity trivia. A morbidly curious agent may start to collect trivia on certain serial killers as they start treating them like celebrities, yet the same can be said about epistemically curious agents who read the autobiography of Salvador Dali to better understand his paintings, yet who thereby become interested in how he spent his time in Cadaqués. While curiosity, including morbid curiosity, may lead one to research trivial topics, the initial emotion nevertheless indicates a potentially final POG.

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73 This is because, as a trait or disposition, morbid curiosity is strongly related to thrill-seeking behaviour (Scrivner 2021).
In short, morbid curiosity is a category of curiosity *simpliciter* which motivates epistemic actions relating to some morbid topic or event. Moreover, it reflects a POG, which can be final. After all, the agent’s morbid curiosity is directed towards the acquisition of epistemic goods, rather than fiction (i.e., one is not morbidly curious if the curiosity is directed towards a slasher film), and the morbid quality of the acquired knowledge can be an extrinsic yet non-instrumental reason for the agent’s positive evaluation of this knowledge. After all, we can imagine an agent interested in microbiological organisms. She may have acquired this interest because her mother used to tell her about algae and bacteria, or because she has enjoyed seeing things that cannot be seen by the naked eye for as long as she can remember. Moreover, her curiosity may be enforced by working in an environment where others enjoy the same topic. Yet neither the reason for her specific interest, nor her interest being specific, counteracts her experiencing the relevant epistemic emotion that reflects a final POG. Likewise, then, a curiosity in morbid topics is not excluded from reflecting a final POG only because it directs attention to topics within a specific category (i.e., death, violence, or suffering) or because it could be partly motivated by the human drive to seek out novel stimuli that cause a state of high arousal. Instances of morbid curiosity can therefore be constitutive of an intellectually virtuous motivation.

8. Epistemic FOMO

In this section I introduce a novel epistemic emotion, epistemic FOMO, as an epistemic equivalent of the ubiquitous emotional experience of FOMO: a fear of missing out. I first discuss FOMO *simpliciter*, formulating the necessary conditions for its experience, i.e., that it refers to a negatively valenced affective state that directs attention towards potentially exciting or important experiences within one’s social circle or peer group. These elements are then employed to construct epistemic FOMO as a negatively valenced affective state which is directed towards acquirable epistemic goods which are, or will be, plausibly acquired by members of one’s social group.

8.1 FOMO

FOMO, or the fear of missing out, has become a popular term to describe a negatively valenced affective state that accompanies an awareness or expectation of some possibly exciting event or experience that is attended or experienced by members of one’s social circle. It is characterised by a fear or anxiety of missing these otherwise shared events or
experiences. Due to its prevalence, negative affective character, and detrimental effect on one’s mental health, FOMO has become an increasingly researched topic in psychology. There the concept is analysed in terms of its characteristics (Elhai et al. 2021; Metz 2019; Przybylski et al. 2013), its relation to social media (Alt 2015; Beyens et al. 2016; Milyavskaya et al. 2018; Oberst et al. 2017; Przybylski et al. 2013), its effects on mental health, specifically focussing on the link between experiencing FOMO and prolonged episodes of anxiety (Elhai et al. 2016; Milyavskaya et al. 2018; Oberst et al. 2017), and the tendency of this emotion to become part of a disposition (Elhai et al. 2021; Dogan 2019; Milyavskaya et al. 2018). In what follows I first address FOMO’s link with social media, before discussing the requirements for an affective state to be an instance of FOMO.

On most psychological accounts, FOMO is researched in the context of social media use. While examples of situations that accompany FOMO tend to be in-person events such as parties, they can also be directed towards online experiences or social contact. This online and offline dichotomy also creates a dichotomy in FOMO’s relation to social media use: for in-person events, social media alerts the user of social occasions, or displays pictures or descriptions of events one could be attending, thereby inducing FOMO, while potential online experiences are attended to on social media because of FOMO (Elhai et al. 2016; Przybylski et al. 2013). In either case, the social network one has on social media influences one’s experience of FOMO.

FOMO is conceptualised as inherently social, as is directed towards experiences that appear exciting or important in one’s social group or are collectively experienced with one’s peers (Milyavskaya et al. 2018; Oberst et al. 2017; Przybylski et al. 2013). So, if one could experience what it is like to see a puffer fish, this possibility is unlikely to induce FOMO when this is not an especially important experience within one’s social group (e.g., when one is not part of a group of ichthyologists) and when it does not involve a communal experience (e.g., when it is not part of a social outing to an aquarium).

Moreover, the experience of FOMO indicates a choice between two or more options, where the agent’s attention is drawn to an experience one fears missing out on. For example, someone can experience FOMO directed at an event or experience which she previously excluded in order to, e.g., work, sleep, or attend another party instead. Note that the chosen option is not perceived as less worthwhile than the option that induces FOMO; one does not need to believe that one made, or is making, the wrong choice. Yet while enacting the chosen option, even when the agent endorses the choice
she made, her attention is still drawn to the other experience (Metz 2019; Milyavskaya et al. 2018).

Note that FOMO is only experienced because its intentional object is or was accessible: the agent is only able to choose to, e.g., work instead of going to a party because it would be possible to attend the party. If one wants to experience zero gravity or what it is like to be a soldier in 100 BC, this desire intuitively does not amount to a fear of missing out. This is explained by the social and accessibility requirements discussed as, while others have had these experiences, they are not currently available to the agent nor her peers. Rather, these affective states entail a desire for phenomenological information which cannot be acquired, thereby causing the experience of negative affect. FOMO, in contrast, is directed towards theoretically available experiences, even when they are incompatible with some enacted or endorsed decision.

In relation to this characteristic, FOMO also has a motivational component as it motivates the agent to respond to the possibility their FOMO directs attention to, whether this entails attending an event or checking social media (Alt 2015; Milyavskaya et al. 2018). Even when an agent has chosen to get a good night sleep rather than to attend a party, she may experience FOMO while getting ready for bed, motivating her to get dressed and attend the party after all. Or, when she decides to enact the option she deems more prudent, i.e., going to bed, FOMO continues to directs her attention to the other option. This attention-guiding quality continues even when the hurdles to attend the party, such as being tired or the party’s remote location, give her good reason to endorse her chosen action. As such, FOMO either motivates one to respond to the possibility it is directed towards, or entails a self-sustaining negatively valenced awareness of potentially missing out.

Lastly, FOMO need not always be directed towards positive experiences. After all, some exciting or memorable experiences may be negative, such as witnessing a fight or waking up amongst friends with a hangover. This may be, in part, as one can fear missing out on novel ‘methods of discourse (e.g. in jokes)’ (Przybylski et al. 2013: 1843). If someone misses out on a memorable experience shared amongst her peers, this may affect future conversations with these peers, e.g., as she would be unable to understand certain references. Moreover, this agent may be afraid of missing out on exciting social experiences which would make for a good story to collectively reminisce over, such as spending an evening in detention or having an inebriated friend be sick on her shoes. So, even with such negative experiences in mind, one may still experience FOMO.
In short, FOMO is a negatively valenced affective state which directs attention to possibly exciting or important social or socially informed experiences which one could, theoretically, take part in. This affective state motivates the agent to take part in these experiences, or, when deciding to enact another option, continues to direct attention to the potential importance or excitement of them. FOMO thereby has a negative effect on mental health, as its self-sustaining attention guidance towards what one may be missing out on is related to prolonged experiences of anxiety – an effect mentioned in the introduction of this section. The following section employs these characteristics to construct a possibly equally ubiquitous emotion: epistemic FOMO.

8.2 Epistemic FOMO

In this section I introduce epistemic FOMO as a novel epistemic emotion, referring to an epistemic counterpart of FOMO simpliciter. As such, it mirrors the account of FOMO discussed in the previous section, encompassing negative affect, being socially informed, and motivating action in response to the object one is afraid of missing out on. However, while FOMO simpliciter entails a fear of missing out on experiential goods, epistemic FOMO entails a fear of missing out on epistemic goods. The resulting concept reflects the account of epistemic emotion presented in the first section: epistemic FOMO directs attention to, and motivates the enactment of, possibilities for epistemic action, directed towards epistemic goods that have plausibly been acquired and deemed important by members of one’s social circle or peer group, and reflects a negative orientation towards lacking these epistemic goods (or a positive orientation towards acquiring them).

As we saw in the previous section, FOMO is directed towards experiential goods that must be social in character or must be valued and plausibly experienced by one’s social group. When we apply this to epistemic FOMO, the epistemic goods in question must be inherently social, such as a collective construction of group knowledge, or deemed important and plausibly acquired by one’s social group. This means that, if one’s social group is news savvy, an agent experiencing epistemic FOMO will be afraid to miss out on knowledge about current events, thereby being motivated to read a broad array of news articles daily. Yet the opposite is true as well: if one’s peers or social circle are not

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74 The only other account of epistemic FOMO in current literature will be discussed later in this section.
75 As it is outside of the scope of this thesis, I will not give an analysis of group knowledge.
interested in the news whatsoever, then one is unlikely to experience epistemic FOMO directed towards knowledge of current events.

Similar to FOMO, epistemic FOMO is connected to social media in two ways. First, epistemic FOMO makes one afraid to miss out on some knowledge potentially shared on social media, which motivates checking social media to reduce this experience of negative affect. Second, epistemic FOMO can result from engaging with social media, where articles or references are shared that contain information possibly acquired by the agent’s peers. In both cases, epistemic FOMO motivates one to acquire the relevant information, an act that may be in conflict with other, more enjoyable or prudent options, such as going to sleep or working.

Note that this account of epistemic FOMO is distinct from the only other account of epistemic FOMO in the current philosophical literature. In a book review exploring the reasons behind believing conspiracy theories, Fraser’s (2020) suggests that epistemic FOMO may be a relevant factor. She describes epistemic FOMO as a fear of missing out on true beliefs; a disposition or rational stance to acquire true beliefs, disregarding the potentiality of acquiring false beliefs as well. As such, Fraser argues, epistemic FOMO may lead one to accept seemingly outlandish conspiracy theories in order to avoid missing out on acquiring the true beliefs that may seem equally likely.

As Fraser’s (2020) account refers to a specific cognitive stance – one that values acquiring true beliefs over avoiding false ones – without the social contextualisation that accompanies FOMO, it is distinct from the epistemic emotion introduced in this chapter. Also note that epistemic FOMO does not inherently lead one to accept the same beliefs as members of one’s social circle, as it rather motivates accessing the information plausibly consumed by one’s peers – information that one need not accept as veridical. Even when reading an article shared by a friend who explicitly states that she endorses the information, the agent’s background knowledge or further research can lead her to reject the information as true or justified.

So, as epistemic FOMO motivates one to consume shared or referenced information, on top of acquiring possibly exciting or important information one’s social group may possess, the link between experiencing epistemic FOMO and believing conspiracy theories is not direct. Nevertheless, acquiring information based on what one’s social group is expected to consume could still make one more susceptible to conspiracy theories if one’s social circle is interested in such theories. After all, one’s peers may reference articles supporting these theories in a convincing way, or may only
consume news from sources sharing partisan and unsubstantiated reporting. Epistemic FOMO can thereby motivate one to consume this information which could, over time, lead to conspiracy thinking. This potential effect, as well as epistemic FOMO’s connection to epistemic bubbles, will be discussed in Chapter 9.

Epistemic FOMO reflects a negative orientation to lacking potentially important or exciting epistemic goods plausibly acquired by one’s peers or social circle. This NOI can be purely instrumental. After all, one of the reasons for experiencing FOMO simpliciter is a fear of missing out on (novel) methods of discourse. Similarly, epistemic FOMO may be motivated by a fear of not being able to have a discussion or informed conversation with members of one’s social circle. Yet it can reflect a final POG or NOI as well: similar to ‘interest’ standing in an extrinsic but non-instrumental value relation to an epistemic good, the epistemic good being valued by one’s peers can also add to its final value.

9. Conclusion
I have argued that both epistemic emotions and reasons that motivate the acquisition, assessment, or sharing of valuable epistemic goods can be constitutive of an intellectually virtuous motivation. Even when one’s reasons behind epistemic action appear instrumental, one can nevertheless possess a final POG if these reasons reflect that one finally values practical wisdom. I argued that epistemic emotions can reflect an intellectually virtuous motivation when they reflect a final POG or NOI. This allows agents who do not have epistemic access to their possession of a final POG or NOI to perform adroit intellectually virtuous acts when they dispositionally experience affective states that reflect such a final POG or NOI. This makes the motivation required for intellectual virtue more attainable for the everyday agent.

This chapter is the final piece of the framework I propose. From this point forward, I apply this framework to our epistemic engagement with the contemporary sociotechnical environment. This will allow us to assess the virtuousness of the epistemic emotions, values, and behaviours induced, enforced, or used by online platforms that aim to capture and retain our attention. In the following chapter, I present an outline of this epistemic sociotechnical environment, followed by a discussion of epistemic habits and dispositions that may undermine the accuracy condition of intellectual virtue.
1. Introduction
In the first half of this thesis, I presented an account of apt intellectually virtuous action, based on Sosa’s (2007, 2017) AAA structure of competence. First, an act must be Adroit. This entails that an act must be the product of an exercise of intellectual virtue, meaning that it must result from an acquired, epistemically motivated, admirable, reliable, and stable disposition to perform the behaviour characteristic of the relevant virtue. Second, the act must be accurate by being successfully virtuous, reflected by the act being admirable. Third, the act must be apt, meaning that it must be admirable because it was an exercise of intellectual virtue. I argued that an apt act of intellectual virtue is a wise act, making it partly constitutive of wisdom. In this introduction I set out the field upon which this account of apt intellectually virtuous action will be applied. I then introduce the concept of doombehaviour: a category of epistemic behaviour constituted by the increasingly well-known concepts of doomscrolling and doomsurfing, as well as doomchecking – a novel term to describe the frequent checking of social and traditional media websites for distressing information.

1.1 The Attention Economy
As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, our current environment is loaded with endless streams of information we can attend to. What’s more, the platforms carrying this information are fighting for our attention: most platforms we employ online have been designed with the goal of profitability in mind, where this is accomplished through drawing and keeping our attention, leading to a new economy of attention (e.g., Franck 2020; Williams 2018). For example, by designing the technology or platform in a way that causes affective changes in the user, the technology or platform aims to induce frequent or long-lasting periods where the user’s attention is captured (e.g., Ash 2012; Stiegler 2010).

Recall the discussion of affordances from Chapter 6. There, I noted that an affordance can be technically available to the agent without being inviting (e.g., a glass
of water affords drinking even when the agent is not thirsty). Another way of putting this
inviting quality of an affordance, is that it solicits a response (e.g., Bruineberg et al. 2018;
van Dijk and Rietveld 2017). For many platforms that aim to capture the agent’s attention,
the goal is thereby to make the affordance (e.g., the possibility of clicking, reading,
commenting, or performing other forms of engagement) into a solicitation, motivating
users pick this platform, article, or other information-bearing piece of media over the
myriad of others available.

Many platforms incorporate elements that will captivate our attention as they affect
us in some way that is difficult to ignore, whether this is on the platform itself or as a means
to draw users to this platform to begin with. News websites that are financed through
advertisements, for example, may present sensationalised headlines, shocking or
enticing pictures, or advertisements in the form of clickbait which, through their affective
quality, draw the attention of the user to the image or text which affords, or solicits,
clicking. Moreover, through such attention-grabbing images or text, the articles can
generate social-media engagement, soliciting people who do not (regularly) visit this news
(or special interest) platform to do so by clicking on an article that seems enticing or
important given the attention it receives on social media. Something similar occurs on
social media platforms such as Twitter (or “X”) and TikTok, where posts that see a lot of
engagement from others with a similar user profile as the agent, are often presented first.
Moreover, as both platforms favour shorter content, the cost of engaging with individual
posts appears low to the user. Yet something similar can be said of content presented on
platforms that present information that would be time-consuming to acquire. After all,
even when clicking on a long and perhaps complicated think piece, the user is aware that
she can simply stop reading. In other words, the user can simply ‘leave’ a digital space
when her attention wavers.

When attention does waver, however, these platforms can employ several
strategies to direct a user’s attention to other content on their platform, aiming to prevent
the user from leaving altogether. These strategies include providing immediately visible
related content suggestions and personalised recommendations, showcasing content
that captured the attention of other users, and implementing features like infinite scrolling
and autoplay. By making it convenient, enticing, and rewarding for users to explore
further, platforms aim to keep users within their digital realm and discourage them from
leaving to seek content elsewhere.
Yet platforms do not merely present us with objects that draw and retain our attention once we come across this content. They also aim to maximise their received attention by motivating the user to return by, e.g., sending notifications to the user of a received message, a friend request, a breaking news update, or a new video release. Both social and traditional media often apply gamification methods to establish habits in their users (e.g., Deterding et al. 2011; Schüll 2012). Moreover, such platforms gave rise to desires that are relatively novel, while drawing on existent values such as being informed, entertained, or social (e.g., Stiegler, 2010). One example is the normalisation of the ability to be informed on current events across the globe as they happen, which can turn into more fine-grained values. This can be reflected in the experience of epistemic FOMO, discussed in Chapter 6 and 9. While the epistemic value of being informed precedes the time of the internet, or plausibly even the written word, our current sociotechnical environment has added an urgency to this value: needing to be informed on events as they happen, or being informed about the goings on or interests of one’s social circle right away. After all, due to the continuous streams of information available to the agent, the agent is aware that her peers also have access to this information. As one is afraid to miss out on the knowledge that has been plausibly acquired by one’s peers, then, one’s epistemic FOMO can motivate one to visit platforms one’s peers may visit to consume the presented information, aiming to acquire the epistemic position plausibly possessed by one’s peers. In short, the attention economy has led platforms to be designed to capture our attention. Some of the consequences of this development are outlined in this chapter.

1.2 Doombehaviour and Unpleasurable Habits
In this chapter, I discuss a relatively novel category of epistemic behaviour that has become ubiquitous in our contemporary socio-technical environment: doombehaviour, entailing frequent or long-lasting engagements with distressing information on current events. This behaviour is notably linked to the epistemic emotions of external uncertainty and epistemic FOMO discussed in the previous chapter. While doombehaviour may result in the acquisition of epistemic goods which can be deemed important, both on the orthodox account due to CCCR and on the wisdom account given the topics, it is also related to increased anxiety and depression in the actors performing this behaviour. The model of apt intellectually virtuous behaviour proposed in this thesis can incorporate these
prudential harms to assess when the different forms of doombehaviour can indeed be apt, and when they fail to be.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, ‘doomscrolling’ and ‘doomsurfing’ became frequently employed terms to describe the increasingly prevalent practise of frequent or immersive online information acquisition related to distressing current events, often inducing a sense of doom. The uncertainty and insecurity characterising this time led to a spike of online news consumption, as people looked for updates on lockdown regulations, the spread of the virus, and its possible cause, on top of acquiring previously unfamiliar concepts such as ‘r-value’ and ‘mRNA vaccine’. (Anand et al., 2022; Price et al., 2022). Over time, other distressing topics, such as police brutality directed at people of colour and extreme weather events related to the climate crisis, became part of this continual consumption of negative news. This increase in news consumption mainly occurred on traditional and social media platforms, which offer a seemingly never-ending stream of distressing information (Price et al., 2022).

As this behaviour became increasingly prevalent and normalised, its negative effects on the mood and mental health of those engaging in the practise became evident (Mannell and Meese, 2022; Price et al., 2022; Ytre-Arne and Moe, 2021). Multiple media outlets and even government entities have thereby advised to limit doomscrolling and doomsurfing (Garcia-Navarro, 2020; Mannell and Meese, 2022; Roose, 2020), problematic news consumption (McLaughlin et al., 2022), or reduce news consumption in general (Head to Health, 2020; World Health Organisation, 2020; Mannell and Meese, 2022). While the relevant behaviour has thereby amassed academic and media attention, the topic has not seen any philosophical engagement. This is especially surprising as doomsurfing and doomscrolling refer to ubiquitous and potentially harmful online epistemic behaviours, making it a fruitful topic for philosophers of well-being, epistemologists, and philosophers of technology. Moreover, as I aim to show in this chapter, a philosophical analysis of this behaviour allows us to provide more fine-grained advice than limiting news consumption altogether, incorporating the potential epistemic value of the behaviour and the potential goals of those who enact it, rather than merely focussing on its prudential costs.  

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76 The term ‘doomscrolling’ was already in use by 2018 (Garcia-Navarro 2020).
77 The prudential costs here reflect the negative effects on the agent’s well-being, where pluralist accounts of well-being that include epistemic value are bracketed.
The words ‘doomscrolling’ and ‘doomsurfing’ have been described as distinct in terms of platform, physical activity, and level of passivity (e.g. Anand et al., 2022; Ytre-Arne and Moe, 2021). I argue that if we accept these differences, the respective concepts refer to distinct epistemic behaviours that differ in epistemic value. Doomscrolling, as I discuss in Section 2.1, refers to passively scrolling on a social media platform, attending to negatively valenced information. Doomsurfing, discussed in Section 2.2, rather entails goal-directed deep-dives into negatively valenced topics. In Section 2.3 I introduce the term doomchecking, referring to frequently opening trusted news sources to check specific facts – another practise that is increasingly ubiquitous since the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, in Section 2.4 I argue that these forms of doombehaviour are ubiquitous due to two elements. First, our current sociotechnical environment does not merely provide the necessary platforms for doombehaviour to occur; it actively promotes its enactment. Second, as all doombehaviour is partly constituted by an affective feedback loop, where negatively valenced affective states direct attention to distressing information, which in turn results in further negative affect, doomscrolling, doomchecking, and doomsurfing can be self-sustaining practises, or can motivate one to perform behaviour reflective of a different category of doombehaviour.

From Section 3, doomscrolling, doomsurfing, and doomchecking are analysed in terms of their instrumental epistemic value, i.e., their role in acquiring epistemic goods such as true belief, knowledge, and understanding, to analyse whether these behaviours are advisable from an epistemic perspective. While I argue that all doombehaviour is directed towards the acquisition of non-trivial beliefs, I note that doomscrolling is unlikely to lead to knowledge as its platforms are notorious for presenting sophisticated disinformation and misinformation. Doomchecking and doomsurfing, on the other hand, appear to be epistemically worthwhile.

Section 4 places this analysis within the context of intellectual virtue. I argue that if we were to merely focus on the instrumental epistemic value of doombehaviour, we lack the tools to incorporate the mental health effects in the assessment of this behaviour. Focussing on wisdom thereby allows us to delineate when doombehaviour can or cannot be aptly intellectually virtuous, given these prudential concerns. Finally, Section 5 further contextualises potentially maladaptive epistemic habits within the attention economy arguing that, under certain conditions, these habits can be considered epistemically self-indulgent without a necessary link to depression or anxiety.
2. The Categories of Doombehaviour

This section presents an interdisciplinary analysis of the existent concepts of doomscrolling and doomsurfing. It then introduces doomchecking as a category of doombehaviour which, while previously categorised as doomsurfing, differs from this practise in significant ways. Finally, I discuss the causal interactions between these three categories of doombehaviour, as well as how our current epistemic environment gives rise to doombehaviour as a whole.

2.1 Doomscrolling

The term ‘doomscrolling’ was already in use before the pandemic, referring to the immersive practise of scrolling through social media, attending to information that caused a sense of impending doom (García-Navarro, 2020). Subsequent accounts further compare doomscrolling to passive social-media engagement: users mindlessly scrolling through their feed, where this activity is enforced by the design of the platform rather than by the user’s volition (e.g., Sharma et al., 2022). This design, which includes notifications, a tailored feed, and (almost) always presenting the user with new information, also enforces habitually opening the relevant platform without conscious motivation to do so. Doomscrollers, then, often automatically open a news-heavy social media app or website and, due to the immersive quality of the practise, tend to stay on this platform for a long time, often without intending to do so (Sharma et al., 2022). However, note that doomscrolling is distinct from other passive social media use; automatically opening or scrolling through social media feeds need not be related to consuming negatively valenced information on current events, where this is a requirement for doomscrolling.

The doomsroller’s attention is drawn to negatively valenced or shocking information, which is taken in without active engagement (Sharma et al., 2022). While social media users’ attention tends to be drawn to negatively valenced information in general, the initial uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other negatively valenced affective states caused by consuming distressing news (through doomscrolling or other methods), intensifies this effect (Price et al., 2022). Moreover, the negative affective state caused by doomscrolling can motivate further doomscrolling as the agent attempts to ‘up-regulate their mood’ through further engagement with the social media platform (Anand et al., 2022, p. 2). Yet even without such intended up-regulation, the platforms employed for doomscrolling are designed to grab and keep the agent’s attention for prolonged periods of time, making one instance of doomscrolling last longer.
than initially intended (e.g., Williams, 2018). This makes doomscrolling a vicious cycle of negative information gathering, which helps explain the longevity and prevalence of doomscrolling sessions. It also illustrates the low level of agency that tends to characterise the practise which, as I argue in Section 3.1, is relevant for its minimal epistemic value.

2.2 Doomsurfing

Unlike ‘doomscrolling’, ‘doomsurfing’ was specifically coined to describe the epistemic behaviour prevalent at the start of the pandemic, where a sense of uncertainty led many to surf the web in an effort to understand what was happening and why. Similar to doomscrolling, then, doomsurfing is motivated by negative affect which, due to the content consumed, is usually only amplified by the practise. Unlike doomscrolling, however, doomsurfing is described as goal-oriented, with agents seeking information on a particular topic to try and make sense of it (Anand et al., 2022).

Rather than being limited to newly uncovered information, doomsurfing can involve learning about the history or context of a distressing topic, such as chemical weapons, racism, or pandemics, to understand the relevant timely subject or development. Likewise, it can entail attempts to understand complex scientific terms, exemplified by attempts to understand the definition and importance of a disease’s ‘r-value’ – a term that was relatively unknown by laypeople before the pandemic yet now seems in common use.

The topics one doomsurfs about include, e.g., Russian invasion of Ukraine, the economy and its effects, and climate change. As these topics are complex and continually in flux, one always seems to be able to acquire more relevant information. This, in part, explains the immersive characteristic of doomsurfing: imagine an agent who may simply want to understand why energy prices are going up. This topic is complex, with multiple causes that are widely reported on, most of which being distressing and inviting of further research. Hours later, then, the doomsurfing agent can still be reading about the record profits shareholders of major energy companies received, or the prevalence of food bank shortages. This quality caused doomsurfing to be linked to another popular concept describing similar online behaviour: falling into a rabbit hole (e.g., Gilbertson, 2020), referring to long-lasting, immersive, and difficult to stop deep-dives into a particular topic (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Doomsurfing can thereby be defined as prolonged episodes of immersed online research with the aim of acquiring understanding or to broaden one’s knowledge of a timely and distressing topic or event.
2.3. Doomchecking

At the start of the pandemic, many started to frequently check for updates on the spread of COVID-19 and lockdown regulations. This was soon followed by tracking the death toll of COVID-19, extreme weather events (Anand et al., 2022), and developments of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. I categorise this frequent checking for updates on specific facts related to timely topics as doomchecking. In what follows I discuss three differences between doomchecking and other doombehaviour: their temporal extension, immersive quality, and epistemic parameters.

First, doomchecking refers to short-lived instances of information acquisition, in contrast to the prolonged sessions of social media engagement or the time-consuming deep-dives characterising doomscrolling and doomsurfing respectively. It would, after all, be odd to identify reading one social media post as doomscrolling; there would be very little scrolling involved. Likewise, doomsurfing implies surfing across pages or platforms to consume the relevant distressing content. Doomchecking, on the other hand, merely entails checking a platform for potential updates on a specific fact or piece of information. As such, compared to doomscrolling and doomsurfing, an instance of doomchecking is relatively brief.

What may be considered a prolonged session of doomchecking would rather refer to multiple instances of doomchecking.78 For example, checking whether Russia has employed chemical weapons can be followed by checking the current r-value of COVID-19, which may in turn be followed by checking whether the drought in Italy has subsided. These examples describe three distinct epistemic actions related to three distinct topics, i.e., three instances of doomchecking. Doomchecking, then, is less temporally extended than doomscrolling and doomsurfing.

Second, this difference qua temporal extension is, in part, due to doomscrolling’s and doomsurfing’s immersive phenomenological quality, where agents lose track of time while engaging in these behaviours, causing them to continue for longer than they realise or intend (Sharma et al., 2022). Doomchecking, on the other hand, is characterised by its frequency: the short-lived individual instances of epistemic action may not be immersive, but the agent’s preoccupation with the relevant topic or fact still leads to increased news consumption.

78 Omitting the rare instances where, e.g., webpages take a long time to load.
Third, doomchecking has fixed epistemic parameters, i.e., a particular fact or group of facts which has (recently) been checked before. Whether this is applied to checking COVID-19’s r-value, its total fatalities, or updated developments of a distressing event, the doomchecker specifically aims to acquire a particular belief or group of beliefs and once this is acquired, the act of doomchecking is completed. In contrast, doomscrollers may expect to acquire beliefs on a broad array of negatively valenced topics as they scroll through their timeline. Additionally, while doomsurfers focus on a particular topic, their intention is to acquire information that will contextualise, explain, or help them make predictions about the relevant subject. In other words, doomscrollers and doomsurfers accumulate a broad array of beliefs during their long-lasting immersive activity which they need not have expected to acquire.

One similarity between doomscrolling and doomchecking entails the potential automaticity of this epistemic behaviour, as checking particular facts may become habitual over time. Similar to doomscrollers automatically opening their social media platform of choice, then, doomcheckers may automatically open websites containing updated information on the facts they tend to doomcheck. Whether this entails liveblogs on the progression of the Russian invasion of Ukraine or a search engine providing them with the updated death toll of COVID-19, doomchecking is enacted to acquire particular beliefs or groups of beliefs, as the act is concluded once this specific information is acquired. Similarly, while I automatically turn on the coffee machine in the morning, this is nevertheless goal-directed behaviour, i.e., to make coffee.

2.4 Doombehaviour
With a description of these three categories of doombehaviour at hand, I now note that doombehaviour is a pressing topic to discuss given its ability to blossom in our current sociotechnical environment. Moreover, while the three forms of doombehaviour outlined in the previous section are distinct, acting on one category can result in acting on other categories as well, further increasing the prevalence of doombehaviour as a whole. Both elements are respectively discussed in this section.

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79 One form of doomchecking deserves special attention as it appears to be ubiquitous without being related to a specific topic or event. Namely, checking whether something distressing has occurred since one last checked the relevant news application or website. This will be discussed further in Section 1.4.

80 For explorations of the level of agency in automatic epistemic actions that lead to beliefs or knowledge, see, e.g., Baehr (2011) or Sosa (2017).
Doombehaviour is supported and motivated by an abundance of accessible distressing information, which is provided through an interaction of two elements. First, as doombehaviour is directed towards distressing information on current events or topics, the prevalence of distressing events or developments taking place presents the agent with a constant stream of topics that can function as the object of one’s doombehaviour. This can be illustrated by the word *permacrisis*, referring to ‘an extended period of instability and insecurity’ (Collins, 2022), being the Collins Dictionary’s word of the year 2022. In other words, the wars, economic distress, global issues, and political upheaval constituting 2022’s permacrisis present an agent with objects for doombehaviour, as well as causing a sense of uncertainty, distress, or anxiety that motivates such doombehaviour.81 Second, as argued, our current socio-technical environment allows us to acquire information from all over the world at any time of day, thereby providing easily accessible platforms for doombehaviour to occur. Moreover, these platforms are often designed to grab and keep our attention, whereby the long-lasting epistemic activities of doomscrolling and doomsurfing are enforced by the relevant platform (e.g., Williams, 2018).

All three doombehaviours presented in this chapter are affected by this permacrisis and the immediate access to relevant information that is often presented on attention-grabbing platforms. First, social media platforms are specifically designed to grab and keep a user’s attention, on top of habituating engagement with such platforms. Moreover, due to the permacrisis, this social media engagement can quickly turn into *doomscrolling* given the abundance of posts and headlines referring to novel distressing topics or developments on said platforms. Second, given the number of topics causing a sense of uncertainty, anxiety, or distress that constitute the permacrisis, the objects for *doomsurfing* are abundant. Moreover, due to the available technology, information on such topics is immediately accessible on websites which frequently present the user with further information to consume, either on the topic at hand or another distressing, attention-grabbing subject. Third, smartphones allow one to quickly *doomcheck* at any time and during any situation. Moreover, the permacrisis motivates doomchecking with regards to particular topics as these objects of doomchecking are everchanging – a relevant aspect for the epistemic value of the practise that will be discussed in Section

81 While information on distressing current events has been easily accessible since the introduction of online news platforms, the everchanging quality of current distressing events motivates continuous inquiry. After all, people rarely doomsurf the famine in Yemen – a crisis that has been going on for a long time and is unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future.
3.3 – as well as motivating a more general form of doomchecking, discussed in what follows.

The insecurity and uncertainty characterising a permacrisis may lead one to check whether any novel noteworthy events have occurred. For instance, the climate crisis leads to frequent weather-related disasters, like wildfires and floods. As such, one may check a news app to see whether any new weather disasters have occurred. Likewise, political upheaval may cause important government plans or sanctions to change in quick succession, motivating frequent checking on these political issues. Given these and other areas reflective of a permacrisis, one may be motivated to frequently check their news platform of choice to see whether any novel distressing event has occurred, rather than, or on top of, checking for developments on known distressing events or topics.

Note that this general variant of doomchecking still merely entails an act to acquire a specific group of beliefs, i.e., whether a novel distressing event or development has occurred and what this event or development roughly entails. For general doomchecking to be enacted, one need merely read the headlines. Yet doing so may motivate doomsurfing, aiming to acquire more information on the relevant topic, or doomscrolling as a way to either up-regulate one’s mood or to see how this and similarly distressing topics are represented on social media. Doomchecking can also simply motivate news consumption, such as reading the linked article, without the immersive and time-consuming qualities that characterise doomsurfing and doomscrolling.

The discussion in this and previous sections illustrate how acting on one category of doombehaviour can motivate enacting another. For example, doomscrolling may lead the agent to come across an especially attention-grabbing piece of information, motivating her to click on the relevant articles to get a better understanding of this topic. Doomscrolling can thereby motivate doomsurfing. Moreover, an understanding of the pressing quality of certain current events acquired through doomsurfing, or noticing others frequently sharing their views on such topics while doomscrolling, can lead to doomchecking as one aims to be up to date regarding these events in a way that mirrors their pressing nature or the knowledge possessed by one’s social circle. While these behaviours are thereby causally linked, in what follows I argue that they possess distinct levels of instrumental epistemic value, making the case for the practical use for distinguishing these methods of news consumption.
3. The Epistemic Value of Doombehaviour

In this section I assess the instrumental epistemic value of doomsrolling, doomsurfing, and doomchecking, where this value is determined through its relation to truth (e.g., Alston 2005; BonJour 1985; Pritchard 2014) or CCCR (i.e., cognitive contact with reality that, as argued in Chapter 3, could be considered the ultimate end of intellectual virtue on the orthodox account).

3.1 The Epistemic Value of Doomsrolling

Recall that doomsrolling refers to passive social media engagement. Users scroll through their feed, automatically attending to the negatively valenced information and often sensationalised headlines in the seemingly unending stream of posts the platform presents them with. The passive quality of this behaviour is further supported by the doomsrollers’ reported habitual, unreflective, and unintended social media use (Sharma et al., 2022). On the other side of the spectrum, an agent would be motivated to acquire some epistemic good and actively shapes her behaviour in some way to acquire this good. While this active form of epistemic action seems applicable to instances of doomsurfing and doomchecking, belief-acquisition through doomsrolling seems relatively passive.

This would normally not be a problem: much of our knowledge is somewhat passively acquired (e.g., Baehr, 2011; Sosa, 2017). For example, imagine someone working in her office when the light turns off. Her subsequent belief that the light is off is automatically acquired, yet she nevertheless knows that the light is off. However, if we imagine that she shares her office with a prankster who is known for placing cardboard boxes over lightbulbs, her automatic, intuitive belief may be false. When she is aware of this prankster, then, she only knows that the light is off after ruling out the possibility that she is being tricked.

Something similar can be said of the doomsroller who gets her news from social media platforms, i.e., platforms notorious for spreading sophisticated disinformation (Bradshaw and Howard, 2019; Dawson and Innes, 2019; Johnson and St. John, 2020; Morgan, 2018). Doomsrollers are therefore likely to be confronted with content specifically designed to trick users into believing misinformation. As such, akin to the

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82 While many falsehoods may be acquired due to disinformation – false information shared in order to trick the reader – false beliefs may also be acquired by consuming misinformation, which does not entail malicious intent and may simply entail overly simplified information or sensationalist reporting.
office worker, users may be tricked into believing falsehoods. For the doomscooler faced with potentially sophisticated disinformation or misinformation, however, checking the veridicality of the acquired belief is more difficult and effortful than for the office worker checking whether the lightbulb is covered by a box. Moreover, due to doomscooler’s posited passivity, doomscrollers are unlikely to start this difficult or effortful process. However, if they do start this process by, e.g., employing other sources, reading the relevant articles and assessing the trustworthiness of these sources, they can no longer be said to be doomscrolling, as this behaviour is closer to doomsurfing or just plain research.

The possibility of being tricked on a social media platform is present even when the doomscroller has curated her account to only follow people she deems trustworthy. After all, platforms like Twitter and Facebook also show posts that are popular or have been promoted by a company, group, or institution. Moreover, doomscrollers may mistake ‘retweets’ or ‘shares’ from trusted users for endorsements of the retweeted or shared content, thereby assuming the content to be true and justified, without this being intended by the trusted user (Marsili, 2021). Likewise, these platforms show posts that have merely been liked or commented upon by users the doomscroller follows, no matter this user’s intent. Lastly, the doomscroller is unlikely to know how vigilant the users she follows are in verifying their sources. This is especially concerning as users are more likely to believe and share information posted by trusted friends and public figures than the original source of the information (Tandoc, 2019; Sterrett et al., 2019). Doomscooring, then, plausibly leads users to acquire false beliefs, whether this is due to sophisticated disinformation or sensationalised headlines.

This epistemic environment also connects doomscooring to an influential Gettier case, i.e., an example where one acquires a true and justified belief which does not amount to knowledge. The fake barn country case, first introduced by Goldman (1976), asks us to imagine someone driving through farmlands, perceiving various barns down the road. What this agent does not know, however, is that some of these barns are merely facades. So, when this agent forms the belief that she is driving past a barn, even when this belief is true and justified (as her perception of a barn justifies her belief that there is a barn), her belief does not amount to knowledge; she merely got lucky in forming her belief while driving past a real barn. Similarly, the doomscroller may acquire a belief that is true and justified, e.g., by reading a post of a trusted user containing true information.
on current events. Yet, given plausibility of being tricked, or the trusted user having been tricked, this belief would not amount to knowledge.

Note that this conclusion is reached through the definition of doomscrolling supported in the, admittedly sparse, research that has so far been conducted on the topic. Given the abundance of sophisticated misinformation, the doomscroller ought to become active in her research and leave the relevant social media platform in order to check whether believing the presented information is justified, perhaps inducing the idea that this research can be constitutive of doomscrolling. Yet to argue that doomscrolling can entail moving across platforms to be sufficiently informed to accept the information as veridical, the distinction between doomscrolling and doomsurfing posited in the current literature would have to be rejected. If we were to reject this distinction, we are back where we started: with the advice that doombehaviour ought to be minimised as a whole, despite this behaviour coming in demarcated forms with, as I argue, distinct epistemic values. Pragmatically, accepting the categorisation presented in this and previous papers allows us to distinguish between epistemically fruitful and degenerative activities, making the foundation for resulting norms or advice related to this behaviour more fine-grained, allowing us to avoid throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

In short, the doomscroller consumes in an environment where she might be tricked into accepting misinformation. Moreover, given doomscrolling’s passive nature, when users perform research to check the plausibility of this information, this research is merely motivated by doomscrolling, rather than being constitutive of doomscrolling itself. As such, doomscrolling is unlikely to lead to knowledge due to potential consumption of misinformation, the Gettier effect, and, when the agent is aware of these risks, not accepting the information presented to her as justified. Doomscrolling thereby has little epistemic value.

3.2 Doomsurfing

In contrast to doomscrolling, doomsurfing does not inherently lead to encountering misinformation or Gettier case pitfalls. This is, first, due to the platforms employed. While doomscrolling is restricted to social media, the doomsurfer chooses other platforms that she trusts. This allows the doomsurfer to opt for, e.g., trusted newspapers, online encyclopaedias, or journal articles. Ultimately, the success of doomsurfing in producing knowledge therefore lies in the trustworthiness of the sources chosen by the agent.
Second, doomsurfing entails consuming more in-depth information on a distressing topic, in contrast to the doomscroller who tends to scroll through headlines or articles summarised in one tweet or post. While the headline ‘25 dead in hurricane disaster’ in a trusted newspaper may induce the belief that the destructive force of a hurricane killed 25 people, reading the accompanying article would let the agent know that only ten people died at the time of the hurricane, the rest dying due to a lack of assigned relief funds. As such, the doomsurfer is unlikely to be misled by over-simplified or sensationalised headlines.

As doomsurfing leads one to research a topic across platforms, rather than merely employing one source, the doomsurfer is also less likely to be taken in by the rhetoric or false information promoted by one particular platform. Moreover, the longevity of doomsurfing, enforced by its immersive quality, allows her to acquire more beliefs on this topic than when one stops one’s research once the initial question is answered or article is read. Doomsurfing is thereby likely to increase CCCR to a greater extent than reading an article or physical newspaper, simply because there is no natural stopping point and the immersive quality of the behaviour, potentially induced by the persuasive design of the platform, leads to more time spent on information acquisition, adding to one’s understanding of the topic at hand.

There is however one big caveat to this analysis. Namely, that the epistemic deep-dives that characterise doomsurfing may still lead to an inaccurate representation of the relevant topic or event. Akin to all forms of online enquiry, the sources one employs to acquire the sought-after information may be unreliable. This is enforced by the potential use of search-engines, which tailor the search results they present to the individual user’s search history, as well as the specific wording of the initial enquiry. For example, researching climate change while using a search engine tend to result in suggestions of different sources for different people (Pariser, 2011). While one agent may be directed to sources outlining the deadly consequences of man-made climate change, another may be directed to sources claiming that man-made climate change is a hoax. The rabbit holes one falls into due to doomsurfing may thereby lead one to come to an understanding of a complex and important topic, but they may also lead one to acquire information that causes one to support conspiracy theories.

The epistemic value of doomsurfing, then, is dependent on the agent’s ability to choose trustworthy sources. As such, the potential epistemic value related to doomsurfing is only applicable when the agent is generally epistemically responsible or
has been informed on the reliability of the various sources to their disposal. For the epistemically responsible epistemic agent, then, doomsurfing would be epistemically advantageous, while doomscrolling would still be detrimental to their epistemic position.

3.3 Doomchecking

While doomchecking entails the frequent and potentially compulsive (Sharma at al., 2022; Mannell and Meese, 2022) checking of a particular fact, this behaviour can still be considered instrumentally epistemically valuable as it, ceteris paribus, leads to knowledge-acquisition. Yet, similar to doomsurfing and news consumption in general, this depends on whether the agent employs a trustworthy source through which to check the relevant fact.

One may argue that doomchecking does not lead to knowledge-acquisition as the fact one checks may not have changed (significantly). After all, doomchecking refers to frequently checking a fact one has checked before, generally using the same platform previously employed. As such, one may merely acquire further justification for a particular belief (Woodard 2022) or perhaps not improve one’s epistemic position at all (Friedman, 2019), as the information upon which the doomchecker bases her belief has not changed.

However, on the cited accounts of repeated checking, the epistemic agent checks previously checked information as she considers that her previously acquired belief may have been false (e.g., checking whether one really turned off the stove). She thereby checks her prior belief by checking the information previously used as justification for this belief (that the stove is off). In contrast, the doomchecker, ceteris paribus, knows that at time \( t \), \( p \) is true. Yet, as doomchecking concerns checking facts related to current events, i.e., facts that are likely to change, the doomchecker does not know whether \( p \) is still true at \( t+1 \). As such, the doomchecker does not check whether her belief that \( p \) at \( t \) was true.

She rather checks updated information related to \( p \) to determine whether \( p \) is true at \( t+1 \).

The doomchecker’s belief acquired at \( t+1 \) is thereby distinct from the belief acquired at \( t \). For example, one may have the belief that at time \( t \), \( n \) people have been killed in the Russian invasion of Ukraine. If one doomchecks this fact again, even when only an hour has passed, she acquires the novel belief that at \( t+1 \), \( n+m \) people have been killed. Moreover, given the potential changeability of \( n \), the belief that at \( t+1 \), \( n+m \) people have been killed remains a novel belief even when the number of fatalities has not changed (\( m=0 \)). Likewise, one may frequently check whether a verdict has been reached in an important court case. While at \( t \) to \( t+1 \), one would acquire the distinct beliefs that at this time
no decision has been made, at \( t_0 \), one acquires the belief that a verdict has been reached (and plausibly what this verdict entails). In short, what is true at \( t \) may not be true at \( t+1 \), thereby making the belief acquired at \( t \) distinct from the belief acquired at \( t+1 \). *Ceteris paribus*, then, doomchecking leads to the acquisition of novel epistemic goods.

Note that it seems plausible that from a certain frequency, the epistemic value of doomchecking becomes negligible. However, it is not inherent to the behaviour that one doomchecks with this frequency. After all, in the court case example, once she knows that a verdict has been reached, the doomchecker would not keep checking whether a verdict has been reached. Likewise, if a doomchecker knows that COVID’s r-value is only updated once a day, she is unlikely to doomcheck this r-value after the daily update. In other words, if a doomchecker is aware that it is highly unlikely that there are updates to a topic of interest or that a novel distressing event has occurred, she is also unlikely to doomcheck. However, during a permacrisis and within our sociotechnical environment, where developments are reported on almost instantaneously, it is often plausible that a novel development or event has been reported on since the last moment one checked one’s preferred news website. However, while the orthodox account of intellectual virtue may be committed to categorising this doomchecking as in line with intellectual virtue, in the remainder of this chapter I argue that the effect this motivating preoccupation has would undermine the prudential element of wisdom.

4. Doombehaviour and Intellectual Virtue

As the epistemic goods doombehaviour is directed towards are considered valuable on both the orthodox and wisdom account of intellectual virtue, they are appropriate epistemic goods for an intellectually virtuous agent to (be motivated to) acquire. For example, as doomsurfing is directed towards acquiring an understanding of a potentially complex topic, doomsurfing can significantly increase CCCR and result in epistemic goods constitutive of *sophia* or *phronesis*. In what follows, I therefore assess doomscrolling, doomsurfing, and doomchecking within the context of intellectual virtue, assuming an intellectually virtuous motivation.

Doomscrolling, even when performed from an epistemically virtuous motivation, would fail to be an aptly virtuous activity. After all, due to the unreliability of the information consumed given the easy spread of misinformation and disinformation on social media platforms, doomscrolling would be epistemically careless when the information consumed is not assessed for its veridicality through other sources, or epistemically gullible when
So, if we accept that doomscrolling is passive in nature, then doomscrolling merely has the potential to motivate intellectually virtuous behaviour. That is, one would have to stop scrolling to interact with the information in a way that reflects intellectual virtue.

In contrast, doomsurfing and doomchecking could reflect intellectually virtuous behaviour. In the case of doomchecking, the agent can display intellectual humility in her realisation that the knowledge she previously acquired may be dated. Likewise, it could reflect inquisitiveness: if one initially chose a trustworthy source to check the relevant fact, the source is likely to remain trustworthy upon doomchecking the fact, in addition to being the relevant source to ‘ask’ for an update on this fact. When doomsurfing, one is likely to be thorough, employing multiple sources during the process, making one less likely to accept misinformation presented on one untrustworthy website. This thoroughness, as well as intellectual perseverance and inquisitiveness, is aided by the immersive quality of doomsurfing, supporting the acquisition of in-depth knowledge or understanding one may not have acquired through offline news consumption, i.e., merely reading the paper or watching the evening news.

Moreover, the distressing nature of the subject matter does not detract from the epistemic value of doombehaviour. For example, someone researching the effects of the transatlantic slave trade may become emotionally distressed due to the harrowing content and its ongoing impact on millions of lives. The negative prudential effects of this research do not detract from its epistemic value and, when they are accepted by the agent as she deems the distressing knowledge sufficiently valuable to experience these negative effects, this knowledge-acquisition could even be deemed intellectually courageous. Likewise, then, doomsurfing and doomchecking may be deemed intellectually virtuous if one knowingly accepts the potential distress that accompanies these activities to acquire valuable epistemic goods.

However, this trade-off between the epistemic goods and prudential costs may not be sustainable when it comes to doombehaviour in a sociotechnical environment during a permacrisis. After all, there is always more distressing news to consume. Moreover, the effects of the attention economy on our sociotechnical environment can lead platforms to display shocking, distressing, or sensational information to draw attention of new and existing users. Partly due to such persuasive design, engaging in doombehaviour can

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83 Nevertheless, as stated, where an agent employs multiple unreliable sources, such rabbit holes can rather lead to an inaccurate representation of complex topics.
quickly result in a disposition – a problem given doombehaviour’s link to experiencing episodes of depression or anxiety.

On the orthodox account, accepting the risk of negatively affecting one’s mental health may be interpreted as similar to accepting the risk of negatively valenced affective states such as sadness or fear. I.e., sufficiently valuing CCCR to take a prudential risk would reflect a very strong POG or NOI, forming the foundation for admirable epistemic behaviour. However, as argued in Chapter 5, when the intellectual virtues are directed towards wisdom rather than CCCR, one’s health, including one’s mental health, becomes a relevant consideration when assessing the accuracy (or admirability) of one’s behaviour.

While one may argue that the information acquired through doombehaviour may be sufficiently epistemically valuable to accept the risk of experiencing depressive or anxious episodes, similar to a courageous agent being willing to experience pain or even death when fighting during a noble battle, this comparison does not hold water. First, recall that this example of courage from Chapter 5 referred to heroic actions, trading one’s life or well-being to save the life of others. In contrast, it would not be heroic to accept pain and possible death by driving through an intersection at full speed while seeing an upcoming car failing to stop for a red light. That is, risking a crash to fight for one’s right of way is not courageous as, at best, it is a poor way to fight for others to uphold the law and, at worst, it is a reckless act as the end for which one risks one’s own and the other’s wellbeing is not (sufficiently) noble. Likewise, deciding to read another news article on the climate emergency at 2am while falling into a depressed state is not a heroic act, especially considering the potential consequences.

In previous work (Neijzen 2023) I have argued that depressive states negatively impact the perceptive and deliberative elements of practical wisdom, but the impact of depressive and anxious episodes can also be directly applied to intellectual virtues themselves. First, depressive episodes are often characterised by feelings of alienation with regards to others and future goals (e.g., Jacobs, 2013; Ratcliffe, 2014), supporting the likelihood that one may become less inclined to engage with one’s intellectual cohort, as suggested by Brogaard (2014). This would be an issue given the importance placed on epistemic cohorts in previous chapters, as well as for the virtues that rely on interaction with one’s epistemic community, whether this entails open-mindedness, epistemic generosity, or intellectual courage.
Second, an agent’s cognitive functioning is affected when she experiences psychomotor retardation – a common symptom of depression (e.g., Buyukdura et al. 2011; Mendels and Cochrane 1968). The experienced difficulty in engaging in or following conversation, as well as the decreased ability to focus, that thereby occurs would negatively impact the agent’s attentiveness, sensitivity to detail, and perceptiveness.

Third, the experienced stifling of one’s emotional responses, as well as the alienation from future goals, can make opportunities for epistemic good acquisition less inviting, or appear too difficult or effortful to perform (e.g., Buyukdura et al. 2011; Jacobs 2013; Ratcliffe 2014; Stone et al. 2010). This thereby negatively affects virtues employed to start (e.g., inquisitiveness, curiosity, and wonder) or continue (e.g., determination, thoroughness, and patience) inquiry. Moreover, while one may still consider epistemic goods as finally valuable, the stifling of one’s emotional responses can decrease the stability of one’s dispositional affective final POG or NOI.

Given this summary of the ways in which depressive moods can negatively impact one’s intellectually virtuous behaviour, as well as the perceptive and deliberative elements of practical wisdom (Neijzen 2023), engaging in doombehaviour may not be the right line of action given one’s final POG or NOI. After all, if one’s epistemic acquisition-process negatively affects one’s ability to acquire, assess, apply, and share epistemic goods in the future, then this acquisition-process would hamper one’s final values. In other words, if one’s doombehaviour negatively affects one’s mental health, accepting this risk is more impactful than merely accepting pain or other negatively valenced affective states that result from reading distressing information. This thereby supports the inclusion of valuing one’s mental health in our wisdom concept, as previously argued in Chapter 5.

As such, while doombehaviour may lead to the acquisition of valuable epistemic goods, an agent’s intellectual virtue may fail to produce apt actions when she risks her mental health by performing these acts. Note that for an act to undermine that prudential element, the agent ought to be aware of the prudential risks when engaging in this epistemic behaviour. Yet, as I argued in Chapter 5 and will further discuss in Chapter 9, wisdom dictates that one ought to desire knowledge of how to live well within one’s (usual) environment, including one’s digital environment. In other words, when one regularly engages in doombehaviour, one ought to desire the knowledge of how this affects her and her epistemic community.
5. Epistemically Self-Indulgent Habits

In the introduction of this Chapter, I noted that platforms can aim to install habits into their users to capture and retain their attention. While some apps are open in their aim to instantiate such habits – this being the main selling point of apps such as Duolingo, Habitica, and Forest, as the agent uses those apps in order to acquire desired habits or skills – other apps aim to induce habits so agents will return to, and stay on, the platform even when they would not endorse doing so (e.g., Ash 2012; Brennan 2021; Franck 2020; Oulasvirta et al. 2012; Williams 2018). One method through which such apps and websites do this, is by recreating the slot-machine effect.

Slot machines function by inviting the agent to provide a very small financial investment, upon which the agent can pull the lever so the machine presents them with a combination of symbols that represents a win or loss. As slot machines are designed to be profitable, they rely on mathematical programming with regards to reward: players win often enough to keep them on board, reinforcing their behaviour (Schüll 2012). The possibility of a reward, in combination with the minuteness of the investment, motivates the agent to keep playing. Additionally, the reward varies with every pull, different symbols resulting in different monetary rewards, increasing surprisal, drawing the player in further (Schüll 2012; Williams 2018). The variable rewards mechanism that keeps users engaged thereby relies on induced uncertainty through creating unpredictability with regards to when and how a player will be rewarded.

Likewise, social and (some) traditional media websites or apps ask for a small investment, paid for by our attention. Similar to pulling the lever on a slot machine, an agent can access or reload a platform, “pull to refresh”, or scroll to the next post to receive a potential reward. The reward is not a cash prize, whereby frequent rewards could make the platform unprofitable, nor does it have to induce positive affect. It rather is surprise that keeps the users engaged (Williams 2018; Ross 2009). Platforms that employ the slot machine effect may thereby be even more successful in establishing habitual use than actual slot machines. The positive reinforcement through the variability and frequency of the reward is easily accomplished by social and traditional media, as new information is (almost) always presented to the user upon refreshing the website or app. Moreover, through the algorithms discussed in the introduction of this chapter, social media platforms are able to present more “rewarding”, i.e., more surprising or otherwise (personalised) attention-grabbing content to the user. Likewise, as discussed, due to the
permacrisis and the vast reporting on both local and global issues, news(-heavy) platforms offer similarly attention-grabbing rewards.

This effect is not limited to individual platforms. While such platforms may aim to grab and hold on to the attention of their users, the fact that many platforms use this technique leads to slot machine habits across platforms. In other words, accessing any website or platform often leads to a reward in the form of surprising or engaging content and, when it fails to do so, other platforms are immediately available for another pull of the lever. This can include informative, epistemically worthwhile platforms to visit, such as traditional and reliable news websites, or platforms specialised in the spread of scientific or otherwise academic research (e.g., ResearchGate, ScienceDaily, Nature News, Daily Nous). In other words, agent who finally value knowledge, understanding, or other epistemic goods can easily fall victim to the slot-machine effect. This is in addition to other methods to install dispositions in the user to capture their attention, such as pop-up notifications or email subscriptions. So, through the attention economy, our digital environment as a whole can create epistemic habits in us, where we frequently check various platforms for novel content.

On the orthodox account of intellectual virtue, habits instantiated through the slot-machine effect or other persuasive design elements could be considered intellectually virtuous when they entail frequently checking platforms that present trustworthy, informative content, if this habit was instantiated through a final POG or NOI. After all, such habits reflect inclinations and dispositions to acquire epistemic goods: the repeat behaviour is directed towards acquiring novel information, where succeeding feels rewarding, while failing to acquire novel information is experienced as unpleasant, or as an incentive to check the next platform. In other words, such habits reflect a POG (being positively orientated towards acquiring knowledge through checking the relevant platforms) or NOI (being negatively orientated towards failing to acquire knowledge in this way) that could be constitutive of one’s intellectually virtuous motivation. Additionally, these habits reflect the automaticity that comes with acquiring a stable disposition to perform behaviour reflective of intellectual virtues (e.g., curiosity or inquisitiveness).

However, these habits and the methods to install them can also lead to a maladaptive overconsumption of content, or a dependence on the relevant technology or platform. Through expanding our notion of epistemic temperance, I argue that some epistemic habits resulting from the interaction between the user and the technology fail to be virtuous, despite resulting from a final POG or NOI and reflecting the behaviour
characteristic of an intellectual virtue – something that the orthodox account of intellectual virtue may be committed to deny, as suggested in the previous paragraph.

The concept of epistemic temperance was introduced in Chapter 5, where it was discussed as an epistemic counterpart of moral temperance, including both moral and prudential considerations in determining whether one ought to pursue a physical (moral temperance) or epistemic (epistemic temperance) pleasure. From this discussion, we gathered that one can consume and enjoy epistemic objects too frequently when this behaviour affects one’s mental health, or undermines moral or prudential values in another way. However, a relevant aspect of this virtue that was not discussed in Battaly’s (2010) paper on epistemic self-indulgence, and only mentioned in Chapter 5, is that temperance concerns itself with (mental) pain as well as pleasure.

5.1 Painful Epistemic Habits
The moral virtue connected to the experience of pain tends to be courage, as this virtue allows one to accept the prospect of pain when the end is sufficiently worthwhile (NE 1116b). However, courage is also connected to pleasure, as performing courageous acts may be painful, but living in line with courage, accomplishing noble goals, is pleasurable to the virtuous agent. After all, recall that Aristotle argues that a virtuous agent, ceteris paribus, enjoys life, or has eudaimonia. In this sense, possessing courage can induce, rather than lessen, the experience of fear when facing the possibility of death: as life is pleasurable for the virtuous agent, they have more to lose than non-virtuous agents (NE 1117b). Moreover, note that the courageous agent does not want to experience pain. They aim to avoid it, if it is possible to do so while living in line with noble concerns (idem).

Avoiding pain is thereby a concern for the practically wise agent, and temperance aids her in this pursuit. This is not only because temperance allows one to avoid the effects of ill-health that may occur due to overindulgence, but also because possessing self-indulgence as a disposition is in itself painful. Frequently acting with the goal of experiencing certain pleasures leads one to desire them when they are absent, causing the self-indulgent agent to ‘consequently feel[s] pain not only when he fails to get [the relevant pleasures], but also from his desire for them, since desire is accompanied by pain’ (NE 1119a 1-5). So, apart from the extreme examples of physical addiction, where the agent requires certain substances to avoid being in physical pain, the pain relevant to self-indulgence appears to be mental – it is the desire itself that is painful, or at least unpleasurable.
As such, if one has acquired the general disposition to desire something that is not conducive to health or one’s moral character which, when unattainable or (temporarily) abstained from, causes a negatively valenced affective experience, this disposition may be self-indulgent. Note that this is distinct from mere disappointment upon realising a treat one was looking forward to is not available. After all, Aristotle’s claim is not Epicurean; he does not argue that one ought to abstain from desiring anything not strictly necessary that might be (temporarily) unattainable. Rather, it refers to the continued desire for specific foods, sex, or other bodily pleasures that is painful or unpleasant, except when engaging in the relevant activity. The epistemic version of this, then, would be a continuous desire for knowledge, where not acquiring it can be experienced as painful, or at least as unpleasant. Again, note that this does not refer to a negatively valenced affective state when one desires to acquire knowledge yet is unable to do so due to, e.g., a lack of internet access. This, after all, refers to disappointment or temporary frustration. It is only when one frequently or consistently feels displeasure when one is not in the process of acquiring knowledge or information that it is categorised as epistemically self-indulgent.

And this, it seems, is a state that certain technologies and platforms (aim to) install in their users: turning the affordances they continually offer into solicitations that may be difficult or unpleasurable to ignore. For many who have acquired the discussed epistemic habits through engagement with our socio-technological environment, a notification of a particular app can capture and demand attention, despite other values conflicting with responding to this notification, where not responding to the notification causes negatively valenced affective states (e.g., Clayton et al. 2015; Stothart et al. 2015). Combined with the increasingly common phenomenon of experiencing the phantom feeling of a vibrating phone in one’s pocket (e.g., Rosenberger 2015; Rothberg et al. 2010), habitual smartphone use may lead to frequent experiences of negatively valenced affective states, unless one immediately responds to the affordance one’s phone offers.

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84 Recall Chapter 1, where I differentiated between general and situation-specific dispositions. One may have the situation-specific disposition to eat ice-cream, e.g., when it is warm out, when there is ice-cream nearby, and when one has not had anything sweet that day, or a general disposition to eat ice-cream, whereby one eats ice-cream whenever one has the opportunity to do so, whether this is a fitting response to the situation or not.

85 Note that one’s epistemic desire may be satiated without actually acquiring knowledge, as one may be mistaken in the truth-value of, or the justification behind, the acquired belief. This is why I previously spoke in terms of acquiring novel information.

86 See previous footnote.
Moreover, when one’s smartphone is in the room, one’s attention tends to be drawn towards it, as indicated by one’s focus on other tasks being negatively affected (Ward et al. 2017; Ruiz Pardo and Minda 2022). Yet when one is temporarily separated from one’s smartphone, one’s cognitive functioning is similarly affected, in addition to inducing distressed affective states (e.g., Hartanto and Yang 2016; Yildirim and Correia 2015). In other words, while the presence of one’s phone continually directs one’s attention to this object, leaving it at home would induce unpleasurable affective states. If this is indeed the case for an individual smartphone user who has been habituated to attend to epistemic affordances offered by her phone, then her unpleasurable experience when she does not respond to these affordances reflects an epistemically self-indulgent habit.

Likewise, once on the platform, the affective resistance that can accompany attempts to stop scrolling, or to refrain from refreshing the page, can be experienced as unpleasurable. Disengaging, for the epistemically self-indulgent, can be compared to attempts to stop oneself from eating a delicious meal halfway through. Yet as the stream of novel information seems endless, a more apt comparison is an attempt to stop oneself from eating while at an all you can eat buffet, while having a whale-sized stomach. Note that, for epistemic indulgence to apply to continued engagement with a particular platform (rather than the technological tool, i.e., a phone or computer), the motivation to stay on the platform must be due to the acquired habit or disposition, rather than because of the importance of a piece of information. In other words, the engagement must depend on the potential novelty of the next post, rather than the importance of one particular post that offers more information as one reads on.

One may argue that this characteristic of moral self-indulgence is not applicable to epistemic self-indulgence, as acquiring epistemic goods can be seen as noble, similar to morally virtuous action. As such, if someone experiences a negative affective state due to a POG or NOI more often, or more intensely, this may indicate a stronger or more stable epistemically virtuous motivation. Comparing this to moral virtue, if an agent is physically restrained from helping someone in need, this would be painful for a kind or courageous agent. So, the objection goes, experiencing pain or displeasure upon not engaging in epistemic behaviour is fitting for the intellectually virtuous agent, making the

87 Ruiz Pardo and Minda (2022) aimed to assess the replicability of Ward et al.’s (2017) study. While they note that physical proximity of a smartphone need not affect one’s cognitive abilities, they do support that, when one’s own smartphone is in the room, some cognitive abilities are impaired, including one’s ability to direct one’s attention to cognitive tasks.
discussed habits or dispositions acquired through our engagement with our socio-
technical environment reflective of intellectual virtue possession.

While it is true that a morally virtuous agent would (or should) experience pain
upon being unable to act morally virtuously in a given situation (e.g., during a moral
dilemma where all options open to the agent would undermine virtue in some way – see
Hursthouse 2001 for this argument), she does not experience pain in general, e.g.,
reading in her room on her own, rather than out in the world, finding opportunities to be
kind, honest, or brave. This is supported by our discussion of courage and temperance
in Chapter 5, where both contribute to experiencing pleasure and avoiding pain. Both
phronesis and sophia are avenues towards eudaimonia, not because one ‘maximises’
moral or epistemic value, but rather because the connected virtues allow one to live well,
experiencing the pleasures that come with performing moral acts or acquiring epistemic
goods, while also experiencing other pleasures while protecting oneself from unnecessary
pain.

Additionally, eudaimonia is also connected to a fully virtuous character as it tends
to minimise the experience of akrasia or enkrasia, where one desires something that is
not compatible with virtue (Annas 1995, 2011). Conflicting desires, after all, are
connected with pain or displeasure as one cannot satisfy both and, as Aristotle notes in
his discussion of temperance, unsatisfied desires bring with them the experience of pain.
Apart from reestablishing the effects of unfulfilled desire, this element draws our attention
to an illuminating question. Namely, is attending to one’s phone to access the relevant
informative platform or to continue scrolling on this platform – despite opposing, neither
morally virtuous or vicious, desires (e.g., talking to a friend, resting, or painting) – enkratic,
while not engaging in these epistemic behaviours, opting to respond to the opposing
desire, is akratic? If the answer is “no”, then the agent would “be pained more than he
ought to [...] his pain being caused by pleasure’ (NE 1118b31-34).

While orthodox accounts of intellectual virtue do not conceptualise the virtues in
relation to wisdom (except when reduced to understanding) epistemic akrasia is
mentioned in contemporary epistemic literature as a hurdle to overcome (e.g., Hookway
2001; Horowitz 2013). Yet in these contexts, epistemic akrasia tends to be defined in
terms of the rationality behind holding a belief: if one takes a belief to be true despite being
aware that an adequate justification to support the veridicality of the belief is lacking, one
is epistemically akratic (e.g., Coates 2012; Horowitz 2013). This is thereby connected to,
yet still distinct from, a responsibilist interpretation, whereby an agent would be
epistemically *akratic* when she fails to perform a fitting or required epistemic action due to opposing desires, whether this act entails acquiring, assessing, or sharing an epistemic good. Not applying, e.g., intellectual humility, thoroughness, intellectual integrity, or (self-)scrutiny, thereby accepting a belief as true while aware that one lacks adequate justification, is thereby merely one way in which one could be epistemically *akratic*.

On an orthodox account of intellectual virtue, where the virtues are directed towards establishing CCCR, it is arguable that missing any perceived opportunity to acquire (or share) novel epistemic goods due to the presence of conflicting, non-virtuous desires is *akratic*. Yet it seems highly unintuitive that someone who continually desires to acquire knowledge through engagement with their phone or laptop, being pained by a temporary inability or choice to refrain from this behaviour, is *akratic*, displaying weakness of will, whenever they do not give in to these epistemic desires. By accepting the suggested expansion of epistemic self-indulgence, supported by the model where intellectual virtues are directed towards wisdom as suggested in this thesis, we can account for this intuition, as I argue in what follows.

A disposition or habit, induced by platforms through persuasive design (including, but not limited to, the slot-machine effect), to experience affective states that reflect a NOI – where one disvalues not possessing or acquiring a piece of knowledge – may lead one to perform the characteristic behaviour of motivational virtues such as curiosity and inquisitiveness. If one’s NOI is final, then, the resulting acts could be considered virtuously curious or inquisitive. Thus far, the orthodox account and the wisdom account presented in this paper are on the same line. However, as argued in this section, if one has become so accustomed to these habits that *not* using one’s phone (or other available technologies) to perform acts of information-acquisition causes an unpleasurable experience, the habits that cause this experience are epistemically self-indulgent.

The acts that aim to satiate this acquired continuous desire for surprising information thereby fail to be accurate, as they undermine epistemic temperance. As such, even when these acts are adroit in relation to curiosity or inquisitiveness, they would not be apt as they are epistemically self-indulgent, thereby failing to be admirable, i.e., accurate. Moreover, if one’s inquisitiveness or curiosity *tends* to be induced and acted upon because of these epistemically self-indulgent habits, then these seemingly inquisitive or curious acts do not reflect the possession of the corresponding intellectual virtue. After all, recall that the intellectual virtues have to be reliable. If an epistemic trait that induces behaviour characteristic of an intellectual virtue frequently leads one to
perform actions that undermine another virtue, including epistemic temperance, this epistemic trait is not sufficiently reliable to be virtuous. As such, under these circumstances, the seemingly inquisitive or curious acts are not performed from the intellectual virtues of inquisitiveness or curiosity.

When we incorporate this element of temperance, we can explain the prudential disvalue of dispositional doomchecking without necessitating the risk of anxious or depressive episodes. After all, while checking the status of distressing facts or developments may not be pleasurable, this practise can be considered as part of a broader category of behaviour or habits acquired through the slot-machine effect or other methods of persuasive design. As stated, the information acquired when checking on a particular topic need not be positively valenced to function as a ‘reward’ – it is rather related to the experience of surprise. As such, if one has acquired a disposition to doomcheck, motivated by frequent or continuous negatively valenced affective states brought about by the possibility that novel and potentially important information is available (entailing distressing information, or soothing information on a distressing topic), then one’s doomchecking would be epistemically self-indulgent.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter I introduced doombehaviour, constituted by doomsrolling, doomsurfing, and doomchecking. While I argued that instances of doomsrolling are very unlikely to be intellectually virtuous, as the unreliability of the platform it is performed on leads to concerns of intellectual gullibility and carelessness, both doomchecking and doomsurfing could be considered intellectually virtuous behaviours when performed by intellectually responsible agents. These agents possess an epistemically virtuous motivation and are sufficiently inquisitive, careful, and informed to choose trustworthy sources. However, if one’s doombehaviour becomes dispositional, enforced by the permacrisis and our sociotechnical environment, these activities can negatively impact one’s mental health. If one is aware that one’s mental health is negatively affected by such doombehaviour, then engaging in this behaviour anyway would undermine the prudential element of wisdom.

Moreover, when doombehaviour, or other epistemic habits and dispositions, lead one to experience frequent or constant negatively valenced affective states when not engaging in information-acquisition behaviour, these habits can be considered
epistemically self-indulgent without necessarily causing mental health problems. By acquiring the virtue of epistemic temperance, one can assess one’s interaction with the sociotechnical environment, unlearning habits that lead one to undermine a moral or prudential value.

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88 This is relevant as there is a distinction between episodes of depression or anxiety that are defined by specific diagnostic criteria and a more general experience of negative emotions, moods, or displeasure.
1. Introduction
Imagine an agent who believes herself to be epistemically generous by ‘sharing’ an article on social media. After all, surely her followers will find it useful to know 10 expert tips for winterising your motorcycle. However, as she currently lives in a country where the temperature does not fall below 15°C, she does not read the article before ‘sharing’ it. She may also ‘like’ a post detailing how scientists are unveiling the secrets of quantum entanglement after only reading the title. After all, she may theoretically like the content of this article, as she plans to learn more about quantum physics once she’s able to find the time.

While it seems evident that an epistemically responsible agent should refrain from spreading information before assessing that the conveyed claims are true, justified, or even plausible, the introduction of ‘likes’ and ‘shares’ complicates this maxim. In this chapter, I therefore discuss the acts of ‘sharing’ and ‘liking’ posts on social media and the ways in which doing so can undermine intellectual virtue. While most of the arguments in this chapter fit with orthodox accounts of intellectual virtue, remember that it is not clear that all such accounts include virtues related to distributing, rather than acquiring, epistemic goods.

In Section 2, I argue that both ‘sharing’ and ‘liking’ are illocutionary actions that can share the function of conveying that the ‘shared’ or ‘liked’ post is worth attending to. I then argue that this function can be other- or self-directed. Other-directed ‘likes’ or ‘shares’ entail an attempt to affect the original author (e.g., her mood, social status, or epistemic credibility), or an attempt to influence the information consumed by others. The latter goal tends to be associated with ‘shares’ (Arielli 2018; Marsili 2021), while the former is associated with ‘likes’ (McDonald 2021). Yet I argue that ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ can

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89 This can refer to a general judgement, where the user supposes that the post should be attended to by everyone, or all users of the relevant platform, or that the post would be worthwhile to attend to for specific subsets of the users of the relevant social media platform (e.g., one’s Facebook friends, Twitter followers, or members of a particular ‘group’ or ‘list’ on such online platforms).
also be self-directed, where the act is performed in an attempt to increase one’s own epistemic or social status.\footnote{Note that none of these goals inherently exclude any of the other functions – one can ‘like’ or ‘share’ for many reasons.}

With this in mind, Section 3 argues that, in different ways, both self-directed and other-directed incentives to ‘like’ or ‘share’ can motivate bullshitting (Frankfurt 2005). I argue that, as bullshitting inherently undermines intellectual virtue, this incentive presented by our sociotechnical environment can, and ought to, be regulated by intellectual virtue.

2. ‘Sharing’ and ‘Liking’

In Chapter 7, some social-media platforms (e.g., Twitter and Facebook) were described as news-heavy, meaning that these platforms are regularly used to acquire, share, and discuss information on current events. Yet these platforms are also often used to acquire, share, and discuss content not directly related to current events, such as scientific articles, literary fiction, think pieces, and interviews related to topics of interest to the user or the user’s intended audience. Moreover, other popular social media platforms, such as YouTube and TikTok, may provide similarly informative content, yet in the form of a video rather than text or a link to an article.

All the aforementioned platforms provide the option of ‘liking’ a particular post, and many offer the opportunity to ‘share’ a post with specific other users, one’s followers, or all other users of the platform. Moreover, many news websites or special interest platforms also provide direct links to ‘share’ their content on social media. This ‘sharing’ or ‘liking’ increases the visibility of the relevant post – an effect most users are aware of, or quickly become aware of through experience. In this section, I argue that we can presume that users of these platforms are aware of the increased visibility caused by their ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ of posts, and that such ‘likes’ or ‘shares’ thereby share the function of directing the attention of other users to the ‘liked’ or ‘shared’ post (or to the fact that one ‘shared’ or ‘liked’ the post, as discussed in Section 3.2).

‘Sharing’ a post (an act that can also be known as ‘retweeting’, ‘reposting’, or ‘reblogging’, depending on the platform) is an illocutionary act performed on online platforms. Yet what this illocutionary act entails varies from endorsing the content of the post to drawing (positive or negative) attention to the fact that the original author posted
this content (Arielli 2018; Frigerio and Tenchini 2023). What a ‘share’ is intended to convey can be illuminated through context added by the ‘sharing’ user. For example, rather than ‘retweeting’ a post, one can ‘quote tweet’ this post to contextualise one’s view on the tweet’s content (e.g., ‘this is false’ or ‘this is important information’) (Marsili 2021). A ‘share’ that includes this contextualisation can thereby be compared to other uses of quotations, such as a quote by a politician used as an illustration in a news article, or a definition of a concept quoted in an academic article which is then endorsed or argued against. As such, in what follows I rather focus on ‘shares’ that lack this explicit contextualisation.

In Section 3.1 of the previous chapter, I noted that social media aids the spread of misinformation in part because users may mistake a ‘share’ from another user as this user epistemically endorsing the content of the relevant post or article. However, this does not mean that every ‘share’ that lacks the explicit denouncement of the ‘shared’ content indicates that the ‘sharer’ endorses this content, epistemically or otherwise. After all, when one ‘shares’ without explicit contextualisation, this contextualisation can be implicit. For example, if the user ‘shares’ a post containing a lot of spelling errors or nonsensical claims, this action may be performed to e.g., humiliate the original poster, to draw attention to their mistakes to illustrate the poster’s incompetence, or to simply share a post one’s followers may enjoy, where those seeing that this user ‘shared’ the post can be expected to understand that this ‘share’ did not entail the endorsement of the post’s content. This can be illustrated by the tweet of former USA president Donald Trump, disgruntledly posting about ‘the negative press covfefe’ (Trump, 2017).91 It is safe to assume that many of the ‘likes’ and ‘shares’ this post received were not endorsements of the claim that ‘the negative press covfefe’ had some sort of negative effect on Trump. In other words, many ‘shares’ did not entail an epistemic endorsement of the content of the post, and through the implicit context of this ‘share’, the user’s followers can easily infer that this act of ‘sharing’ does not imply an endorsement of the content of the post, nor of its author.

On the other hand, ‘sharing’ a post that contains information that the user is known for espousing, or at least not known for denying, could be interpreted as an endorsement of the veridicality of the post (that what was written is true), an endorsement of the overall message of the post (that the advice, presented significance, or appreciation reflected in

91 While Marsili (2021, p. 10462) mentions this tweet in her analysis of ‘retweeting’, she notes that the many retweets of this post are ironic, ‘nonserious’ retweets.
the post is endorsed through the ‘share’), or as ‘evidence’ in support of a greater claim
the ‘sharer’ is known to hold that may or may not be espoused by the original author. For
example, ‘sharing’ a post detailing a personal experience of the original author can
indicate that the ‘sharing’ user believes that this was indeed experienced by the author,
or that this experience is part of a systematic benefit or problem the sharer suggests
exists (without this being necessarily supported by the original author). In short, a ‘share’
can, but need not, indicate an epistemic endorsement of the post’s content. Rather, it has
the function of directing the attention of other users to this post. With this in mind, in what
follows I argue that ‘sharing’ is functionally similar to ‘liking’ a post, as both actions either
aim to direct the attention of others to the post, or aim to direct the attention of others to
the fact that one has attended to the post.

‘Liking’ a post, akin to ‘sharing’, is considered to be an illocutionary act. It tends to
be categorised as expressive, entailing a communication of enjoyment or appreciation,
yet it can also be seen as an epistemic endorsement (Arielli 2018). According to
McDonald (2021), however, ‘liking’ need not perform either function. First, given the ways
in which ‘sad’ posts are ‘liked’, where actual enjoyment would be highly inappropriate
(e.g., liking the announcement of the death of a friend’s family member, or a news article
about the latest distressing development in a civil war), ‘liking’ need not perform this
expressive function. So, the user need not even like the post she ‘likes’. One also need
not (epistemically) endorse the content of the ‘liked’ post. For example, when ‘liking’ the
post of a friend (or Facebook ‘friend’) reminiscing about the beauty of the Red Sea that
she experienced while diving in Egypt, the person liking this post need not thereby
endorse the claim that the Red Sea is beautiful, that diving in the Red Sea made the friend
appreciate its potential beauty, or even that this friend visited Egypt. So, according to
McDonald (2021), ‘likes’ should be characterised through their phatic function, signalling
to the author of the post that one has attended to the post, similar to smiling or nodding
to someone familiar while walking through town. Moreover, through this act of ‘liking’, the
user is said ‘to bestow a small gift upon the poster’ (McDonald 2021, p. 9), in part because
the user is aware that this ‘like’ will increase visibility of the post.

Yet this characterisation ignores the ubiquity of ‘liking’ news articles, scientific
studies, project announcements, and posts by strangers one does not intend to engage
with further. This is a problem for McDonald’s (2021) theory, as many social networking
sites aim to keep their users on the platform by displaying posts that are not necessarily
written by people or organisations that the user ‘follows’ or ‘befriended’. Instead, through
algorithms linked to the users interests and the levels of engagement with posts by others with a similar user profile, users are frequently presented with posts submitted by strangers. These posts can still be ‘liked’, and this action can in turn spread the reach of the post to other people who are even further removed from the original author. The phatic function of ‘liking’, then, does not explain the many other incentives or behaviours that incorporate this practise. As such, ‘liking’ a post can be motivated by similar reasons as ‘sharing’, i.e., directing the attention of others to the post, without the effect on the original author being taken into consideration.

Moreover, ‘sharing’ a post can have a similarly phatic function that McDonald (2021) ascribes to ‘liking’. For example, posts promoting the publication of an article (academic or not) may be ‘shared’ by a (Facebook) friend or follower of this author as they support the achievement of this author, rather than the content of the article. As such, both ‘liking’ and ‘sharing’ can have pathetic functions. Moreover, as in both cases the user is aware that ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ increases the visibility of the post, both actions can be assessed in terms of this end. In other words, both ‘liking’ and ‘sharing’ a post can be motivated by one’s aim to disseminate the information contained in the post as one endorses its veridicality, by the aim to support or direct attention to one’s previously established position, or by the phatic aim to let the original author know that one has attended to their post, in addition to positively supporting their social or epistemic status by increasing the visibility of their post.

There is, however, another effect of both ‘liking’ and ‘sharing’ a post that has not been taken into account in the current literature. Namely, rather than merely increasing the visibility of the ‘shared’ or ‘liked’ post, it is also visible that one ‘shared’ or ‘liked’ the post – an effect the user is plausibly aware of.92 As such, one reason for ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ a post could be to let others know that one has engaged with this information. This is thereby distinct from the phatic function of letting the original author know that one has attended to their post. After all, while the visibility of one’s ‘like’ may be used to add to the original poster’s social capital – something the ‘liker’ may intend – the visibility of one’s ‘like’ can also be employed to reflect well on the ‘liker’. I.e., that one has read and understood the post, in addition to potentially signalling to others that the ‘liker’ likes, or endorses the importance of, the content. Likewise, ‘sharing’ a post can be self-directed

92 In the following chapter I argue that a regular user of such a platform ought to be aware of this effect as, for these regular users, it can be considered common sense knowledge.
when one merely aims to convey to others that one has attended to, and understood, the ‘shared’ post.

In the following section I argue that these self-directed forms of ‘sharing’ and ‘liking’ can be forms of bullshitting (Frankfurt 2005) about the ‘shareworthiness’ (Arielli 2018, p. 253) of the ‘liked’ or ‘shared’ post. I then argue that one can also bullshite about the content of the post through one’s ‘shares’ or ‘likes’, given the implicit contexts discussed in this section.

3. ‘Liking’ and ‘Sharing’ as Bullshitting

McDonald (2021) notes that the social capital that comes with publishing a well-‘liked’ post can motivate posting potentially false, exaggerated, or harmful information, as the desire for this social capital, or even mere social interaction, may override epistemic or moral concerns. This claim is supported by the noted effects of gamification of social interaction prompted by the popularity of social media platforms (e.g., Franck 2020; Nguyen 2021). The affective rewards that come with ‘likes’ or other forms of engagement with one’s post, which may entail a sense of achievement, inclusion, or social status, can prompt users to employ methods described throughout the previous and the following chapter, i.e., sensationalised titles, attention-grabbing images, etc. When the agent cares more about these potential rewards than how the content she provides affects the epistemic standing of others, this agent is likely to bullshite by ‘posting’ information that will increase engagement. In this section, I argue that this potential for bullshitting is applicable to ‘liking’ and ‘sharing’ information posted by others as well.

Following Frankfurt (2005), bullshit refers to a statement by someone who, in uttering or writing it, does not care about whether it is true or false. The focus is instead on the intended consequences of sharing this statement, which can include motivating another to perform an action, to increase one’s social or epistemic status, or other reasons one may have to make the other believe that one possesses the knowledge one proclaims to have. According to Frankfurt, bullshitting is increasingly prevalent due to the increased motivation on people to act as if they possess knowledge on topics they are ignorant about:

Bullshit is unavoidable whenever circumstances require someone to talk without knowing what he is talking about. Thus the production of bullshit is stimulated whenever a person’s obligations or opportunities to speak about some topic
exceed his knowledge of the facts that are relevant to that topic. This discrepancy is common in public life, where people are frequently impelled—whether by their own propensities or by the demands of others—to speak extensively about matters of which they are to some degree ignorant. Closely related instances arise from the widespread conviction that it is the responsibility of a citizen in a democracy to have opinions about everything, or at least everything that pertains to the conduct of his country’s affairs. The lack of any significant connection between a person’s opinions and his apprehension of reality will be even more severe, needless to say, for someone who believes it his responsibility, as a conscientious moral agent, to evaluate events and conditions in all parts of the world.

Frankfurt, 2005, p. 63-64

Since publication, these pressures have only increased. Not only are we able to read about current events from across the world—doing so is increasingly important as the global issues (e.g., climate change, economic fluctuations, pandemics) are likely to affect one’s country, whichever country this may be. We are also, theoretically, able to read about events the moment they happen, wherever these events take place. Lastly, given the easy accessibility of information on whichever topic, in addition to the ubiquity of social media posts where friends, colleagues, or peers share this information, one may believe that one ought to have consumed this information as well. I have already argued that these three elements can induce the experience of epistemic FOMO, where people feel motivated to acquire potentially important or interesting knowledge that peers have plausibly acquired. However, following Frankfurt, this pressure may instead, or additionally, motivate bullshitting. After all, rather than actually consuming the information one’s peers may have consumed, one can simply pretend to have done so by giving uninformed opinions or, as I will argue, by ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ posts they have not read or understood.

This potential consequence of engaging with our contemporary sociotechnical environment is of great importance to responsibilist virtue epistemology, as bullshit’s characteristic lack of care about the truth or falsehood of presented information undermines the motivation required for an act, trait, or agent to be intellectually virtuous. The structure that motivates bullshit, then, also motivates the devaluation of a final POG
or NOI – rather than valuing being informed, one may rather value seeming informed, as being sufficiently informed seems impossible.

While Frankfurt mainly discusses statements where the utterer is indifferent to the truth or falsehood of their claims, Moberger (2020) notes that an absence of care, as described by Frankfurt, can also refer to a lack of conscientiousness: ‘One can care about the truth of one's statements without taking care with respect to them. Being intellectually humble, honest and discerning even to a minimal degree is, unfortunately, not guaranteed by a desire that one's statements be true’ (p. 597). So, on the interpretation of bullshitting as indifference regarding the truth-value of a statement, the motivational quality of intellectual virtue is automatically undermined. On the interpretation of bullshit as indifference towards the veridicality of a statement or as a lack of taking care in establishing the veridicality of a statement, one can possess a final POG or NOI yet lack, or even undermine, the relevant intellectual virtues that allow one to acquire epistemic goods while avoiding epistemic ills. I call the Frankfurtian lack of care about the epistemic value of the information the narrow account, and the lack of conscientiousness in addition to this the broad interpretation.

This assessment of bullshit, whether we only accept the narrow conceptualisation or the broader version that allows for an epistemic motivation on behalf of the agent, seems straightforwardly applicable to people ‘posting’ content: people aim to satisfy some sort of goal, such as pushing a political position, convincing others that one is informed, or accumulating ‘likes’, by ‘posting’ information, disregarding the veridicality of, or justification behind, the content. This is intellectually vicious behaviour as it is epistemically reckless, intellectually dishonest, or epistemically prodigal. More relevant for our present purposes is assessing whether this concept of bullshit is also applicable to ‘shares’ and ‘likes’. In what follows I first discuss ways in which ‘liking’ and ‘sharing’ can fall under the narrow account of bullshitting, before analysing these acts under the broader account.

3.1 Narrow Bullshit
If feeling impelled to seem informed or to possess an informed opinion can motivate bullshitting, as Frankfurt (2005) suggests, then the act of ‘liking’ posts containing information one aims to seem informed about would be an easy way to give this impression. In this context, ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ can entail bullshitting by intending the ‘like’ or ‘share’ to be interpreted as an epistemic endorsement of the content, despite not
caring about the truth-value of the content. These ‘likes’ or ‘shares’ would be a stand-in for communicating or ‘posting’ the content herself, where ‘posting’ this content would be an act of bullshitting. This would thereby be intellectually vicious as this lack of care with regards to the truth-value of the content one espouses reflects epistemic insouciance (Cassam 2018, 2019).

However, as stated, a ‘like’ or ‘share’ need not entail epistemic endorsement, i.e., ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ a post is not the same as the communicative act of claiming that the content of the post is true. One may thereby argue that ‘liking’ a post under these circumstances is rather a way to avoid bullshitting, while still seeming informed. That is, rather than seeming informed by formulating opinions or other statements without care for their truth-value, one can avoid such bullshitting by simply ‘liking’ posts that, e.g., convey understanding of complex topics, informed opinions, or updates on current events, that one is actually ignorant about. Yet I argue that one can nevertheless bullshit through ‘liking’ and ‘sharing’ by bullshitting about the shareworthiness of the content, as well as by bullshitting through the implicit context of one’s ‘like’ or ‘share’.

As argued, ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ a post communicates that one endorses the increased visibility of a post, a function that Arielli (2018) describes as the shareworthiness of the post. While a ‘share’ is more directly related to this function, ‘liking’ performs this function as well. After all, recall that this is one reason behind McDonald’s (2021) argument that a ‘like’ has the phatic function of treating the original author: one is aware that this ‘like’ will increase visibility. In other words, a ‘like’ or ‘share’ entails a communicative act entailing the claim that the post is worth attending to. As such, when one ‘likes’ or ‘shares’ without, e.g., having read the linked article, or understanding the post itself, one bullshits that the post or article is worth attending to.

Bullshitting about the shareworthiness of a post or article can be due to the pressures mentioned by Frankfurt – where one aims to seem informed, (morally) conscientious and opinionated with regards to current events – as well as to increase one’s epistemic status in other respects. For example, ‘liking’ a scientific article on a complex topic can be an act of bullshitting when one has not read the article, or has not understood its content sufficiently to endorse its shareworthiness. So, when ‘liking’ an academic or news article after only having read the headline or abstract, this ‘like’ can serve the function of suggesting that one is well-informed, well-read, or understands complex topics in the hope to improve one’s epistemic status.
In these cases, then, the ‘like’ or ‘share’ is self-directed, as it is performed with the intention to notify others that one has attended to this post, rather than from the aim to make others attend to this post. After all, whether or not others should attend to the post is exactly what one is bullshitting about in these cases. However, other-directed ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ can also be acts of bullshitting. In these cases, the agent need not bullshit about the shareworthiness of the post – she can endorse that the post is shareworthy – as she rather bullshits about the veridicality of the post through implicit contextualisation.

When someone ‘likes’ a post of a friend where this friend celebrates her accomplishment of a new publication, linking the published article to this post, then this agent need not have understood or even read the linked article to support the shareworthiness of this post. After all, she takes this friend’s accomplishment to be shareworthy, so she is not bullshitting about the shareworthiness of this post. Moreover, due to the friend’s words accompanying her linked article (e.g., ‘I’m so happy to announce that my article has finally found a home’) it is clear from context that the ‘like’ or ‘share’ need not imply the epistemic endorsement of the content of the linked article.

However, as noted in Section 3.1, the user’s own reputation also adds to the contextualisation of her ‘like’ or ‘share’. That is, it informs the inferable reason behind her evaluation that the relevant post is shareworthy. When we recall Donald Trump’s tweet complaining about ‘the negative press covfefe’, the misspelling of the final word of this tweet contextualised the meaning behind many of its ‘shares’ and ‘likes’, making it a straightforward assumption that most of those who ‘shared’ or ‘liked’ supported the shareworthiness of this tweet for reasons other than epistemic endorsement. However, if a twitter user is known for her dedicated support of Trump as she frequently ‘likes’ his other tweets and tends to complain about “woke-culture” and “Obamacare”, then her ‘like’ or ‘share’ of this tweet indicates that she endorses Trump’s claim that he endured negative press coverage or negative press conferences. Again, this agent does not bullshit about the shareworthiness of this post, as she takes what the tweet implies to be true: that Trump is treated poorly by the press.

In other words, if an agent’s known positions are in line with the content of the post, and this agent is aware that ‘sharing’ or ‘liking’ increases the visibility of the post, then the implicit contextualisation of her ‘share’ or ‘like’ leads these acts to be epistemic endorsements. This leads to the possibility of an agent valuing truth in general, while nevertheless bullshitting about the truth of a particular claim she ‘shares’ or ‘likes’.
We can compare this to an innocuous instance of bullshitting by an agent aiming to convey understanding. For example, to teach children that manorialism was an element of feudalism that negatively affected the lives of the peasantry, a teacher may use an anecdote she once heard about a particular peasant, Robert, whose exploitation led to disease and the eventual death of his family. The teacher repeats this anecdote in class as an illustration of how much of the peasantry was affected by exploitation under feudalism, without caring about its truth-value (i.e., whether Robert existed and went through these hardships). Despite her good intentions leading her to consider the anecdote shareworthy, the teacher bullshits about the existence of Robert – something that could be avoided by adding context (e.g., stating that the anecdote illustrates a frequent occurrence, whether Robert existed or not).

Similarly, one may take an article or post to be shareworthy for epistemic reasons as it supports a claim one takes to be true. One thereby does not bullshit about the shareworthiness of the post. Nevertheless, when we incorporate the user-specific context motivating the ‘like’ or ‘share’, these can be acts of bullshitting when they are presented as an epistemic justification for holding or sharing the position the user is known to espouse, despite this agent’s lack of care with regards to the truth of the post she ‘liked’ or ‘shared’. For example, when ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ a post about a trans woman intimidating a cis woman in a bathroom, the agent may not care whether or not this event actually took place. She rather treats it as an illustration of trans women, who she sees as male, infiltrating female-only spaces which she considers to be a harmful development. She may thereby consider herself to be epistemically generous, providing more support for the claim that she believes to be true in order for others to also acquire the ‘knowledge’ she believes to possess. Her ‘likes’ or ‘shares’ are thereby epistemically motivated, while still being bullshit.

### 3.2 Broad Bullshit

In the previous section, I discussed ways in which ‘sharing’ or ‘liking’ a post can amount to bullshitting as commonly understood: conveying something without caring whether what one conveys is true or not. I also noted that one can engage in this form of bullshitting even when one’s ‘share’ or ‘like’ is epistemically motivated, as one believes that the relevant post functions as an informative illustration of a proposition one believes to be true. However, as argued by Moberger (2020), one can bullshit when one does not care enough about the veridicality of, or justification behind, a claim before espousing it, or
when one does not take enough care when assessing the veridicality of, or justification behind, the claim one espouses.

If we accept this, then an agent who attempts to be epistemically generous by increasing the visibility of a post to her followers, can be bullshitting when she fails to be epistemically conscientious. Recalling the example presented in the introduction of this chapter, we can thereby argue that ‘sharing’ a post on the top-10 methods to make your bike winter-ready, or ‘liking’ an article on how scientists are unveiling the secrets of quantum entanglement, without reading the respective articles can be considered bullshitting, despite the good intentions of the user. So, if an agent ‘likes’ or ‘shares’ a post without either this post or this agent’s previous behaviour implicitly informing why she considers this post to be shareworthy, then her ‘like’ or ‘share’ implies that she takes the post to be shareworthy as she endorses its content, whether this is endorsing the celebration of a recent publication, or the veridicality and importance of a news article.

To avoid bullshitting on the broad conception while ‘sharing’ or ‘liking’ without any clear non-epistemic context, then, the agent ought to be epistemically responsible in assessing the shareworthiness of the relevant post.

First, to be epistemically responsible, she ought to be at least minimally thorough by reading the material she ‘likes’ or ‘shares’, rather than simply accepting that she probably agrees with the content, or that the content is true, as it was posted by someone who seems trustworthy (e.g., a news platform, friend, or someone who claims to be an expert). Second, and relatedly, she ought to be diligent in checking that the source of the information is in a position to support the claims they present. For example, is the news platform a respected source that aims to deliver quality reporting, supporting this goal by involving experts, diligent journalists, and perceptive editors? Likewise, are scientific claims in a post made by someone who has expertise in this branch of science? Moreover, are posts detailing the experiences of someone in a particular position actually made by someone in this position? Whether one ‘likes’ or ‘shares’ a post or article by someone presenting novel information, or a post that merely refers to other sources, one ought to check whether the information presented is trustworthy given these sources.

Third, one ought to be epistemically responsible by incorporating the context in which the post or article is presented. For example, it might be true that scientist x claims that global warming is caused by natural fluctuations in temperature rather than human interference. But before ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ a post stating this fact, one ought to assess what this post conveys (e.g., that human influence on climate change is negligible, or that
scientists support that the continued use of fossil fuels will not cause further damage). If one would ‘like’ or ‘share’ such a post, even when the content of the post is not false, one would be epistemically irresponsible to increase its visibility do to what the post implies.

If we accept this analysis, then both ‘liking’ and ‘sharing’ can be forms of bullshitting, with potentially damaging effects in the form of spreading misinformation and disinformation. Bullshitting through these forms of engagement undermines intellectual virtue, either on the narrow account by spreading information without caring whether this information is accurate – thereby lacking a final NOI and showing epistemic insouciance (Cassam 2019), or on the broad account by undermining specific intellectual virtues, failing to establish that the relevant post is shareworthy.

This is problematic, as social (and some digital traditional) media platforms are designed to afford this kind of fast and cheap engagement: ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ a post is merely a click away. This is enforced by social media platforms rewarding such engagement through installing certain values or ends, as discussed in previous sections. For example, the motivation to be on the receiving end of ‘likes’ and ‘shares’ can motivate ‘sharing’ and ‘liking’ content posted by others, expecting reciprocity or widening the group of people attending to one’s posts through acquiring more ‘friends’ or ‘followers’. In other words, the desire to post things that would be considered shareworthy by others can motivate bullshitting about the shareworthiness about the posts of others. Intellectual virtues related to sharing epistemic goods are thereby important to develop to engage with our current sociotechnical environment in an epistemically responsible manner. To illustrate, epistemic integrity would stop one from bullshitting to seem informed, as such bullshitting regarding the knowledge one appears to possess when distributing it reflects a level of epistemic deception (De Winter and Kosolosky 2013). Likewise, reflectiveness would prevent one from automatically accepting the veridicality of information shared by others, first reflecting on the likelihood of the information being true or adequately justified.

4. Conclusion
This chapter discussed the epistemic responsibility that ought to be accepted when increasing the visibility of potentially false or unjustified information by ‘sharing’ or ‘liking’ this information. This responsibility is important to keep in mind given the persuasive design of social media platforms that make acts distributing information both easy and rewarding. After all, actively engaging with information by consuming it and checking the justification behind the proposed claims is more effortful and time-consuming than
trusting, e.g., the person sharing the information, or the title of an article. Moreover, ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ the relevant post or article is rewarding as both can communicate that one is, e.g., engaged and informed. It can also feel rewarding when one ‘likes’ for non-epistemic reasons, treating another person to attention, increased visibility, and affirmation. Similarly, the social engagement one may receive after ‘sharing’ an article can feel rewarding as well.

To avoid bullshitting through ‘posting’, ‘sharing’, or ‘liking’, one should first simply care about the truth-value of information one acquires and, explicitly or implicitly, shares. For intellectually virtuous agents, this would be reflected in a final POG or NOI, in addition to the knowledge that one’s engagement increases the visibility of the information. This is further aided by intellectual virtues such as reflectiveness, which motivate pause before acting on one’s inclinations (including those motivated by persuasive design). Intellectual virtues also allow one to take care in accepting the information as justified and true before increasing its visibility. So, by acquiring virtues such as intellectual humility, inquisitiveness, epistemic integrity, thoroughness, and reflectiveness, one can guide one’s online behaviour that increases the visibility of information. These virtues should therefore guide and restrict epistemic generosity, yet they are also applicable to ‘likes’ and ‘shares’ performed out of kindness or other non-epistemic reasons. In other words, before sharing 10 tips on how to make your motorcycle winter ready, for whatever reason, first establish that one of these tips does not involve heating up the engine with a flamethrower.
1. Introduction

This chapter is the third and final instalment in the application of the proposed framework on our epistemic sociotechnical environment. While Chapter 7 and 8 respectively discussed maladaptive epistemic dispositions and epistemically irresponsible forms of information distribution, this chapter returns to the motivational element of epistemic action. In the following section, I analyse the potential value and disvalue of experiencing and acting on epistemic FOMO within the wisdom framework, referring to the prudential and epistemic concerns discussed in previous chapters. Following this, Section 3 explores how moral considerations ought to shape our epistemic engagement with our digital environment through the epistemic emotion of morbid curiosity. There, I suggest that the Aristotelian virtue of friendliness can guide our consumption of attention-grabbing information.

2. Epistemic FOMO

In the previous chapter, I discussed the possibility of agents deciding to bullshit about the shareability of articles or other sources of information, as actually reading all the content one may feel pressured to be informed about is, or seems, impossible. However, when experiencing epistemic FOMO that reflects a final NOI, one is afraid of missing out on potentially important knowledge as one values such knowledge, rather than, or on top of, valuing appearing to be informed. The epistemic FOMO directed towards the knowledge plausibly acquired by one’s peers or social group would thereby motivate the acquisition of this knowledge which, given its sheer amount, would be a desire that is potentially impossible to satisfy.

In what follows, I discuss the ways in which experiencing or acting on epistemic FOMO can undermine an element of wisdom, whereby one’s epistemic behaviour would fail to be apt. I do so by, first, discussing the concern that epistemic FOMO may lead one to construct epistemic bubbles, where one’s selective exposure is epistemically harmful.
I argue that this need not be the case when one has acquired, actively constructs, or sees oneself in the context of, an epistemic cohort or peer group that is sufficiently varied and epistemically responsible. Nevertheless, as I argue in Section 2.2, having a general disposition to experience epistemic FOMO can lead to acts or habits that fail to be accurate.\footnote{Recall the distinction between a general and context-specific disposition: the former denotes the disposition to $\phi$, while the latter refers to a disposition to $\phi$ when the conditions $xyz$ are satisfied. As such, a general disposition to experience epistemic FOMO refers to experiencing this emotion in situations where the conditions to make this affective response justified or measured need not be present.} Namely, by negatively affecting the mental health of the agent, and through epistemic self-indulgence.

2.1 Epistemic Consequences

Epistemic FOMO is linked to social media platforms, which are notorious for presenting misinformation and sophisticated disinformation (Bradshaw and Howard 2019; Dawson and Innes 2019; Johnson and St. John 2020; Morgan 2018). In other words, where epistemic FOMO motivates one to check social media for shared information, one is likely to come across content specifically designed to trick the user. As such, when epistemic FOMO is induced by, and enacted on, social media, one is likely to consume misinformation or disinformation which, due to its sophisticated nature, may lead the user to accept falsehoods. However, the same holds for acting on, e.g., curiosity sparked by posts on social media platforms. Moreover, while epistemic FOMO is often induced by social media, it need not lead to accepting the shared content. In what follows I therefore focus on epistemic FOMO’s role in the active formation of epistemic bubbles.

In the existent literature, epistemic bubbles are analysed in terms of the selective exposure that results from being in a particular environment (e.g., Nguyen 2020). First, we often acquire information through our social circle which has not been selected for epistemic purposes; we do not choose our friends or family based on them presenting us with an accurate and balanced overview of current events or other topics of interest. Nevertheless, novel topics or information are often shared with us by this social circle. Second, in our digital environment we are often presented with personalised social (or even traditional) media feeds, based on topics and views we, or our social circle, are already interested in or agree with. Third, search engine results also tend to be personalised, presenting us with answers to our questions, and even suggested formulations of questions, that are in line with our predicted views and interests given our
online profile (e.g., Alfano et al. 2021; Miller and Record 2013). In all three cases, the agent does not choose to be presented with selective content – she may not even be aware that the consumed information is personalised. When one acts on epistemic FOMO, however, one chooses to engage with the information because one’s social circle or peer group plausibly consumed this information. As such, acting on epistemic FOMO leads one to actively contribute to the selective exposure already present in one’s digital environment.

This selective exposure relates to which topics are popular in one’s social circle or peer group, as well as to how these topics are understood. This is affected by the sources generally employed by one’s social group, e.g., whether one’s peers or social circles tend to read *The Times* or *The Guardian*. After all, if one is afraid to miss out on epistemic goods plausibly acquired by one’s social circle, one is motivated to read the sources usually employed by this social circle. This affects the topics one reads about, as newspapers often present information catered to their readers or topics that would attract the most attention, as well as how these topics are reported on, e.g., from a perspective that takes the intended reader’s values into account.

This effect is not limited to current events; people working in academic disciplines may also construct epistemic bubbles out of epistemic FOMO. After all, if one experiences epistemic FOMO while studying or working in philosophy, one is motivated to read the classics – the works plausibly read by those in one’s field – rather than works of equal value that have historically been ignored (e.g., works by minorities within the field). Again, while such bubbles can already form due to the information presented by one’s environment (e.g., having grown up with a particular newspaper or course organisers only including the classics on a reading list), epistemic FOMO explicitly motivates one to consume the information one believes one’s peer group plausibly consumes.⁹⁴

Yet epistemically detrimental consequences are not inherent to epistemic FOMO. First, recall that when acting on epistemic FOMO, the agent may reflect on the content, be perceptive to the relevant details or potential inaccuracies, and be openminded, i.e., neither gullible nor closeminded, regarding the content. Likewise, the agent tends to trust one’s peers to focus on topics, authors, or media sources that are, e.g., interesting, important to a particular field, or accurately represent the topic. Comparing this to FOMO *simpliciter*, after all, an agent is unlikely to act on FOMO, or even experience it, if she

⁹⁴ Note that this lack of passivity, where the agent knowingly and willingly consumes information plausibly consumed by her peers, is in line with the epistemic virtue of intellectual autonomy.
believes that the event will not be important or exciting – an element indicated by her peers or social circle attending or experiencing the event or experience. Nevertheless, as epistemic bubbles can form, constructing a reliable epistemic community should be of importance when assessing one’s epistemic position, rather than acting or not acting on epistemic FOMO.

Whether one can indeed trust that her social circle or peer group will share or recommend sources or information that aid her in working towards her epistemic goal (e.g., being informed in her field or getting an accurate grasp of a topic) thereby depends on whether the agent has constructed an active or good epistemic community. In other words, I argue that one need not simply find herself in a social group that is then employed for epistemic purposes. Rather, our sociotechnical environment gives one the opportunity to construct an epistemic community in line with one’s interests.

Within academia, for example, the colleagues working in one’s university’s department may value the ideas or books by traditionally big names, or they may also value works that have historically been unrecognised despite their high-quality content and underestimated impact on later theories. When the latter is applicable to one’s department, experiencing and acting on epistemic FOMO aids one in acquiring knowledge without the selective exposure induced by her behaviour being epistemically detrimental. When the former is applicable, her sociotechnical environment provides her with the opportunity to expand her epistemic community to include academics who do pay attention to authors or topics that inform the agent’s topic of interest beyond the generally employed canon. Applying this to the experience of epistemic FOMO, the agent can perceive herself to be part of a larger group than one constituted by her colleagues alone. For example, when this agent is an epistemologist, she can see other epistemologists from all over the world as her peers, rather than only those who work in the same building. If she thereby experiences epistemic FOMO within this context, it can be directed towards, e.g., topics within epistemology that are currently popular or discussed on social media by other epistemologists, arguments or citations mentioned by epistemologists she personally knows or trusts, and articles within the epistemology discipline that are published in renowned journals.

In short, while frequently experiencing and acting on epistemic FOMO may lead to the formation of epistemic bubbles, this need not be the case. Epistemically detrimental selective exposure can be avoided when the agent’s social circle is constituted by agents possessing a varied array of points of view, where the knowledge they (plausibly) possess
collectively reflects an informed assessment of the topic of interest they all share, or when the agent takes an active role in assessing and constructing her epistemic cohort or peer group to prevent this epistemically detrimental selective exposure. However, these methods of prevention lead to another problem for the agent dispositionally experiencing epistemic FOMO. Namely, that the information that must be gathered to satiate this emotion may be impossible for the agent to consume given her limited (free) time.

2.3 Epistemic Self-Indulgence and Other Forms of Excess

In Chapter 6, I noted that experiences of FOMO *simpliciter* and epistemic FOMO have a tendency to become dispositional (Elhai et al. 2020; Dogan 2019; Milyavskaya et al. 2018). This is partly due to the vicious cycle of checking social (or traditional) media out of (epistemic) FOMO, which then induces (epistemic) FOMO when coming across experiences (or epistemic goods) one may miss out on. In the case of epistemic FOMO, social media can display the various ‘posts’, ‘likes’, and ‘shares’ of people one follows, where all these forms of engagement indicate that at least some members of her social circle or peer group have consumed the content of the post or article referenced. Similarly, checking news platforms or special interest websites (perhaps out of epistemic FOMO) can induce epistemic FOMO when it makes her aware of the fact that she has not consumed the potentially popular articles posted on these platforms, while her peers plausibly have.

Moreover, epistemic FOMO differs from FOMO *simpliciter* as prototypical instances of the former (checking the news headlines or reading an article) tend to be directed towards actions that are more readily available than prototypical examples of the latter (going to a social event). To illustrate, when an agent receives a text about a party, or sees a picture of the event on social media, the resulting FOMO may motivate her to, e.g., get dressed, buy some drinks, and travel to the party – steps that may all discourage her from responding to her FOMO. Yet if simply clicking on a picture of a party would transport her there, this option would be harder to resist. While for FOMO this option is hypothetical, for epistemic FOMO it is not. Due to the prevalence of computers and smartphones, reading an article or checking social or traditional media is merely a click away. This means that epistemic FOMO has fewer hurdles to overcome when it is in conflict with another possible choice, increasing the likelihood of its enaction.

Additionally, as I argued in the introduction of Chapter 7, one’s epistemic value of being informed can also contain a more fine-grained value of valuing being informed on
topic x right now, or on event y as it unfolds. These epistemic values motivating an urgency element of epistemic FOMO, can arguably be reflective of a final POG or NOI in a similar way to the greater value of being informed. Similar to ‘interest’ standing in an extrinsic but non-instrumental value relation to an epistemic good, the epistemic good being valued by one’s peers can also add to its final value. Likewise, then, that an epistemic good includes information that has only recently been uncovered, or that it is currently engaged with in the agent’s social circle or society, can add extrinsic value to the good that need not be reduced to instrumental value.

Likewise, epistemic FOMO can become dispositional due to her awareness of the sheer amount of information plausibly consumed by these peers or members of her social circle. This amount of information can thereby induce a continual experience of epistemic FOMO: there is always more information plausibly consumed by her peer group, especially when this group is varied enough to avoid epistemically harmful selective exposure. Additionally, due to the global dispersal of many epistemic communities, as well as the interest in current events from around the world, updates are being shared literally around the clock.

I argue that such a disposition can lead to epistemically self-indulgence. Recall the discussion of epistemically self-indulgent habits induced by persuasive design. These habits are self-indulgent due to the continuous or frequent experience of displeasure when one does not engage in information-acquisition. As noted, an awareness of the sheer amount of information containing potentially important or exciting knowledge one is missing out on, can lead to a frequent or continual experience of epistemic FOMO. Moreover, when epistemic FOMO is directed to current events, it may lead to frequent doomchecking, or turning on notifications for several news apps, immediately checking one’s phone with every notification. So, having a general disposition to experience epistemic FOMO, where this is experienced as a negatively valenced affective state and where the motivated epistemic behaviour merely offers a short respite from experiencing this emotion, would be epistemically self-indulgent.

Additionally, akin to FOMO simpliciter, epistemic FOMO motivates one to enact possibilities for action that may be in conflict with other, potentially more prudent options. After all, epistemic FOMO directs attention to potentially important or exciting information even when one planned on going to sleep, to work, or to a party (i.e., one can thereby be torn between epistemic FOMO and FOMO simpliciter). Acquiring information one is afraid to miss out on can thereby stop one from pursuing other pleasures – pleasures the
Aristotle’s temperate agent enjoys: those that “conduce to health and fitness […]”; as also other pleasures so far as they are not detrimental to health and fitness, and not ignoble, nor beyond his means” (NE 1119a 16-18). Pleasures that conduce to health can include eating well, sleep, and working out. Moreover, given Aristotle’s positive evaluation of friendship, going to dinners or parties with one’s social circle, communally enjoying the pleasures that one can partake in without over-indulging (e.g., unhealthy food or alcohol), also seems in line with temperance. As such, if one dispositionally experiences epistemic FOMO to such an extent that one stops engaging with healthy pleasures (e.g., sleep, exercise, eating tasty food, and social contact), this moral insensitivity prevents her epistemic behaviour from being accurate.

Lastly, recall the link between FOMO and increased anxiety (Elhai et al. 2016; Milyavskaya et al. 2018; Oberst et al. 2017), which was argued in Chapter 6 to be applicable to epistemic FOMO as well. Dispositionally experiencing and acting on epistemic FOMO, then, where the agent is aware that this behaviour may negatively affect her mental health, would undermine the element of wisdom argued for in Chapter 5 and 7. As such, an agent would be excessively curious, inquisitive, thorough, or determined when she is aware that she puts her mental health at risk by acting on epistemic FOMO.

3. Morbid Curiosity

Morbid curiosity is an epistemic emotion which, as argued, can reflect a final POG whereby it could be constitutive of adroit intellectually virtuous action. After all, being curious about topics because they relate to death, violence, or other morbid concerns seems similar to being curious about topics because they are of interest given one’s nationality (e.g., local news rather than morbid news) or one’s hobbies (e.g., famous violinists rather than famous serial killers). Rejecting morbidity as a topic of interest that adds to one’s final POG directed to a piece of knowledge therefore seems arbitrary. Morbid curiosity can thereby function as the epistemic motivation necessary for adroit intellectually virtuous action.

However, as I argue in what follows, whether the actions this epistemic emotion motivates are aptly intellectually virtuous depends on whether the information sought out is, or can be, ethically acquired and enjoyed. While the accuracy condition of admirability is required for all epistemically motivated behaviours, morbid curiosity in particular may motivate one to act in ways that contradict moral considerations. Specifically, I argue that
the Aristotelian virtue of friendliness provides us with parameters restricting the cases where an epistemic act, motivated by morbid curiosity, can be apt.

I first discuss the ways in which one's online behaviour, motivated by morbid curiosity, can undermine friendliness due to the consequences of this behaviour. While this relies, in part, on the agent's awareness of the consequences of her action, in some cases she can be blameworthy for not possessing this knowledge, making her blameworthy for the act as well. After all, as argued in the previous chapter, one ought to know the very basics of the consequences of one's online behaviour, including the increased visibility of posts one 'shares' or 'likes'. Moreover, I argue that further knowledge about the effects of one's behaviour in the environment one frequently inhabits, including the digital environment, is a sufficiently important constitutive part of practical wisdom such that lacking a desire to acquire it, or consistently failing to act on this desire despite having the means to do so, would undermine the deliberative element of practical wisdom. Second, I argue that enjoying morbid content (as it is morbid, rather than, e.g., enjoying one's sense of achievement upon acquiring knowledge) could in itself undermine the motivational component of practical wisdom. Lastly, I apply this analysis to examples of persuasive design that could induce morbid curiosity, motivating inaccurate acts of intellectual virtue.

3.1 Friendliness
Friendliness (previously mentioned in Chapter 5 as the Aristotelian virtue from which the neo-Aristotelian virtue of kindness is derived) entails an attitude of goodwill towards others that is normally directed towards one's friends (NE 1155ba.34). Friendliness, then, refers to a disposition to treat others as if they are friends. This is a valued trait as 'we praise those who love their fellow men' (NE 1155a.20). This friendliness, involving a love for others and wishing them well, minimises the necessity of the virtue of justice, while 'the highest form of justice seems to have an element of friendly feeling in it' (1155a.27-28).

Note that this discussion of friendliness is, in part, based on Aristotle's account of friendship (NE 1155 – 1165). Friendliness is distinct from friendship as the latter requires reciprocity. This is why one cannot be friends with someone who is vicious: while a friendly agent may love or have goodwill towards a vicious agent, the vicious agent fails to show goodwill as they do not value the virtues that contribute to eudaimonia, i.e., the qualities that allow one to live well and be happy. They thereby do not motivate or otherwise aid the other to live well, and may even motivate her to endorse or perform acts that are in conflict with living well. In other words, goodwill towards another entails, on Aristotle's account, that one wishes them well, including wishing the other to live well, as this brings them closer to eudaimonia.

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An agent’s friendliness is morally virtuous when she experiences and shows goodwill towards others as she values these others for their own sake: ‘when men wish the good of those they love for their own sakes, their goodwill does not depend on emotion but on a fixed disposition’ (NE 1157b.31-34). The deficiency of this virtue is thereby not reducible to being cruel to one’s fellow men. Rather, it entails a lack of goodwill to others, which thereby merely explains why one who possesses this vice could perform cruel acts. In other words, acts that would not be considered cruel, yet are performed as one lacks goodwill towards others, undermine the virtue of friendliness.

So, if an act reflects a lack of goodwill towards another agent, failing to value them as a person, this act would undermine the motivational or deliberative element of phronesis. This includes acts that do not physically harm the other, but that still treat the other and their values, needs, or wishes as irrelevant for the deliberative process informing one’s behaviour. For example, consuming information explicitly detailing the torture or violence someone had to endure, where this information is not shared with the consent of the victim, would undermine moral concerns connected to respect for others. While intuition may differ on considering the consumption of this information cruel or not, ignoring the wishes of others regarding what elements of their lives they are willing to share, even when they are the wishes of strangers, would undermine the Aristotelian concept of friendliness. In what follows I argue that this analysis is applicable to two categories of behaviour potentially motivated by morbid curiosity: ignoring the effect of one’s actions upon the wellbeing of others, and enjoying the acquisition or possession of morbid information.

3.2 Friendliness and Consequences of Morbid Curiosity

Acting on one’s morbid curiosity by reading or otherwise engaging with the (category of) information that inspired this emotion might be indirectly harmful, as illustrated by the effect of reading or sharing the manifesto of mass-murderers. That manifestos published, posted, or shared by the mass-murderer are widely read, after all, has been established as a motivation for others to publish their manifestos (or other collections of their beliefs) accompanied by mass murderer or terrorists attacks; the precedent of engagement with such manifestos adds to another agent’s motivation to commit similarly

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96 One need not directly show the manifesto to others for this effect to be established. Rather, as argued in the previous chapter, ‘liking’, ‘sharing’, or otherwise engaging with it on social media can already distribute the text or message in the way aimed for by the author, as well as potential future terrorists and mass-murderers.
atrocious acts in order to draw attention to their ideas or beliefs (e.g., Berger 2019; Meindl and Ivy 2017). So, while one may apply the virtues of inquisitiveness or curiosity by reading this manifesto in an attempt to increase one’s understanding of why or how someone would be motivated to perform such acts of violence, these acts fail to be accurate when one disregards the potentially harmful effects of one’s epistemic behaviour.

One caveat to this is that, for the presence of such considerations to undermine friendliness and thereby practical wisdom, the agent must either be aware of the harmful consequences of her actions and perform them despite this awareness, or the information that these acts of engagement have these harmful consequences must fall into the category of ‘common knowledge’ that is available to the agent, i.e., one would have to be blameworthy for not possessing this knowledge (Montmarquet 1995).

There are various possibilities for potentially harmful information-acquisition available to the contemporary agent, without the agent intending or being aware of the harm they may cause. For example, one may regularly click on the videos of someone suffering from an eating disorder, simply to check whether they are still alive or whether their condition has improved or deteriorated. This may seem like a morally motivated act as it indicates that one cares for this individual, where regularly checking up on them is part of this caring disposition. It could also be an epistemically motivated act – one that could be considered adroitly intellectually virtuous as the behaviour reflects the immediate end of inquisitiveness and the information one is after could aid practical wisdom (e.g., knowing about a loss within a community important to the agent can inform her behaviour within this community). It can also be an example of morbid curiosity – the topic of this section – where the agent aims to acquire information on the progression of this person’s disease or potential death as the agent is interested in the morbid ways in which an eating disorder affects the body of the person who suffers from it. This could reflect a final POG constitutive of sophia, when it is part of an effort to, e.g., understand this particular disease, or the effect of malnutrition on the body. Whatever the motivation of the agent, however, if the content creator with an eating disorder tallies their views or makes a living out of displaying their physical and mental ill-health, a high number of views may motivate continuing the behaviour that allows them to post this attention-drawing content, rather than seeking help to improve their health.

Similarly, attending to videos depicting dangerous acts such as free climbing, or immoral acts, such as “pick-up artists” sexually assaulting women, motivates the content
creators to continue putting their own life in danger or harming others, for reasons of monetisation or the novel social good of receiving ‘likes’. In relation to the former, Williams (2018) argues that the viewers of videos displaying dangerous acts are complicit in the potential eventual death of the user posting the video.

The question thereby becomes: to what extent can the agent be blameworthy for their online information-acquisition motivated by morbid curiosity? As argued in the previous chapter, the fact that ‘liking’, ‘sharing, or even clicking on or ‘viewing’ a post increases the visibility of this post on the relevant platform ought to be considered common knowledge. After all, when someone frequently uses a particular platform, we are able to expect this user to be aware of the direct effects of their actions on this platform. Similar to the increased visibility of ‘liked’ posts, I argue that it should also be common knowledge that platforms and creators can make money from one’s engagement with a post or article. While one need not be familiar with the exact monetisation structures in place on different platforms, it is common sense that platforms and creators make money through adverts or sponsored content. It should also be common sense that individual creators and the CEOs of many platforms may act from a financial motivation.

If the agent consumes content out of morbid curiosity, they possess the knowledge, belief, or expectation that this content can contain morbid information or imagery. So, videos or articles by “pick-up artists” would be consumed because they (may) include sexual assault, videos reflecting dangerous behaviour because the subject may get hurt, etc. As such, the agent ought to reflect on whether they endorse that their online behaviour may aid in financing or motivating sexual assault or life-threatening behaviour. If they neglect taking this potential consequence into account while being aware that they consume morbid content, either due to a lack of goodwill or a lack of common sense knowledge, they undermine friendliness, whereby their potentially adroit intellectually virtuous acts fail to be admirable, and thereby apt.

On the other hand, one may not be aware of the specific circumstances through which an article or post was published, for which one would not be blameworthy. For example, when one is morbidly curious about self-harm and therefore clicks on content displaying the wounds of someone who has engaged in this activity, one is not blameworthy for lacking the knowledge that this picture or video was not consensually shared. As such, one is not blameworthy for the added distress experienced by the
person who sees that yet another person has witnessed this very private part of their experience.

There is a middle ground between the extremes of knowing the basic effects of one’s engagement on a platform one frequently uses, and knowing the morally relevant context of a particular post or publication. This includes the manifesto example presented at the start of this section, as well as the more complex mechanisms at work within the attention economy (e.g., the trustworthiness of specific news outlets given the ways in which they aim to capture attention, a platform’s monetisation methods, or how data mining affects future content one is exposed to). While one may not be blameworthy for lacking this knowledge initially, one would be blameworthy for lacking the desire to acquire this knowledge, i.e., lacking a desire to acquire knowledge that contributes to living well in new media contexts.

When we recall Chapter 5’s discussion of knowledge that can aid one’s generosity, I argued that an awareness of how much one could stand to share is necessary for the agent to act on this virtue and lacking knowledge of one’s income and, e.g., one’s rent would be blameworthy if the agent has access to this information (e.g., when she is not unexpectedly fired from her job). On the other hand, an understanding of how the cost-of-living crises will affect her in the following five years, or what charities are effective in fighting for a worthwhile cause, add to one’s ability to be generous, yet lacking this knowledge or understanding does not make her blameworthy for her being overly careful with her finances, donating less than she would otherwise, or donating to charities where a big chunk of this donation goes to bonuses for the top management of these charities. However, when an agent values generosity, she ought to also be motivated to learn how to put it into practise more effectively. E.g., she ought to be motivated to acquire knowledge on whether the charity she donates to puts this donation to good use.

Similarly, while an agent may not be blameworthy for lacking knowledge of, e.g., the type of content usually presented on particular platforms (e.g., what news outlets engage in sensationalist reporting or privacy breaches) or by particular content creators (e.g., does this individual use cruelty to capture attention), one ought to desire acquiring this knowledge when it is relevant for living well in her digital environment. Note that, similar to the discussion of phronesis in Chapter 5, the knowledge one ought to possess or desire is agent-specific. For example, if an agent never or only very rarely uses YouTube or TikTok, she need not know that these platforms pay content creators for the ‘views’ they gather. If one visits these platforms frequently, however, she ought to desire...
knowledge on the financial incentives and restrictions in place for those posting on the platform.

In this section, I have argued that consuming (morbid) content where one is aware of the potentially harmful consequences undermines the virtue of friendliness. One can also fail to be aware of these harmful consequences while still undermining practical wisdom with one’s behaviour. Namely, when a particular platform or source of information is part of one’s day-to-day digital environment. If this is the case, then the basic effects of one’s engagement on this platform would be considered common knowledge, where one would be blameworthy for lacking this knowledge and therefore one’s behaviour (e.g., sitting through an advert to watch a video of sexual assault). Moreover, if one has no desire to acquire more complex knowledge on how to live well in one’s sociotechnical environment, one would undermine the deliberative quality of practical wisdom. As such, an agent who dispositionally experiences morbid curiosity ought to also possess the motivation to acquire epistemic goods on how to act on this epistemic emotion without causing harm.

3.3 Friendliness and Morbid Behaviour

Morbid curiosity may also undermine the motivational element of phronesis when the discussed elements that make the information-acquisition blameworthy do not apply i.e., without the agent’s potential knowledge of the effects of her engagement being relevant. Namely, when an agent’s engagement with morbid content itself undermines friendliness by failing to treat the people involved as people deserving of respect, love, and autonomy. I illustrate this through, first, instances of morbid curiosity that entail the prospect of pleasure when engaging with morbid content and, second, through the relevance of consent.

Reading about a gruesome murder should not arouse pleasure given the virtue of friendliness. After all, it shows a lack of goodwill towards the victims of this murder – an absence of seeing them as people worthy of respect, love, and staying alive. As the intellectual virtues are directed towards wisdom rather than friendliness, the initial spark of pleasure or excitement when stumbling upon an article detailing this murder does not undermine wisdom. The subsequent desire to read this article out of morbid curiosity also does not undermine wisdom, despite this desire not being in line with friendliness. After all, the motivational element of practical wisdom allows one to perform acts that are in line with moral virtue despite opposing desires. However, if she clicks on this article or
reads it because she expects to experience further pleasure by learning about the gruesome details, she does undermine practical wisdom. In other words, using the suffering of others for one’s epistemic enjoyment undermines friendliness and the motivational element of wisdom as this refers to an intentional act, while experiencing an affective state that is not in line with one’s values can be an automatic response to a situation – one that can be reflected upon, regulated, and, with practise, prevented.

Additionally, when an agent does not expect to experience pleasure from their morbidly curious behaviour, one can nevertheless undermine friendliness when her curiosity motivates her to ignore issues of consent. Recall the example concerning self-harm discussed in the previous subsection: if the morbidly curious agent is aware that this imagery was spread without the consent of the depicted subject, then engaging with this content would undermine friendliness even when she also knows that the depicted subject will not know that her image is spread without consent. After all, the morbidly curious agent fails to show goodwill to this subject as she ignores their right to informational self-determination. This entails the ‘the authority of the individual to decide himself, on the basis of the idea of self-determination, when and within what limits information about his private life should be communicated to others’ (Rouvroy et al. 2009, citing BVerfGE 65, 1, pertaining to the 1983 Census Act determined by the German Federal Constitutional Court). While one need not be aware of these terms or legal decisions, it can be considered common sense that consuming private information about someone without their consent to satisfy their morbid curiosity, means that one does not treat this person with the respect that she deserves. I.e., while an agent may not be blameworthy for not knowing that the private information was shared without consent, she is blameworthy for not knowing that if private information is shared without consent, consuming it would be disrespectful.

This element of friendliness is relevant for many prolific problems present in the digital environment. It pertains to, e.g., revenge porn, the right to be forgotten, and doxing. With this in mind, morbid curiosity is not the only emotion that ought to be restrained by friendliness for it to motivate apt acts of intellectual virtue.97

97 Note that many of these examples would also undermine the moral virtue of justice. However, as I suggested in this section, an act need not be cruel or unjust to undermine the moral value of possessing goodwill towards others.
3.4 Morbid Curiosity in the Attention Economy

With this account of morbid curiosity in tow, we can return to the ways it is roused by our digital environment and how to respond to the affordances it draws attention to. One example of morbid curiosity being used to grab attention, is by displaying thumbnails containing violent or otherwise morbid imagery. The proper function of thumbnails, which are images, reduced in size and containing a link to the full-sized image, video, or article it accompanies, is to provide a visual representation of the larger content it links to. In practise, however, they are often chosen to draw the attention of the user. The same is applicable to text, such as (sensationalised) headlines on news websites, explicit titles of posts on Reddit or Youtube, or the content of short social or traditional media posts.

Such online content aims to grab attention and, to reiterate the point made in the sections on epistemic FOMO, is likely to motivate action given the seemingly low costs connected to this action. The information is merely one click away, and consuming it is not likely to be highly time-consuming. As such, even when one does not dispositionally experience morbid curiosity, platforms and content creators driven by the attention-economy can induce this emotion, motivating the seemingly cheap cognitive action of clicking, watching, reading, or even more pro-active actions such as ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’, discussed in the previous Chapter. So, akin to modulating one’s motivation to perform acts that increase the visibility of potentially false information, one can employ the virtues of reflectiveness to halt and assess the epistemic behaviour motivated by persuasive design.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed two epistemic emotions that are instantiated, enforced, or employed to capture and retain our attention. I argued that experiencing and acting on epistemic FOMO can easily become dispositional given our sociotechnical environment, potentially resulting in epistemically self-indulgent habits or acquisition methods that can undermine the prudential element of practical wisdom. To avoid this, the intellectually virtuous agent ought to value her wellbeing to adequately inform her decision to act on her epistemic FOMO or not. Moreover, an intellectually responsible agent can avoid the epistemically detrimental epistemic bubbles that may form through her epistemic FOMO by being active in evaluating or creating her epistemic community. Second, while morbid curiosity is evergreen, platforms can aim to induce this emotion to capture attention. This can motivate epistemic behaviour that may undermine moral virtues such as friendliness.
To avoid such actions, the intellectually virtuous agent ought to be reflective to assess whether she endorses this epistemic behaviour, similar to questioning whether one endorses increasing the visibility of a post before ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ it.

Given the sophisticated methods employed by online platforms to capture and retain our attention, possibilities to act on epistemic emotions induced by persuasive design can seem highly inviting and easy to respond to. It often merely entails a click of a button or not directing one’s attention away from the displayed content. As such, when one does not (yet) possess the virtuous dispositions allowing one to ignore affordances that would undermine wisdom, responsibility engaging with this digital environment can be difficult. This could seem like a limitation of the account presented in this thesis: it is plausible that few people truly possess the intellectual virtues allowing for wise engagement. So, in the following and final chapter, I suggest methods of emotion regulation that can improve the reliability of the intellectual virtues within our sociotechnical environment.
In the introduction of this thesis, I gave the example of an agent taking a stroll through a crowded city centre, where so many people and events were fighting for her attention that her original epistemic intentions were thwarted. In the chapters that followed, I aimed to provide an account of intellectual virtue that allows the agent to engage wisely with this relatively novel epistemic environment. In what follows, I give a succinct overview of the framework proposed this thesis and how it was applied. While I have argued that the responsibilist virtues are well-suited to guide one away from the ubiquitous pitfalls within our sociotechnical environment, one’s virtues may be imperfect – as many of ours are. I therefore suggest methods of emotion regulation that can aid one’s intellectually virtuous processes in an environment that appeals ‘to the lowest parts of us’ (Williams 2018, p. 29) to capture and keep our attention. Most importantly, one can regulate one’s emotions by adjusting the situations that cause the unwanted emotions. While we may be unable to ignore or remove the many newsies, street performers, and flyerers while strolling through our city centre, we are able to use apps and browser extensions to try and make our digital space more our own.

1. An Overview
Chapter 1 presented an overview of responsibilist epistemic virtues and their connection to knowledge. This was compared to the direct and constitutive relation with knowledge possessed by reliabilist virtues, as argued by Sosa (e.g., 2007, 2017) through his AAA structure of competence. To illustrate, a percept of a strawberry constitutes a belief that is Adroit when produced by one’s reliable faculty of perception, Accurate (i.e., true) when there is indeed a strawberry in one’s visual field, and Apt when the perceptual belief is accurate due to one’s reliable faculty of perception. If this belief is apt, one knows that there is a strawberry present. While I argued that the responsibilist virtues lack such a direct and constitutive relation with knowledge, they can possess this relationship with wisdom.
The account of wisdom presented in Chapter 2 incorporates the most prominent wisdom conceptions within western philosophy: practical, theoretical, and Socratic wisdom, resulting in a wisdom concept that reflects the implicit theory of wisdom. The novelty of this account, however, is based in the way in which these concepts are combined to form a complex and holistic account, where the elements of these three wisdom concepts add to and constrain one another. It is this account of wisdom that is partly constituted by apt acts of intellectual virtue.

As argued in Chapter 1 and 3, an adroit act on this model is the product of an intellectual virtue, i.e., an epistemically motivated, acquired, admirable, stable, and reliable disposition to establish the implicit end of the relevant virtue (i.e., the characteristic and skilled behaviour related to this virtue). As argued in Chapter 4, such an adroit act is accurate when it is admirable, meaning that it is successfully virtuous. This entails that the relevant act cannot undermine another virtue, intellectual or moral, as these virtues are constitutive elements of wisdom. As such, if an act is adroit, accurate, and accurate as it is adroit, this act is apt, and thereby a wise act.

Chapter 5 consolidated the connection between intellectual virtue and wisdom, noting the connection between the intellectual character traits and the motivations, dispositions, and abilities constituting the contemporary and complex account of wisdom proposed in Chapter 2. Directing the intellectual virtues towards wisdom also provides the normative foundations for taking moral and prudential considerations into account when assessing a trait, habit, or act as intellectually virtuous or not. It thereby grants intellectual virtue the function it implicitly already possessed: acquiring, assessing, and sharing valuable epistemic goods in a responsible and admirable manner. This account entails that an apt act of intellectual virtue is wise, giving the responsibilist virtues a direct and constitutive relation to this highly valuable epistemic good.

This chapter also provided a differentiation between required, constitutive, and trivial epistemic goods that the intellectually virtuous agent can acquire. The required epistemic goods entailed the knowledge, understanding and skills for which the agent would be blameworthy when lacking them. For practical wisdom, this entails common sense knowledge, where this is determined by the agent’s situation and the accessibility of this knowledge. Other practical knowledge that could aid one in living well is constitutive but not required knowledge. Theoretical wisdom is partly constituted by a complex understanding of academic topics, yet one need not possess this understanding to live in accordance with sophia. Instead, what is required is the basic knowledge or skills
that allow one to acquire such a complex understanding. For Socratic wisdom, one must possess the knowledge that human knowledge is fallible, including one’s own. A further understanding of one’s cognitive limitations adds to one’s Socratic wisdom. The epistemic goods that are not required for, and do not add to, wisdom are not sufficiently worthwhile to acquire, i.e., they are trivial.

This framework was enriched further in Chapter 6 by discussing epistemic emotions that can be constitutive of an intellectually virtuous motivation, before being applied to increasingly ubiquitous phenomena in our sociotechnical environment. Chapter 7 addressed the prudential concerns arising from epistemic habits or dispositions that can be maladaptive to the extent of inducing episodes of anxiety or depression. This was followed by Chapter 8’s analysis of the novel methods of information distribution through ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ articles or ‘posts’, which may harm the epistemic standing of others when the necessary knowledge and intellectual virtues related to Socratic wisdom are not applied. That is, one ought to be able and willing to admit to one’s cognitive limitations, and take care in assessing these limitations in others before ‘sharing’ their testimony, or distributing it by ‘liking’ it.

Finally, I returned to some of the epistemic emotions discussed in Chapter 6. While epistemic emotions that reflect that one finally values epistemic goods and finally disvalues epistemic ills can partly constitute an intellectually virtuous motivation, they may also motivate epistemic behaviour that fails to be apt. This was analysed through the epistemic emotions of morbid curiosity and epistemic FOMO, as both are induced or used by online platforms to capture the user’s attention and motivate frequent visits to this platform. Additionally, as argued, frequently experiencing epistemic FOMO could arouse prudential concerns, and experiencing and responding to morbid curiosity can lead the agent to undermine moral values.

These emotions are certainly not alone in their potential to motivate behaviour that undermines an element of wisdom. All of the dispositions, habits, and individual acts discussed in this thesis are likely to have been motivated by an emotion, or otherwise an affective state directing attention to the relevant epistemic affordance – as discussed in Chapter 6. While this thesis has discussed intellectual virtues that allow one to engage wisely with one’s digital epistemic environment, the final section of this thesis aims to provide some light at the tunnel for those of us with imperfect intellectual virtues. By incorporating emotion regulation, specifically strategies aimed at modifying the situation
rather than our affective states or behaviour alone, the reliability of these imperfect intellectual virtues can be increased.

2. A Helping Hand: Emotion Regulation and Situation Modification

In previous Chapters, I have discussed epistemic emotions, values, and behaviours enforced by the digital environment when shaped by the attention economy. I have also argued that – when the intellectual virtues are directed towards wisdom – epistemic, moral, and prudential values are relevant to responsibly navigate one’s epistemic environment. This thereby allows us to categorise some epistemic actions as wise, i.e., as adroit, accurate, and apt acts of intellectual virtue, performed in response to, or perhaps despite, one’s sociotechnical environment. While possessing the intellectual virtues as described would thereby aid one’s responsible epistemic engagement with this sociotechnical environment, one can increase the reliability of imperfect virtues by applying methods of emotion regulation.

Both epistemic and non-epistemic emotions can motivate behaviour characteristic of an intellectual virtue, which fails to be apt as this behaviour undermines another element of wisdom. For example, the external uncertainty leading one to doomcheck every five minutes, or the intense curiosity keeping one awake to do research at 3am, undermining epistemic temperance. Something similar is of course also applicable to non-epistemic emotions, as discussed in Section 4.1 of Chapter 5. However, for the purposes of this concluding chapter, I focus on epistemic emotions. I argue that methods of emotion regulation provide us with the tools to minimise the harmful effects of the behaviours and emotions discussed in previous chapters, while retaining their potential epistemic value where possible. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 2, emotion regulation through response modulation is a constitutive skill of the motivational element of practical wisdom.

2.1 The Process Model of Emotion Regulation

The process model of emotion regulation (e.g., Barret and Gross 2001; Barrett et al. 2001; Gross and Barrett’s 2011; Quoidbach et al. 2015) incorporates five generally accepted methods of how emotions can be regulated that, I argue, can be grouped into three categories: adjusting the situation to avoid or halt the experience of the unwanted

98 Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 2, emotion regulation through response modulation is a constitutive skill of the motivational element of practical wisdom.
emotion, adjusting one’s affective relation to the situation, and adjusting the behaviour motivated by the unwanted emotion. In other words, the agent can perform emotion regulation to affect the cause, experience, and consequence of the unwanted emotion. Before these categories can be put into effect, one should first identify the emotion one aims to regulate, whereby more specific emotion concepts (e.g., frustration or annoyance rather than anger) aid one in contextualising one’s affective experience. This includes an assessment of whether the emotion and the behaviour it motivates are in line with one’s values. After all, the function of emotion regulation is not limited to, and need not even include, attempts to avoid the experience of negatively valenced emotions; feeling good is not the ultimate goal of emotion regulation on this account. Rather, the goal is to experience and act on emotions that are in line with one’s values and goals: if one’s anger leads one to tell off their neighbour for stealing one’s mail, which one would not have done without this affective push, then one’s anger need not be regulated (if one aims to read one’s mail) (Gross and Barrett 2011). When the agent does aim to regulate the emotion, one or more of the following methods can be implemented.

In the first category of emotion regulation, an unwanted emotion can be regulated through situation selection or situation modification. Here, the agent uses her knowledge of which situations or situational aspects induce the unwanted emotion. She can then select situations where she will not experience the unwanted emotion, or attempt to modulate or adjust the relevant aspects when she finds herself in such a situation. The latter can be illustrated by putting on noise cancelling headphones, effectively turning out the frustrating buzz and chatter that fills a café (thereby regulating the unwanted emotion of frustration), and the former by simply avoiding busy cafes.

The second category entails regulating the affective experience itself – rather than its cause or its effect – through cognitive change or attentional deployment. On the latter method, attention regulation allows one to attend to aspects of a situation that regulate the unwanted emotion, either by minimising the phenomenological character of this affective state, or by inducing a preferable emotion.99 For example, when someone is afraid that she will be rejected for the job during her interview, her attention may be drawn to how long she takes to answer a question, or to the frown on the interviewer’s face. Through attentional deployment, this agent can rather try to focus on how well she prepared to induce confidence, or on a pleasant picture on the wall to distract herself.

99 Attention regulation is empirically supported as an effective regulation method (e.g., Freund & Keil 2010).
from her fear. Cognitive change, on the other hand, entails a shift in how one affectively relates to the situation by changing one’s thinking. The agent afraid of rejection during a job interview can, for example, attempt to consider this interview a learning experience, where being rejected would not be the end of the world. Likewise, she can reinterpret the interviewer’s frown as a sign that the interviewer is thinking deeply about her answers, rather than disagreeing with them. Moreover, she can shape her anxious affective experience into a more useful affective state by interpreting it as her body giving her the energy and focus to respond to the interviewer’s questions (Barrett 2017).

The last category is constituted by *response modulation*: adjusting the behaviour motivated by the emotion. This can entail suppressing facial or bodily changes to hide their emotional experience from others, or choosing another action over the behaviour the relevant emotion motivates (e.g., counting to ten when angry, rather than shouting or punching a wall).

To illustrate this model in an epistemic framework, imagine an agent experiencing curiosity upon seeing the diary of a close friend unattended, which motivates behaviour that may be in line with her value to get to know her friend, yet is in conflict with the value she places on mutual respect in friendships or honesty. This instance of curiosity should be regulated as the agent aims to avoid reading her friend’s diary. The most straightforward way to do this is to regulate her behaviour, stopping oneself from reading the diary. As response modulation through inaction could be difficult when the agent’s attention keeps being drawn to the diary due her continual experience of curiosity, however, the other methods of emotion regulation can help. By leaving the room (situation selection) or by covering the diary with her coat (situation modification), she can remove the intentional object of her curiosity from sight. Through attentional deployment, she can shift her focus to the books on her friend’s bookshelves, as reading the titles distracts her from the diary. Through cognitive change, she can think about how pleasant and interesting the future conversations with her friend may be where she can consensually learn about the friend’s secrets and share her own, strengthening the friendship. As such, while response modulation could stop one from performing an act that is in conflict with one’s values, other methods of emotion regulation can aid this process, and can even give the agent insight in the reasons behind her desire to read the diary and other ways to accomplish this end (i.e., getting to know her friend).

Note that only the presented example of cognitive change is still in line with the agent’s goal to get to know her friend: by accepting that she wants to get to know her
friend yet does not want to reach this goal through reading her diary, she is able to think of other methods to potentially become equally informed, without thereby undermining her other values. We can apply attentional deployment in a similar way: by directing her attention to objects in the room the friend has on display (e.g., pictures, posters, and books), the agent can learn about her friend’s experiences and interests in a way the friend implicitly consented to by inviting her into the room. The methods of cognitive change and attentional deployment can be accompanied by other categories of emotion regulation to ensure that the agent’s behaviour is in line with her values (e.g., becoming excited by the prospect of interesting conversations with one’s friend while nevertheless pulling a blanket over her friend’s diary). In this way, then, these methods can be applied to epistemic emotions that motivate adroit yet unadmirable epistemic actions, allowing one to avoid performing an unadmirable act, as well as potentially directing one’s attention to a possibility for apt intellectually virtuous action.

2.2 Regulating the Digital Environment

The methods discussed in the previous section can be applied to emotions brought about or enforced by the digital environment. For example, one can regulate epistemic FOMO by applying cognitive change. That is, the agent can consider that she would not be uninformed on, e.g., current events or the field of epistemology by temporarily missing out on a novel event or publication – if the event or publication is sufficiently important, she is likely to acquire this information later that day or week through, e.g., watching the evening news or researching her topic of interest at a time where it does not conflict with activities that reflect her other goals and values (e.g., being rested, having a social life, or not missing an important deadline). Likewise, she can consider that a friend or another active member of her epistemic cohort would inform her of important developments in their shared field of interest during their next social interaction. Moreover, if these methods do not work, she can assess whether her experience of epistemic FOMO indeed reflects her final POG or NOI, or that it is rather motivated by a desire to seem informed. If the latter is the case, she can attempt to regulate her emotion through attentional deployment, rather attending to information she does take to be finally valuable; through cognitive change by considering that her friends would not consider her uninformed by lacking this recently published information; or through situation selection, aiming to avoid the (online) spaces that induce the feeling.
However, we must acknowledge the motivational strength of platforms designed to capture and retain attention, especially in relation to the methods of attentional deployment and response regulation. After all, as Williams notes, depending on these strategies would be akin to saying, “Thousands of the world’s brightest psychologists, statisticians, and designers are now spending the majority of their waking lives figuring out how to tear down your willpower – so you just need to have more willpower.”

Williams 2018, p. 101

Likewise, situation selection may be difficult to apply in our current sociotechnical environment. For many, engaging with the sociotechnical environment is a necessity. So, when one judges that the emotions one experiences or habits one developed through one’s interaction with this environment are not in line with one’s values and concerns, simply unplugging the Wi-Fi is not a viable option – especially on the long term. In relation to avoiding self-indulgent habits, situation selection would motivate one to, e.g., delete apps that send notifications from one’s phone, or to otherwise stop engaging with apps or platforms that one has a self-indulgent relation to. However, recall that these habits can also involve the relevant technology as a whole. Preventing situations where one has the ability to use one’s smartphone or laptop for online communication or information-acquisition, however, would not be a sustainable solution for most (Williams 2018, p. 100). In other words, decoupling from the sociotechnical environment (the so-called ‘digital detox’) is typically only a temporary solution to lowering one’s (painful) desire to engage with this environment, if one has access to it at all.

Similarly, deleting social media apps and otherwise preventing oneself from visiting these platforms is only a viable solution for some. After all, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (or “X”), Mastodon, ResearchGate, or Reddit allow one to build an epistemic cohort that is partly or fully constituted by others working in one’s field of interest or area of specialisation, who one would not commonly come across in one’s day-to-day non-digital environment.

As such, whether (temporarily) uncoupling from the digital environment, or one particular platform, is feasible for an agent possessing an epistemically self-indulgent habit or an epistemic disposition that negatively impacts her mental health, depends on
this agent’s situation. However, if we accept that situation selection may be untenable or unsustainable as an emotion regulation method, then the better option is to change the situation one might be unable to avoid. According to Williams (2018), changing the situation to motivate behaviour more in line with our values would entail upending the current structure of our digital environment. Yet, as the power to restructure the digital environment to reduce the impact of the attention economy is unlikely to be in the hands of individuals aiming to navigate this environment, those who lack this influence are better aided by tools to scaffold their own digital environment.

To apply situation modification, customising one’s digital environment, one can install various browser extensions, or apps and plugins on one’s phone, tablet, or laptop. For example, if an agent is aware that she is susceptible to doomsurfing until late at night, negatively affecting her health, she can install an extension such as StayFocusd, blocking her access to traditional and social media websites from a specific hour or once she has spent more than a set amount of time on these platforms. Likewise, if an agent is aware that her attention is automatically drawn to images or information on topics she aims to avoid (e.g., as she wants to reduce her consumption of trivial or morbid content), she can use a keyword blocker extension, filtering her online experience to avoid articles or posts containing morbidity-related (and potentially triggering) words such as torture, rape, and self-harm, or to block the names of celebrities to avoid the experience of curiosity motivating the acquisition of trivial knowledge.

Moreover, one can even use similar methods of gamification employed by the attention-capturing platforms to install habits that avoid epistemic self-indulgence. The app Forest, for example, can be used to enhance focus and reduce the impulse to respond to digital distractions. Users “plant” virtual trees during time-blocks when one aims to focus on a task, while responding to digital distractions causes the virtual tree to “die.” Moreover, avoiding the use of one’s phone during “focus sessions” earn users virtual coins that can be used to unlock various trees and plants for their digital forest.

These examples may only reflect the beginning of developments allowing users to manually customise their digital environments, rather than being at the mercy of algorithms aiming to capture and keep their attention. Through these methods of situation modification, then, agents can act on their epistemically virtuous motivation to acquire, assess, and share valuable epistemic goods within their digital environment, while being less affected by the methods of the attention economy that may derail this wise engagement. Using these and potential future tools to increase the reliability of one’s
intellectual virtues, does not make these traits any less admirable or wise. Quite the opposite. After all, as argued in Chapter 5, even the courageous man puts on his armour before going into battle.
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